



5 Tips for Reducing Turnover at Your Restaurant



1. RECRUIT THE BEST TALENT

Reducing turnover is a process that starts at the very beginning - which candidates you get to walk through your door and what questions you ask them play a huge part in your turnover. Make sure you're asking the right questions to get a true feel of the candidate. Questions such as, "What is your favorite part of the restaurant industry?" and "What would you change about the restaurant industry?" can show a candidate's experience and familiarity, along with whether they'll be content in a server position. Also, asking, "Why do you want to work here?" will show whether they are interested specifically in your restaurant. It's also important to make sure the candidate is a good fit for your culture. If you're a family-friendly joint, how does this candidate interact with children? If you're a sports bar, is this server quick-witted and easy going? Make sure they fit your culture, or their performance and your customers will feel the effects. A tried-and-true method for bringing in top talent is to ask your top talent to refer a friend with similar qualities (and previous restaurant experience!)

2. IMPROVE YOUR TRAINING

Once you've got a great, new server onboard, you need to make sure they get off on the right foot - and stay there. Don't be afraid to have rigorous, multiple-day training with physical and written tests. Set the tone from the beginning that you expect your employees to take the position seriously and thoroughly know the restaurant's policies and menu. Follow this up with regular performance reviews and ongoing development to refresh those skills and add new skills anytime you would like to introduce new menu items or industry

trends for serving. It is essential that you align your employees' goals with restaurant's goals from the start, and foster an environment that is strict, but still enjoyable. Hold them accountable to your policies (are your policies reasonable?), and celebrate your successes together.

3. HELP INCREASE THEIR TIPS

Income is the number one determinant of whether a server stays at your restaurant. There are several things an employer can do to help their staff boost their tips, the main source of income for servers. Studies show there are several little tricks servers can utilize to boost tips, including a genuine greeting that includes their name, crouching down to be on eye-level with the table, adding a hand-written, personal note to the bill, and a combination of smiling and personal contact consistently increase tips. While you may have personal feelings on automatic gratuity to large parties, these are typically the most time consuming and members of the party are more likely to tip less, according to research. Consider allowing an automatic gratuity. You can also have competitive games to encourage servers to upsell, such as a bingo card with upsell items in the squares. Finally, consider having special promotion nights, such as trivia night or a free appetizer night, to bring in the crowds.



4. OFFER BENEFITS AND INCENTIVES

Job perks are a sure-fire way to keep top talent at your restaurant. Research your options for offering health benefits to your employees - you could be surprised by its affordability. Also, wherever possible, find a way to foster their passions so that they can build their resumes while waiting tables. For example, let them help in the company's promotions and marketing, office management, HR/Payroll duties or coordinating events. Scheduling is second only to income in determining whether a server stays. Your top performers deserve to have a schedule that helps them achieve a better work-life balance and makes them feel rewarded for their work ethic. Giving them top pick of days off, allowing them the most freedom to set their own schedule and being understanding of emergencies that keep them from work are examples of how to accomplish this. Finally, promote from within so that employees don't feel trapped under a glass ceiling.

5. "WE'RE IN THIS TOGETHER"

Finally, a lot of your restaurant's success with reducing turnover comes down to you. The more your employees get to know you, respect you and trust you, the more loyal they will be. It's essential for you to be present at the restaurant to establish a rapport with each of your employees. Learn their names, wish them happy birthday, join their fantasy leagues, host an annual Christmas party, and leave encouraging notes around the restaurant. You also need to show that you truly listen to them and care about their concerns, and give them a way to share their ideas about improving the business. This open communication is the most essential way to improve trust. When you establish an overall, holistic environment that makes your employees say, "We're in this together," then you've accomplished your goal - and your turnover numbers will reflect that.

