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**Lopez, Teal, J. *Implementation of Manager Training Program***

**Abstract**

The profitability, success and growth of restaurants depends on a well-trained management team. Lack of proper manager training leads to underperformance, low morale, burnout, high turnover, health issues and causes upper leadership to micromanage their teams to achieve desired results. Upon discussing industry trends with training professionals in the restaurant industry, it was determined that a strong and thorough manager training program includes a detailed schedule with rotation through all restaurant positions, leadership training, and company culture. With this structure in place, validation of learning objectives, and a strong culture built on trust and the strengths of each individual, restaurant companies will prosper for years to come.

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“Never give up. Never give up. Never, ever, ever give up.” -Winston Churchill

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## **Chapter I: Introduction**

Company XYZ was one of the nation's leading operators of full service restaurants in both the casual and fine dining sectors of the industry. They owned and operated over 60 locations under ten different brands that stretched from coast to coast across the United States. Headquartered in Southern California, Company XYZ continually added new brands to its portfolio.

With every new acquisition, Company XYZ was committed to delivering the highest dining standards by serving the freshest menu items and providing excellent service in a clean, comfortable, and friendly atmosphere. It was all about the guest experience. Company XYZ employed over 4,300 team members, of which approximately 280 were salaried managers leading teams to accomplish this goal every day.

Company XYZ rebranded itself in 2018 under new executive leadership and a new company name. While maintaining the existing teams of restaurant managers from the old company, Company XYZ implemented new culture statements, systems, standards, and expectations across the organization.

Transitioning an entire organization from the previous company's systems and standards, while also acquiring new concepts presented many challenges. Throughout the transition, Company XYZ was met with resistance from existing managers who were hesitant to the changes being implemented. With a varying caliber of management from the previous company paired with a higher standard of operations under the new company, Company XYZ's executive leadership team was forced to micromanage their teams in order to achieve the desired results quickly. While this approach may have worked for a short period, it was not sustainable over the long term. This environment caused manager burnout, low morale, and turnover of high caliber

leaders who were frustrated with the state. The lack of current and relevant training materials for managers contributed to this situation as well. With not enough well-trained leaders in place, Company XYZ was forced to continue down their current path, which could lead to low morale, disengaged managers, and high turnovers, all of which will negatively impact their profits and halt their future growth plans.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Company XYZ had plans to continue acquiring new concepts and growing the company. The inconsistent leadership at restaurants would delay future growth plans. The lack of proper training and implementation of new standards, the upper leadership team was forced to micromanage their teams. While this may have helped some managers achieve better results, other high caliber leaders were demotivated and frustrated by this approach. To be successful, Company XYZ needed well-trained and competent leaders in every restaurant location so that those leaders could hold their teams to the standard the company desired to achieve.

### **Purpose of the Study**

This study addressed solutions to improve the manager training program at Company XYZ. A standardized training program would provide consistency among restaurant leadership teams, reducing the need for upper leadership to micromanage teams. Through the research, it was determined what program structure was necessary to develop an organized and thorough management training program. Some details included a standardized schedule, checklist of daily and weekly objectives, training modules and projects. A complete manager training program would improve morale and productivity, reduce burnout and turnover, and allow Company XYZ to continue its growth plans with strong leaders in place.

## **Assumptions of the Study**

Regarding this study, it is assumed that all participant responses are true and honest and are based on actual experiences in their field of professional expertise.

## **Definition of Terms**

The following industry terms are defined here for clarification.

**Back of House (BOH).** BOH is the kitchen department in restaurants that includes any employees that typically are not guest facing (dishwashers, prep cooks, line cooks, chefs).

**Front of House (FOH).** FOH is the service department in restaurants that includes any employees that are guest facing (hosts, bussers, food runners, servers, bartenders and managers).

**Full Service.** Full service refers to restaurants that offer traditional table service where guests order from servers at their table and food is delivered to the table.

**Hourly Work Groups.** Hourly work groups are restaurant positions including hosts, bussers, food runners, servers, and bartenders in the front of house and dishwashers, line cooks and expeditors in the back of house.

**Quick Service.** These are restaurants that offer expedited service where guests order from a cashier. Food is either picked up at the order counter or delivered to the table.

## **Limitations of the Study**

The limitation of the study is that the participant group includes only professionals in the restaurant industry. Results were relevant for the restaurant industry.

## **Methodology**

Data was collected through individual interviews with training professionals in the restaurant sector of the hospitality industry. Participants shared best practices and their

experiences with manager training programs. With this data, recommendations were made to the executive team at Company XYZ.

## **Chapter II: Literature Review**

Company XYZ was a growing company in transition. Having acquired a company in decline, Company XYZ set forth to change its course, but that was not met without obstacles. The main struggle was consistency in leadership. The lack of a proper manager training program had created a need for upper leadership to micromanage their teams to drive results quickly. While this approach made positive impact initially, it could not sustain. Company XYZ was already seeing the start of a culture decline, which included low productivity and morale, disengaged managers and rising turnover.

### **Restaurant Leadership**

According to Data USA (2019), there were about 955,000 food service managers in the United States in 2019. Of them, 50.9% were female and 49.1% were male with an average age of 38. The median annual salary was approximately \$47,000. Food service managers require an abundance of skills including critical thinking, personnel resources, financial resources, and time management. They oversee the day-to-day operations of the restaurant including ordering products, preparation of recipes and menu items, hiring and properly staffing the restaurant, cash handling, processing invoices, maintaining restaurant cleanliness and atmosphere and financial responsibilities all while prioritizing guest service. Many restaurant managers say they love their jobs because every day is different.

### **Manager-in-Training Programs**

The importance of a thorough manager-in-training program is essential to the overall success of the restaurant. According to National Restaurant Association, 90% of newly hired managers start out in entry level positions (Perry, n.d.). This includes managers starting as FOH managers or BOH managers, as opposed to general managers who oversee both sides of the

operation. “Learning from experience is the number one way that leaders develop” (McCauley et al., 2013, p. ii). A formal manager training program provides structure, sets expectations, and measures development, preparing leaders for their role. All training is important to a successful business, but great manager training is critical because managers have the largest impact on your operations, team, and guest experience (Perry, n.d.). This data supports the need for a structured manager training program.

### **Challenges Specific to Hospitality Industry**

Professionals in the restaurant industry have always required a high level of flexibility due to the demands surrounding every day being different than the previous. Now, in the aftermath of COVID-19, the challenges are heightened. Restaurant365 (2020) describes the staffing challenges:

With the disruption of the restaurant industry in 2020, finding, training, and retaining high-quality staff has become extremely difficult. Reduced or unstable hours, in addition to the general pressures of the pandemic, have prompted many restaurant industry employees to leave the industry. (Restaurant365, 2020, para. 14)

With increased safety protocols, and a nervous guest base, it is even harder to find employees that are dedicated and will stay with the company long-term.

According to the Restaurant Success Industry Report (2019), “51% of restaurant operators name staffing as a top challenge to success, and 35% say training staff is a top challenge” (Toast POS, p. 11). The restaurant industry varies greatly on the spectrum of training programs and platforms utilized or offered to their team. “When it comes to training new hires, the majority of restaurants (68%) share an employee handbook but only 19% use online training and only 36% have a formal 30-day check -in” (Toast POS, 2019, p. 3). An employee handbook

only is great for setting expectations for all employees, but only goes so far in creating a desirable workplace. The real difference comes when formal training and development programs are in place. Once a hire is made, the focus shifts on retaining them. “Turnover in the restaurant industry is at an all-time high, at 75%” (Toast POS, 2019, p. 12) Failure to retain these new hires is costly. Time spent and the financial impact for sourcing candidates, interviewing, hiring, onboarding, training, and retaining can set an organization back thousands of dollars. According to research compiled by Toast, “It can cost up to \$15,000 for a new manager” (McNamara, 2019, para. 5).

### **Impact of Poor Training**

Poor training is the root of many problems for any organization. When those problems are in leadership, the impact goes even deeper. Simply put, less knowledge and training lead to a lower level of performance (Gendron, 2018). “Your employees can contribute to the success of your company when they are trained to perform their jobs according to industry” (Amo, 2019, para. 1). Even more so, poor training can lead to disengaged employees, low morale, and high turnover. But that is just the start of concerns. Ultimately, if you do not have a well-trained leader, the bottom line will suffer, and the company will decline. Company decline can stem from improper leadership of employees or improper management of the financials (Amo, 2019).

“Some companies consider in-depth training an unnecessary expense and expect new employees to learn on the job from supervisors and older employees. However, this type of training is often inadequate and creates problems for the business” (Amo, 2019, para. 1) Amo (2019) goes on to say that the lack of training or poor training can lead to unhappy employees and high turnover, low rates of production, unsafe work environment, ineffective staff management, increased business expenses and loss of customers. Often because an organization

does not want to invest in proper training, training is assigned to the most veteran employee in that department, Amo (2019) states. That employee may not be equipped to train properly or may not be given the extra time needed to train, and thus the trainee is often left to fend for themselves and ask questions (Amo, 2019). While it may seem like a lot of time spent up front, that time will save the company tenfold in the end if training is emphasized and prioritized.

Micromanaging is often used to control what may be going on in a specific location or department of a company. When leaders at those units lack fundamentals, upper leadership steps in and gets involved, often managing down to a level that the unit leader should be managing. This approach may show immediate results, but in the long run, will disengage managers, lower morale, reduce productivity and creativity and increase stress and turnover. Collins and Collins (2002) summarize this problem by stating:

Micromanagement can be advantageous in certain short-term situations, such as while training new employees, increasing productivity of underperforming employees, controlling high-risk issues, and when there can be no question of who is in charge. However, the costs associated with long-term micromanagement can be exorbitant. Symptoms such as low employee morale, high staff turnover, reduction of productivity and patient dissatisfaction can be associated with micromanagement. The negative impacts are so intense that it is labeled among the top three reasons employees resign. (para. 1)

According to Miech (2020), micromanaging can be extremely toxic to the organization. Managers who micromanage tend to display behaviors such as frequently checking what their team is doing at their computers and checking for their team's active status on online workplaces used (Miech, 2020). They may take a controlling approach when managing projects or have an

inability to let go of responsibilities. Miech (2020) goes on to say that they tend to be overly picky about small details and highly critical of a team member's approach to the work, even if there is a positive outcome. At times they may even redo someone else's work or remove their responsibilities on the project completely (Miech, 2020). When employees are micromanaged, they often feel as if they cannot do anything right or that nothing they do matters. These negative feelings can have a significant impact on the employee's productivity. The employee will lack desire to work with urgency and to full completion of the project. Micromanaging is not realistic or scalable. It is not feasible for a leader to take on all the responsibilities of their team. This approach can also create a dependency from the team to achieve results or accomplish tasks (Miech, 2020).

Morale is defined as, "how employees actually feel about themselves as workers, their work, their managers, their work environment, and their overall work life. It incorporates all the mental and emotional feelings, beliefs, and attitudes that individuals and groups hold regarding their job" (Helms, 2006, p. 562). Low morale is connected to an employee's dissatisfaction with their job. Low morale leads to low productivity, negative financial results, and increased turnover (Picincu, 2021).

"Burned out workers are those who find themselves suffering from severe emotional fatigue, which is frequently accompanied by physiological symptoms. They feel distressed, alienated, inadequate, and unmotivated" (McCormack & Cotter, 2013, p. 2). Robbins (2021) describes burnout as "chronic stress that hasn't been managed correctly" (para. 4). She goes on to say

You feel physically, cognitively, and emotionally exhausted, making it difficult to focus or feel good about yourself or your job. Instead of feeling invested, you feel detached

which leads to losing your connection to yourself and the pride you used to have in yourself and your work. (Robbins, 2021, para. 5)

Burnout can usually be observed by a drastic change in personality, attitude, and behavior (McCormack & Cotter, 2013). Top performers are enthusiastic and energetic about their work. When employees feel that their contributions are constantly scrutinized, they become stressed and frustrated at work (McCormack & Cotter, 2013). Lynott (2015) argues that “the stresses of the foodservice business makes restaurant owners and managers more susceptible to business burnout than their peers in other industries” (para. 4). Once burnout sets in, those traits are often replaced with negativity and cynicism, which leads to under performance, inability to achieve results and ultimately may cause them to leave the company. All of which is impacting the company’s ability to grow their profit line. While low morale can be improved quickly by adjusting supervision or work environment, the effects of burnout can take longer for an individual to recover from (McCormack & Cotter, 2013). Jackson and Schuler (1983, p. 60) outlined causes and consequences in their research as detailed below:

- causes of burnout
  - lack of rewards
  - lack of control
  - lack of clarity
  - lack of support
  - idealistic expectations
  - personal responsibility
- psychological reaction from burnout
  - emotional exhaustion

- depersonalization
- low personal accomplishment
- consequences of burnout
  - withdrawal
  - interpersonal friction
  - declining performance
  - family problems
  - health suffers

Stress on the job will often lead to physical and mental health concerns. Increased substance use, such as alcohol and tobacco, eating and sleep disorders, and other health issues could all lead to an employee's disengagement with the organization and an increase in absenteeism and use of sick days (Miech, 2020).

Low productivity is often the result of employees not having clear performance expectations set by their leaders (Quain, 2018). These expectations are often communicated at orientation but should be reinforced throughout training. If employees are unclear on expectations, and managers are not following up with regular reviews or development conversations, the result will be low productivity (Deeb, 2019).

According to the Trends in Hospitality Training & Development Report (2019) compiled by CHART and Black Box Intelligence, companies that invested in manager training programs that included leadership development and human resource topics saw a measurable decline in their turnover of hourly employees (Hospitality Training Magazine, n.d.). The restaurant industry has had high turnover in those positions for decades, with some staggering data:

Sixty-nine percent of restaurant respondents reported they are understaffed in front-of-house hourly positions and had a 94% annual turnover rate... and that is doing well compared to back-of-house rates. Ninety-three percent reported they are understaffed in back-of-house hourly positions with a 105% annual turnover rate. (Hospitality Training Magazine, n.d., para. 2)

Manager training programs that emphasized leadership and human resources saw those numbers decline by about 30% across the board (Hospitality Training Magazine, n.d.). Considering the average amount spent to recruit and train a new hire costs a company nearly \$2,000, this is money well spent up front (Hospitality Training Magazine, n.d.).

### **Adult Learners**

Pappas (2013) reported on Malcolm Knowles who described the method and practice of teaching adult learners is referred to as andragogy. Adult learning differs from child learning, which is known as pedagogy. Pappas (2013) stated that Knowles suggested that adult learners need to be involved in the planning of their instruction, instruction should be built on experience-based learning and should include topics that are relevant to the learner's job or life and is problem-centered (Pappas, 2014). Adult learners tend to be self-motivated and prefer to learn autonomously. They want to be able to apply their learnings to real situations that they encounter in their daily lives.

### **Best Practices**

The restaurant industry has been built on years of developing systems and procedures in order to best service the guest and be efficient in operations, which together yield positive financial results.

E-learning has become a staple in training programs across industries. Even more so now due to the realities and restrictions that COVID-19 brought upon our lives. It allows us to deliver instruction anywhere to anyone. Anyone can complete a specialty course, certification or even a degree completely virtually with e-learning platforms. “Self-regulated learning, where students use meta-cognitive skills to plan, implement, and reflect on their learning, have been increasingly associated with better academic achievements” (Roddy et al., 2017, para. 17).

The Counsel of Hospitality and Restaurant Trainers (CHART) is a professional organization for training professionals in hotels, restaurants, and food service ([www.chart.org](http://www.chart.org)). The organization has built a culture where shared knowledge is power. Members attend workshops, conferences and share their best practices for successful training programs through networking events and their website.

Lai et al. (2020, as cited in Bass, 1985) who stated that transformational leadership comprises four dimensions:

First, idealized influence is the degree to which followers realize leaders’ value, confidence, belief, power, and ethical or moral orientation; their willingness to identify with these attributes; and a diversion from self-interest to higher collective goals.

Second, inspirational motivation describes how leaders articulate visions to inspire and motivate subordinates to reach desired goals. Third is intellectual stimulation, which refers to leaders who challenge the status quo and underlying assumptions, encourage followers to do so, and are open to new and creative solutions to problems. The final dimension is individualized consideration. Here, like mentors or coaches, leaders provide emotional support and consideration for each follower. (para. 7)

Transformational leaders see their team differently. They pay attention to details about their emotional, physical, and mental state in order to understand how to motivate each individual separately. This approach of seeing the individual produces positive results in morale and productivity (Lai et al., 2020).

### **Summary**

The impacts of training on any organization are vast. Lack of training or poor training can affect employee morale, productivity, cause burnout and increase turnover. All of this combines for loss of time and profits and can lead to company decline as executives scramble to do the work of others and replace those who have left. It's a viscous cycle. On the contrary, a well-built training program will provide leaders with the tools to succeed in their roles. The culture will flourish as leaders have confidence to do their jobs, which will positively impact the bottom line and allow for company growth.

### **Chapter III: Methodology**

Company XYZ was a growing company in transition. Having acquired a company in decline, Company XYZ encountered many obstacles as it set forth to change the course of its newest acquisition. The main struggle was a lack in the consistency of restaurant leadership. The lack of a proper manager training program created a need for upper leadership to micromanage their teams to drive results quickly. While this approach made a positive impact initially, it was not sustainable. Company XYZ began to see the start of a culture decline, which included low morale, disengaged managers and rising turnover.

The current program was an eight-week training schedule and consisted of four weeks working with hourly work groups including dishwasher, prep cook, line cook and chef in the kitchen and host, food runner, busser, server, and bartender in the front of house. That was followed by four weeks of manager task training such as opening and closing the restaurant, shift planning, guest relations, interviewing, hiring, ordering, inventory, and financial results. There was a lack of tools and systems that supported this learning. Hourly positions did not have training materials such as checklists, manuals, or outlined objectives to help guide the learner through each role. Most of the training was taught through on-the-job shadows in which managers-in-training worked closely alongside hourly team members to observe them in their roles on shift. While this method is good for developing relationships with the staff and understanding the importance of each role, there was a lack of validation that learning was happening and a lack of manager and upper leadership support to ensure milestones and objectives were being hit within the standard and desired timeline. It was due to this lack of structure, tools, and validation, that managers were not well prepared to run shifts after

completion of their training, which led to upper leadership micro-managing the granular details of their jobs.

### **Subject Selection and Description**

Subjects were selected from a professional network of hospitality operators and trainers. The sample size was eight training professionals in the restaurant sector of the hospitality industry. The group of trainers had decades of experience including creating, developing, and implementing manager in training programs in the restaurant sector. Restaurant operators provided insight on their experience overseeing the training on location or participating in the training.

### **Instrumentation**

Managers and training professionals were interviewed to gather information on what manager in training programs they have in place, the length of the training, what successes and opportunities they are seeing, and any best practices. The CHART website was also used to research best practices for manager in training programs. A list of interview questions can be found in Appendix A.

### **Data Collection Procedures**

Over the course of two months, data was collected through individual interviews with restaurant professionals. Most of the interviews were completed through phone calls or web calls due to time, location, or pandemic restrictions.

### **Data Analysis**

From the data collected through interviews, the trends and best practices for successful manager training programs were gathered. The data was assessed for common themes and best practices utilized in manager training programs throughout the industry. This information was

used to create a desired schedule, training activities, projects, assessments, and evaluation of a manager-in-training program that fits within the scope and culture of Company XYZ.

### **Limitations**

Limitations that were encountered included sample size. Since subjects interviewed were vastly part of a professional network and the CHART organization, it is possible that other companies are using other methods that were not uncovered during the interview process.

### **Summary**

The restaurant industry is diverse and ever-changing. It requires a manager training program that supports that culture. The data collected throughout the interview process of industry professionals helped determine what structure and components will yield the best results for a successfully trained restaurant manager.

## **Chapter IV: Results**

Company XYZ had plans to continue acquiring new concepts and growing the company. Their state of inconsistent leadership would delay future growth plans. Without proper training or implementation of new standards, the upper leadership team was forced to micromanage their teams. While this may have helped some managers achieve better results, there were concurrently high caliber leaders that were demotivated and frustrated by this approach. To be successful, Company XYZ needed well-trained and competent leaders in every restaurant location so that those leaders could hold their teams to the standard the company desired to achieve.

### **Demographic**

Data was collected from eight training professionals in the restaurant segment of the hospitality industry. Participants varied from four operation managers who had experience overseeing the training of new managers, two managers who had been a manager-in-training themselves, one field training manager and one vice president executive of training departments in varying restaurant organizations across the country.

### **Interview Questions**

The interview process occurred on an individual basis. Responses below are a recap of data and experiences shared by restaurant training professionals nationwide.

The first interview question was, “What was your role in the training of restaurant managers?” Responses included four operation managers who have participated in manager-in-training programs, two certified training managers who oversee the training of new managers, a field training manager who oversees new managers’ initial training and their ongoing development once they transfer to home location, a manager of training and development who

created materials for new managers and oversees their in-store training and an executive level training leader with decades of experience. Many of them wear different hats in their organization and connect dots between day-to-day operations and training.

The second interview question was, “How long is your current manager-in-training program?” Two of the programs spanned 12 weeks, five spanned eight weeks and one was a six-week program. On average, most organizations have decided that the ideal length was an eight-week training schedule for both FOH and BOH trainees.

There are variations to this scheduled based on whether the trainee is an internal promotion, which tends to shorten the program by two weeks on average. The internal training program also has an alternative schedule as these promotions are already trained in several hourly work groups and need more leadership training compared to external candidates. Thus, they do not have to train in hourly work groups and spend the majority of their training learning management tasks, responsibilities and leadership approaches. Those hired externally need more training on the company culture along with a full hourly work group rotation. FOH trainees spend time training with hosts, bussers, food runners, servers, and bartenders while BOH trainees will rotate through all kitchen positions including dishwasher, all line cook stations and expeditor. If managers are hired for a new restaurant opening, the industry trend is to add a couple additional weeks of training in a temporary manager role at another location before the new restaurant opens.

There were also variations dependent on whether managers were hired for a full service or a quick service location. The full-service concepts were those that reported longer training schedules, eight or twelve weeks, whereas quick service concepts reported the six-week training program.

The third interview question was, “What are the main components of the training program?” A typical restaurant manager is working eight-to-10-hour shifts, five days a week. Their training is a blend of hourly positions and manager systems. Industry-wide, organizations have all new managers train in hourly work groups. Participants were split if that included both FOH and BOH roles. Some restaurants expose new trainees to both sides of the business, while others only have you train for the side you were hired. For example, a new chef would only train in all BOH hourly positions, and a service manager would only train in all FOH positions. In both cases, the last four weeks of the training program focused on management systems and leadership development. During hourly work group training, there is an integration of topics that include food safety and sanitation, menu and product knowledge, communication systems, and operational systems. Management systems include topics such as sales forecasting, budgeting, labor costs and scheduling, ordering and cost control, interviewing and hiring, profit and loss statements and guest service philosophies. Leadership training focused more on softer skills, such as motivating your team and maintaining a strong company culture.

Most of the training is happening in the restaurant led by hourly team members and managers. When managers are training in hourly work groups, the same training materials are used as are in place when new hourly team members are trained, such as training packets, reading assignments, and watching online modules. For managers, these materials are used in an expedited manner. For example, if the host training program is five days, a manager would need to advance through the materials in two to three days. Five organizations mentioned regular check-ins from someone in the training department to measure and validate learning. One organization is holding weekly webinars to educate new managers on the importance of their company culture and discuss how culture plays out in day-to-day operations.

The fourth interview question asked, “How many new managers-in-training is your company training annually?” Participants spoke of their current turnover rates impacting how many managers they would need to hire in and train. One of the participants stated that the industry average for manager turnover is about 24%, so the number of MITs in a year depended on the size of the company. With the hiatus placed on hiring due to the pandemic, many organizations were not training many managers. Now, in the aftermath, budgets and staffing needs are still questionable for many organizations. One participant reported there were zero MITs currently in training, three participants had less than three in training and the largest organization stated they were budgeted for 350 managers-in-training for 2022.

The fifth interview question asked, “How do you analyze retention of new manager trainees? What are the results?” Retention fell mostly on the Human Resource Department to measure. Every organization had their own analytics that were important to them aside from how long a new manager stays with the company. Most companies saw a drastic improvement after the two-year mark. If managers made it to their two-year anniversary, they were more likely to stay for five to 10 years.

One company spoke about their specific efforts to retain managers. Post training, new managers participate in a 30-60-90-day development program. With regular development conversations with their general manager and regional manager, goals are determined early by identifying what is important to the new manager. With this, a specified plan is outlined, and progress is measured with lots of communication. Because the development plan is based on the manager’s goals and timeline, and not the company’s, management engagement and retention are well above industry average.

The sixth interview question asked, “Does the program differ for external candidates versus internal promotions? What is the mix of these groups?” Overall, six out of the eight organizations differentiate training schedules and programs for internal and external candidates. With internal candidates having a strong understanding of the culture and some hourly work group experience, their training schedule is two to four weeks shorter than an external hire. More emphasis is made on management systems and leadership development. On average, companies aim for a 50/50 or 60/40 split of external hires to internal promotions. This allows the company to balance the talent levels with internal promotions, helping to maintain a strong culture, while experienced external candidates bring fresh, innovative ideas to the company.

The seventh interview question asked, “What parts of your program are you most proud of?” This provided a wide variety of responses. One participant stated they were most proud of the communication amongst the team. Working with a smaller department than they had prior to the pandemic, they had found success by having weekly conference calls, which provided them a space to update each other on how training was going in their region, what needs they had and to ensure responsibilities were being divided and nothing fell between the cracks.

Another participant said they were proud of the physical support they provided in the restaurants. With their organization’s reduction in the workforce, members of the training team were out in the field working more operation shifts. While this stretched both operations and training departments, they had found some benefits to working so closely in the restaurants and were able to identify ways to improve processes and increase efficiencies.

One participant said they view their manager-in-training program as an MBA. Managers should be able to go anywhere and successfully run any business.

One organization mentioned their webinar on culture comes up the most when they survey recent graduates of the training program. New managers loved hearing directly from top executives what is important or how the culture stays alive in day-to-day operations. These managers stated the webinars were engaging and helped them determine how to make decisions that aligned with the company mission, vision, and values. Managers returned to their training locations energized and focused.

Another organization shared they use a platform called Kolbe to assess the individual learning styles of their new managers. This allows the training manager to adjust the training plan to meet the learner.

Another organization spoke on their ability to make the right hire, which led to more successful training. They have recently seen a change in the quality of applicants and have had to adjust to meet candidates where they are at, molding the program to adapt to individual skillsets. With the staffing shortages, they have had to adjust their recruiting plans as well. They have found recent success participating in virtual hiring fairs, back to work programs and offering bonuses to managers who stay for certain amounts of time (instead of offering signing bonuses).

The eighth interview question asked, “Are there any skills lacking in newly graduated managers?” When analyzing gaps in the training program, it varied greatly dependent on the organization, their goals, and resources as well as the individual trainee.

One participant observed a need to improve the transition out of training into the manager’s home location. Since all trainees trained at a certified training location, new managers were struggling to apply all they had learned once they were out of a structured training environment. They planned to increase success by improving communication and processes during transition to include a transition checklist, scheduled follow up dates to check in and

measure first 30 days after training and improved partnership from upper leadership to ensure that both the new manager and existing management team were supported during this transitional period.

Another organization prioritized their company culture and has analyzed that fully transitioning into that culture was the most challenging for new managers, especially those who had come from cultures that were highly micro-managed. Managers with that experience often find it hard to believe that a culture on the opposite spectrum exists and thus the transition is delayed. This causes hardship on their development as well as their ability to lead their team effectively. The organization was attempting to close this gap through monthly development discussions where new managers meet with their supervisor to discuss their transition into their role, ongoing development, and cultural components.

Another participant wanted to do better testing, so they could validate that the transfer of learning was meeting their needs and expectations. To do this, they were exploring the implementation of gamification to make training more fun and interactive, while still measuring those trainees were meeting learning objectives.

Two concerns came up from four organizations. The first being the new managers' ability to have tough conversations-whether a coaching or disciplinary conversation for an employee or the confidence to speak up and share their ideas with peers and upper leadership. Some of this stems from the lack of confidence some may have as new managers at the company. One company was mandating specific leadership books and holding webinars to teach these skills. Managers then met with their supervisors to role play different situations and practice approaches to difficult situations.

The second most and most frequent response was that new managers struggled to manage their time appropriately outside of training. Their first couple of months were so specifically outlined with daily tasks, objectives, roles, reading, et cetera, and once they were out of that structure, they failed to be able to plan their days and weeks accordingly to accomplish their responsibilities and run smooth shifts. This causes them to work longer hours, feel less productive, and could lead to burnout and ultimately an increase in turnover. This was being addressed by ongoing development discussions with their supervisors.

The ninth interview question asked, “What part of the training has the most value?” Interestingly enough, all participants valued the same part of their program. Relationship building was the response of each organization. Some participants spoke to the value of training in hourly work groups specifically bringing the most value because of relationships that were built with those team members. It allowed the manager to work with individuals, building relationships while understanding the importance of each role and helped managers empathize with challenges or obstacles each department could experience on any given shift. Managers were then able to build trust with those employees as they worked to improve on areas of opportunity and knew how to support each position when challenges arose.

Others stated their interactions with upper leadership and executive teams had the most value as they broke down barriers and created a culture where those leaders were available and approachable for any team member. These relationships solidified the importance of a strong people culture, where managers had opportunities to grow and develop. Ongoing development opportunities were validated through one-on-one development conversations, a company-wide mentorship program, and support for continued education.

The tenth interview question asked, “Have you had to make any changes to your program because of COVID restrictions or needs?” COVID-19 brought a lot of changes to the restaurant world. The restaurant industry was impacted greatly by government shutdowns, state, county and city restrictions and ever-changing protocols. A year and a half since the first pandemic shut-down, restaurants are still struggling to return to a state of normalcy. The latest challenge has been to staff restaurants for the influx of business that many companies are experiencing.

As organizations put a pause on hiring and training, five of the participants had to work in operations as a manager sometime during the past eighteen months. The other three had been laid off or furloughed in the spring of 2020 and were now at different organizations. Besides mandated training on new safety protocols and restrictions, organizations around the country have had to hire a large number of employees. This new workforce is less experienced, and their training needs to address this. Restaurants have also had to focus on other parts of the business, such as takeout sales, family-style meals, and outdoor dining.

Due to staffing shortages, some organizations have adjusted their manager training program in order to get managers working shifts faster. They shortened the training schedule by reducing time spent in hourly work groups and focused only on what was needed to run shifts effectively. While some organizations implemented plans to train in these areas as part of ongoing development, others have opted not to.

Another adjustment made was to train managers in the location they were hired for, as opposed to having certified training locations. This approach had pros and cons. Training in their home location allowed new managers to develop relationships with their team earlier and reduced the time needed to readjust after training as they transitioned to a new location with new people. On the other hand, training outside of the controlled certified training environment

created inconsistencies in training outcomes and required far more support and follow-up from training departments. When asked which approach, they were planning on utilizing in the future, participants were divided.

The final interview question asked, “If you could change your program, what would you do?” Participants considered a future in which resources were endless. Responses were as simple as one participant wanting more time to another dreaming of a training university where they would send all new managers. More realistically, one organization planned to alter training programs to specialize in the roles for which managers had been hired, as currently the program is exactly the same for all managers regardless of if they were hired to be a FOH manager, a kitchen manager or a general manager. Four organizations were looking to implement a learning management system and transition their program to be more technology based.

### ***Conclusion***

In conclusion, organizations are looking forward to returning to normal routines and systems more than anything. With all the industry has been through in the past couple of years, teams have been asked to do more with less. They have been stretched by working with smaller teams and have had to wear many different hats. Now, with the hopes that the global pandemic is behind us, restaurant trainers just want to get back to doing what they love-teaching, developing, and growing a team of individuals and to make a positive impact on those around them.

## **Chapter V: Discussion, Conclusion and Recommendations**

Company XYZ had plans to continue acquiring new concepts and growing the company. Their state of inconsistent leadership would delay future growth plans. To be successful, Company XYZ needed well-trained and competent leaders in every restaurant location so that those leaders could hold their teams to the standard the company desired to achieve.

Upon assessment of data gathered, a meeting was held with upper leadership at Company XYZ including the director of training, vice president of operations, and director of new store openings.

### **Discussion**

By researching common themes in the industry and discussing best practices with training leaders in the restaurant industry, it was determined that the root of the problem was cultural at Company XYZ. The first step to changing this culture, is to better prepare new managers with a more thorough training program and ongoing development. From there, trust is established as managers will be more competent and confident in their roles and upper leadership will be able to transition away from the current state of micromanaging and back to planning for the future of the company. From the interviews, companies that had strong people culture instilled a mutual trust amongst leadership teams. That culture was built on a foundation of training and development. There was sharing of knowledge, clear expectations, effective communication, and systems in place to ensure work was validated. Company XYZ was expecting results without this foundation and thusly found themselves in a vicious cycle where upper leadership was frustrated and micromanaging their teams and managers were untrained and underperforming.

## **Conclusions**

Company XYZ must invest time and finances into a structured and thorough manager-in-training program. Taking the time to develop and implement this training program will delay their results and growth temporarily while the foundation is built, the refusal to do so will delay their growth permanently. The current state of micromanaging from the top down is not sustainable and will result in higher turnover, lower productivity and delayed growth as continual hiring will be needed. Yet without a well-developed training program, that cycle will continue endlessly. Company XYZ needs to hit pause and invest time and resources into this training so that they can have future growth.

## **Recommendations**

Based on the results of the interview process, it is recommended that Company XYZ invest in developing a stronger foundation to their MIT program by revising the schedule, emphasizing company culture, implementing testing and validation of learning, and partnering with upper leadership to build relationships. Taking the time to build a culture of people and training with detailed systems and expectations will pay dividends in the future as they work to realign company standards and grow the company.

With the schedule, it is imperative that learning objectives are detailed and set for daily, weekly, and by-end-of training goals. A detailed schedule provides the structure and foundation to ensure that all new managers, regardless of their experience, will receive consistent training in all areas from hourly work groups to manager functions and leadership approaches that fit within the culture of the company. This structure helps not only the new manager, but the training manager, upper leadership and the training department validate those objectives are being met consistently.

A sample MIT schedule that outlines daily positional training, areas of study and testing is included in Appendix B. This is designed as a quick at-a-glance schedule and will be supplemented with a list of daily and weekly objectives outlined for each of the eight weeks of training. Together, these two systems will provide structure to the MIT program and keep them on track to accomplish all objectives by the end of training.

Appendix C outlines the daily and weekly objectives for week one of the MIT program. The top section lists tasks that the MIT should be exposed to and participate in each shift during the specified week. Below that there are columns that list tasks to accomplish, assigned reading materials, modules to watch and any written assignments for each specific day. There will be a detailed list of objectives for each of the eight weeks of training for new managers. While MITs are responsible for marking off this list, managers and upper leadership can use this to validate the MIT is moving through the program at the right pace and can have follow up discussions or demonstrations that will verify the MIT is retaining the required information.

Testing and validation is important to measure the success of the transfer of learning. While everyone may learn differently, it is important that every manager finishes the training with the same skillset and is able to effectively manage the restaurant. This can be done in a variety of ways. One recommendation would be to implement a learning management system to ensure the delivery of topics is consistent. A learning management system will also track completion of training modules and test scores, reducing the need for an individual to do so manually. Technology based learning including video modules, user-generated content and gamification will increase learner engagement and success rates. Another recommendation to validate learning is to determine and measure skills by demonstration of knowledge checks

throughout training. The restaurant industry is hands on, and it is imperative that new managers can perform tasks with confidence.

More than anything, Company XYZ, needs to cultivate a people culture, where individuals are valued, communication flows both ways between leaders and management, and mutual respect is shared. “Creating a company culture involves selecting a series of values that define both the company, itself and the products it stands to represent. As a leader, you need to encourage those values in your employees’ everyday behaviors” (Nichvalodoff, n.d., para. 10). One way to develop this culture is to utilize assessments to determine a manager’s natural leadership styles and strengths. These assessments will help leaders better understand each other and tailor their approach when communicating or training others. Assessments will also help build a culture around individual abilities, and improve communication, collaboration, and teamwork. It is with this foundation in place, that Company XYZ can build upon with a detailed manager training program in place. In time these components will make Company XYZ an employer of choice and launch their growth plans by having well trained leaders in place and a culture that supports collaboration, development, and opportunity.

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## **Appendix A**

### **Interview Questions**

1. What is your role in the training of restaurant managers?
2. How long is your current Manager in Training program?
3. What are the main components of the training program?
4. How many new Managers in Training is your company training annually?
5. How do you analyze retention of new manager trainees? What are the results?
6. Does the program differ for external candidates verses internal promotions? What is the mix of these groups?
7. What parts of your program are you most proud of?
8. Are there any skills lacking in newly graduated managers?
9. What part of the training has the most value?
10. Have you had to make any changes to your program because of COVID restrictions or needs?
11. If you could change your program, what would you do?











## Appendix B

## Sample MIT Schedule

MIT Schedule At-a-Glance							
MIT: DISc:		GM			Store		
WEEK	MON	TUES	WED	THURS	FRI	SAT	SUN
WEEK 1							
Orientation / Fry / Dish	1 OPEN Orientation Manager Shadow <i>Dish Courses</i>	1 OPEN Dish Study Fry Build <i>Fry &amp; Abbrev. Courses</i>	2 OPEN Fry <i>Salad / Taco Courses</i>	3 CLOSE Fry Study Taco Build <i>Clean Fryers</i>	4 CLOSE Fry Fry Test <i>Close Dish</i>	5	6
WEEK 2							
Salad / Grill	7 OPEN Taco Study Salad Builds	8 MID Taco Taco Test	9 OPEN Salad Salad Test <i>Grill Courses</i>	10 CLOSE Salad Study Grill Builds	11 MID Grill Burgers / Bowls / Study Sandwich / Prep Builds	12	13
WEEK 3							
Grill / Prep	14 OPEN Grill Burgers / Bowls / Grill Test	15 OPEN Prep <i>Prep Courses</i>	16 OPEN Prep Sandwich / Prep Test <i>ETO Courses</i>	17 CLOSE Prep - close grill cleaning Study ETO Position <i>Aloha Excercises</i>	18 MID ETO ETO Test <i>Take-out Audit</i>	19	#
WEEK 4							
BOH Mgmt Host / Server	21 OPEN BOH Mgmt / Tix times, Study Table Schematic <i>Host Courses</i>	# OPEN BOH Mgmt / Labor BOH Final <i>Busser Courses</i>	# OPEN Door Host/Busser Study Alcohol <i>Server Courses</i>	# CLOSE Server BOH Eval	# CLOSE Server Server Test <i>Bar Courses</i>	#	#
WEEK 5							
Manager / Bar	# OPEN Manager Study Alcohol <i>Open Busser Duties</i>	# OPEN Manager Manage Host Stand	# OPEN Bar	31 CLOSE Bar Bar Test	1 CLOSE Manager Manage Bar	2	3
WEEK 6							
Managment	4 OPEN Manager	5 OPEN Manager FOH Final Aloha Cheat sheet	6 OPEN Manager Manage Servers	7 CLOSE Manager FOH Eval (Line)	8 CLOSE Manager Take-out Audit	9	10
WEEK 7							
Management	11 OPEN Manager Ride Along with GM	12 OPEN Manager Dev Mtgs	13 OPEN Manager	14 CLOSE Manager Mgmt Final (Host Stand)	15 CLOSE Manager	16	17
WEEK 8							
Transition	18 OPEN with GM	19 OPEN with GM	# OPEN	21 CLOSE with GM	#	# CLOSE	#

## Appendix C

### Sample MIT Week One Objectives

<p>DAILY</p> 	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> Complete prep boards with Training Manager <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> Manage and record all temperature checks in kitchen <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> Review test strips for dish machine, fryers, and sanitizer buckets <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> Complete prep/work on line with station cook <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> Complete line schematic for fry station/taste product <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> Manage Daily Cost Control Sheet (waste, cooks meals, grab tests, cooling chart) <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> Update MIT Tracking and Recipe Checklists <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> Assign and follow up on completion of Maintenance Calendar <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> Study time (suggested 2-3 hours daily) <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> Introduce yourself to BOH and FOH employees <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> Can you recite our Goal?			
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			
<p>By end of week</p> 	<input type="checkbox"/> Explain proper food temps, danger zone, and holding temps. <input type="checkbox"/> Explain proper food rotation and storage. <input type="checkbox"/> Review 3 final exams & evals <input type="checkbox"/> Have GM add access to Hotschedules and Aloha <input type="checkbox"/> Contact IT for CTUIT login	<input type="checkbox"/> Begin reading Manager Operation Guide		<input type="checkbox"/> One Minute Manager <input type="checkbox"/> Complete Dish Outline <input type="checkbox"/> Complete Fry Outline <input type="checkbox"/> Prepare Development Meeting
<p>DAY</p> 	<input type="checkbox"/> Orientation Checklist <input type="checkbox"/> Shadow GM for lunch <input type="checkbox"/> Attend manager meeting <input type="checkbox"/> Print Food Safety & Sanitation InHouse Audit	<input type="checkbox"/> BOH Manual 1-Guest Service <input type="checkbox"/> BOH Manual 2-Safety and Sanitation <input type="checkbox"/> BOH Manual 3- Dish/ Maintenance	<input type="checkbox"/> Guest Service <input type="checkbox"/> Culture of Respect <input type="checkbox"/> BOH Safety <input type="checkbox"/> Dish Course	
<p>DAY</p> 		<input type="checkbox"/> BOH Manual 4-Fry	<input type="checkbox"/> Fry Course	<input type="checkbox"/> Highlight areas on FSS In House Audit that dishwasher impacts directly. Discuss with GM
<p>DAY</p> 	<input type="checkbox"/> Study Fry builds	<input type="checkbox"/> FOH Manual 4-Food Service		
<p>DAY</p> 	<input type="checkbox"/> Assist in cleaning and closing fryers <input type="checkbox"/> Print Expo Outline		<input type="checkbox"/> Expo 101	
<p>DAY</p> 	<input type="checkbox"/> Print Salad Outline <input type="checkbox"/> Work front side of expo line. Focus on garnishes, presentations and ticket times <input type="checkbox"/> Complete closing leftover counts with Prep <input type="checkbox"/> Assist in closing dish station		<input type="checkbox"/> Salad Course	<input type="checkbox"/> Pass Fry Build test <input type="checkbox"/> Fill out Development Discussion for next week's meeting with GM