

ESL class translates into confident workers

Money and time often are the greatest obstacles to independent restaurants and small regional chains that want to do more to train and educate their employees, especially those who wish to offer Spanish-speaking workers a chance to learn English.

Bob Chinn's Crab House in Wheeling, Ill., was not immune to those challenges, even though the popular seafood restaurant is ranked among the top-grossing restaurants in the country. Although the 650-seat establishment had more than \$22 million in sales last year, employee development of some 350 workers still is expensive.

However, HR magazine, the publication for the Society of Human Resource Management, recently recognized Bob Chinn's for its employee development program. The restaurant, owned by Bob Chinn and his daughter, Marilyn Chinn Le Tourneau, found help through the BizLink Network, a program sponsored by the Welfare to Work Partnership. The group is a nonprofit organization founded by businesses to help small and midsized companies recruit welfare recipients for jobs and retain disadvantaged workers.

BizLink paid for instructors who came to the restaurant in the morning to teach English as a Second Language along with food safety and sanitation classes in Spanish to more than 150 employees. Bob Chinn's paid the workers their hourly wage while they attended the classes.

Frank D'Angelo, general manager at Bob Chinn's, Mary Stevenson, HR director, and Alma Franco, HR administrator, recently discussed the success of the programs.

An employee development program usually focuses on making better workers. Why is Bob Chinn's program called "Striving for a Personal Best"?

D'Angelo: The goal was to have the employees learn a skill they did not have before, one that would not only benefit them while working with us but also take them anywhere they wanted to go. At first, the language class focused on restaurant terms, but then we expanded it to everyday terms. That way they can go to the grocery store, help their kids with homework and converse in English. We wanted to build their confidence and self-esteem.

What have been the results since you started the program?

Stevenson: They are more engaged; they are more involved in their work and with their co-workers. They feel much more a part of the team. We're not receiving complaints from customers; we're receiving compliments.

Franco: We're getting letters and people complimenting us as an employer. Our turnover is down. We're now at 30 percent for hourly workers.

Are the classes ongoing?

Franco: We have one 10-week ESL class that's over at the end of July, but we're working on getting another grant. We don't know yet if funding will be available for another class.

Stevenson: We hope the government sees the value in this and offers funding to businesses like ours.

— **Dina Berta**

NEWS DIGESTS

Survey says 75% of workers feel secure in jobs

ALEXANDRIA, VA. — Despite a weak economy 75 percent of employees feel secure in their jobs, according to a recent survey conducted by the Society for Human Resource Management.

The survey also found that the more secure employees feel about their jobs, the higher their level of job satisfaction, and, subsequently, the higher the levels of productivity and profitability.

SHRM conducted the survey to determine how job security impacts overall job satisfaction. The survey is a part of an ongoing series of studies on job satisfaction. The results were taken from the responses of 607 randomly selected human-resource professionals.

The top three factors respondents reported as providing them with the greatest sense of security included individual abilities and skills, the importance of their jobs to a company's overall success and length of service.

External factors, such as having poor lines of communication with management and layoffs, instead of personal attributes, contributed to feelings of job insecurity.

Cooking school changes name to reflect evolving role

BOULDER, COLO. — The Cooking School of the Rockies here recently changed its name to the Culinary School of the Rockies, reflecting the institute's evolving role from an educational program for home cooks to an accredited, nationally recognized career program.

The school, beginning in January 2004, no longer will offer classes for home cooks. Instead, it will focus on expanding courses for culinary entrepreneurs. The school recently added two new programs: Culinary Skills and the Business of Cooking.

Founded by Joan Brett in 1991, the school is accredited by the Council for Continuing Education and Training, which is recognized by the U.S. Department of Education.

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