

CHART Board Member Says, 'When It Rains, Train'

2008-06-11

Council of Hotel and Restaurant Trainers (CHART) board member John Alexander offers training strategies to help restaurant and hospitality operators thrive in an economic storm

As a follow-up to the March 2008 Council of Hotel and Restaurant Trainers (CHART) conference in Minneapolis, Minn., CHART Board Member John Alexander, Director of Sales, Southeast Region, for the National Restaurant Association Solutions (CHART Gold Sponsor), offers a three-point training strategy to help businesses thrive in an economic downturn. To hear the entire 20 minute interview (3 videos), visit www.chart.org.

Citing statistics from CHART's 75th Semi-Annual Hospitality Training Conference, where 46% of attendees said the training programs within their restaurant or hotel companies were somewhat to significantly affected by recent budget cutbacks and expense scrutiny, Alexander drives home the point that the key to beating the odds in a flailing economy, is to pay attention to staffing, training programs and standards.

While it is a knee-jerk reaction for operators is to cut back on training programs to save money, Alexander says this is risky, and one cutback can lead to a vicious cycle that looks like this:

'Less knowledgeable staff, lower standards, decline in customer satisfaction levels, drop in guests counts from dissatisfaction, negative work-of-mouth, poorly trained staff places great demand on high producers, high performing employees quit, difficult to find good replacements, especially if they're not provided proper training, revenue drops, further cutbacks.'

Alexander pointed to the latest numbers announced in the National Restaurant Association's Restaurant Performance Index, which show six of the eight economic indicators declined in March 2008 and 14% of restaurant owners surveyed are concerned about employee training and retention.

'Now is not the time to be 'penny wise and pound foolish', give the customers good value with every meal,' Alexander says, while supporting his strategies with examples by industry professionals. 'Maintain staffing levels. Nothing drives customers away faster than slow service.'

Alexander shared his insights in a 20-plus-minute teleconference with food industry consultant Judy Asman, a co-production of Restaurant Revolution, an industry information resource. Geared toward restaurant and hospitality industry professionals, Alexander's interview outlines the pitfalls of reacting to economic hardships by eliminating training programs.

To schedule an interview with John Alexander, contact Lisa Marovec at 312-405-2634, or Imarovec@ameritech.net.

CHART, a 700-plus-member non-profit professional association founded in 1970, is the leading resource for the development and advancement of hospitality training professionals.

Judy 'the foodie' Asman is an Orange County-Calif.-based food industry consultant, focusing on modern marketing strategies and coaching to empower small to mid-size businesses.

Restaurant Revolution is a Gainesville, Fla.-based online resource, covering the latest in restaurant marketing and business advancements.

This article comes from Hotel News Resource

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