

workforce. Not surprisingly, there's a direct correlation between job satisfaction and performance.

Although it will require diverting some time from other tasks, keeping your team abreast of "the big picture" is a great way to enlist help. Employees need feedback daily to let them know how they're doing in their work. And, quite frankly, not all of the financial and operating data needs to be confidential. By sharing such information as sales and portion costs, waste counts and the sales mix, you're educating the staff about the business. That, in turn, helps keep the job a bit fresher and multi-faceted. You can take it a step further by maintaining weekly progress charts to encourage good job performance.

Regardless of the "intangible" vehicles to foster employee satisfaction, management will inevitably

have to address labor costs—the second largest cost in any food facility. Hourly rates and salaries aside, there are some things a manager can do to minimize the exposure for unhealthy margins. One of the most common errors in creating a schedule is the tendency to accommodate the staff's needs rather than those of the business.

From a management perspective, however, the key is to think "ownership." When making schedules, consider the cost of the staff's hours. Each employee's rate of pay is multiplied by the hours scheduled to work. The total of all employee labor dollars for that week is then divided by the projected net sales for that coming week, yielding a theoretical labor cost percentage. Should volume be more or less than the projection, management can determine if they reacted appropri-

ately—that is, were hours cut or extended to handle the business.

Another revealing task is matching actual payroll hours to the scheduled hours for the same period. Don't be surprised if you discover that more hours were paid out than what was on the posted schedule.

Whether you operate a small snack stand or full-service dining and banquet facility, opportunities abound for anyone spirited enough to tame the food and beverage operation. By implementing some best practices and striving to streamline f&b procedures, owners can help make their businesses more profitable and, arguably, more fun. ☛

Mike Holtzman is the president of Profitable Food Facilities, a San Diego, California-based food and beverage consultancy. Since 1991, the company has worked with more than 200 clubs, golf courses, resorts, sportplexes and water parks.

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