

Staying the course...

Having a number of jobs during your working career seems to be part and parcel of the hospitality industry. In fact working for one employer may be the exception. Perhaps that's why reports that GEN Yers will have 12-15 jobs in their professional careers don't appear so shocking. While this might seem like quite a few for some occupations, the hospitality industry is fluid; college grads often have two to three positions in the first few years out-of-school!

Yet 12-15? Isn't that a bit much? What's driving this?

Recall - if you will - your first (assistant) manager position; I know I remember mine. I couldn't wait to get on the floor and make decisions – maybe make a difference. At first I was always scheduled with another, more senior manager. Once in a while I would have a two to three hour stint where I was the MOD. Over time I was finally given my own shift – but at that point I had a much better understanding of what needed to be done besides managing the guest experience – the grunt work if you will. This included taking inventory, assisting with food preparation, reviewing time cards and calculating daily labor cost, etc.

Eventually I became a general manager – but it was for a different company. At the time I didn't understand why my previous employer hadn't seen the light – and given me my “own” store. A few months in my new position - and many missteps later - I realized I still had a lot to learn.

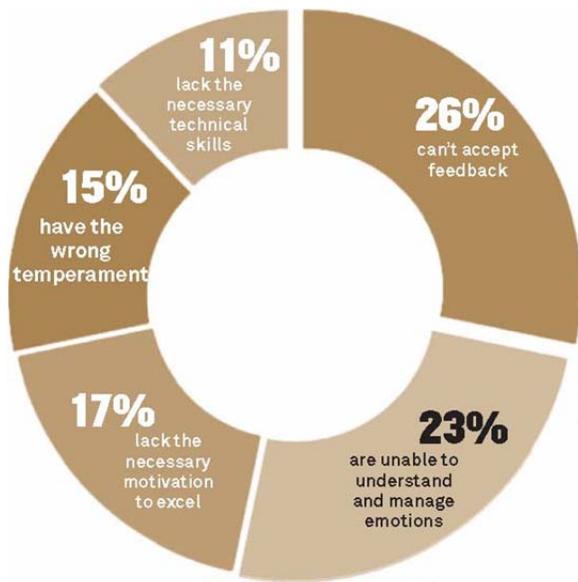
Back to the future – Recently we sent a survey to HTM alums re our program. The purpose was to gauge the preparedness, and to identify curricular strengths and weaknesses. To what extent they thought they were “where they should be” in their careers was one of the questions. Not unexpectedly perhaps, the most recent grads were the least satisfied. Could this be attributed to the same impulse that characterized my youth, or is it part of this generation's mindset?

So when is a person ready? Most of us are familiar with Burger King. I suspect we have eaten there more than once. The operation seems fairly straightforward – burgers, fries, and soda; by all accounts, a winning formula. But if you were a BK franchisee, would you hire a newly minted college grad to run a store for you? Let's rephrase the question – if you had a business that generated \$1.2 million in sales annually, would you turn it over to a recent college grad?

So when is a person ready reprise? According to a study by Leadership IQ, 46% of newly-hired employees will fail within 18 months. The study found that 26% of new hires fail because they can't accept feedback, 23% because they're unable to understand and manage emotions, 17% because they lack the necessary motivation to excel, 15% because they have the wrong temperament for the job, and only 11% because they lack the necessary technical skills.

Failure rate of newly-hired employees

46% of newly-hired employees will fail within 18 months



Source: Leadership IQ

Looking at the postings for managerial level positions gives some indication of what employers/companies are looking for. Here is one for Chili's Bar and Grill in Salt Lake City; the posting is for a Restaurant General Manager. The requirements are:

Results oriented Restaurant/Hospitality Manager with a minimum of two years General Manager Restaurant management (preferably in Full Service/Casual Dining) or retail management experience. High energy, a fun loving personality, leadership skills to inspire a team and, above all, the ability to create an unforgettable guest experience!

This bolsters our findings from a study we conducted a few years back. In that survey we found that the amount of time that managers in food service operations had been employed by their current employer was 5.6 years, and the average amount of time they had been in their current position was 2.9 years. This included managers at various levels - GMs, assistant managers, service managers, beverage managers, etc. While not the definitive answer most of us like, the information gives us some notion of the amount of time it might take. But there are other variables at play such as the size and scope of operations, and one's skills and abilities.

In the meantime, how can we prepare - nay improve - ourselves? Hopefully we are nurturing that at Purdue, and with a bit of luck we are instilling in students a passion for academic success as well as lifelong learning.

Given the extraordinary pace of change lifelong learning and professional development have become essential to maintain competency. Moreover, professional development is often required in many occupations. In accountancy, for example, *The Statement on Standards for Continuing Professional Education (CPE) Programs* indicates that:

An explosion of relevant knowledge, a changing and expanding nature, and increasing complexity characterize the profession of accountancy. Advancing technology, globalization of commerce, increasing specialization, proliferating regulations, and the complex nature of business transactions have created a dynamic environment that requires CPAs to continuously maintain and enhance their knowledge, skills and abilities. (Section 100.02)

Similarly, “Attorneys and judges (in Indiana) are required to attend at least 6 hours of approved Continuing Legal Education (CLE) per year and at least 36 hours of approved CLE per three-year cycle. Also, attorneys and judges are required to take at least 3 hours of ethics credit anytime within the three-year cycle.”

There are numerous opportunities for hospitality professionals to participate in professional development activities. Besides taking a class at a local community college, or finding one on-line, professional organizations offer lifelong learning opportunities. For example, the National Restaurant Association Educational Foundation (NRAEF) has career development programs. The certified Foodservice Management Professional (FMP) is one. This designation is a measure of professional achievement for food service managers; it recognizes those who have achieved a high level of knowledge, experience and professionalism. It may also be used as a “tool” to help the industry recruit, retain and reward qualified employees.

On the hotel side is the Certified Hotel Administrator (CHA). This designation is available to hotel general managers and hospitality executives through the American Hotel & Lodging Educational Institute (AHLEI); it recognizes a high level of expertise via education and experience.

At what point is an individual ready to manage?

“Stay the course,
light a star,
Change the world
Where'er you are.”

Your time will come. Your time will come.