

## *Case Study for Customer Service/Hospitality Training for Food Service Department at a Continuing Care Retirement Facility*

**This Continuing Care Retirement Community** has approximately 300 residents on its campus. These residents are separated by need:

- Independent Living – two buildings, 72 apartments each
- Assisted Living - 79 apartments
- Nursing Home care - 90 beds

The Food Service department serves three meals a day to all residents, or about 900 meals a day.

### **Challenges**

- Overall Food Service operation-
  - Culture was not strong, nor was leadership; roles were not adequately defined for managers making their jobs unclear.
  - Rest of organization thought that Food Service was “on its own island” when it came to customer service. Meaning that they were not following any of the policies or the culture of the rest of the organization.
  - Executive Chef had been recently terminated and they were searching for a replacement.
  - Food inventory was not being managed properly.
  - Staff would “play” one manager against another until they got their way
  - Managers would lead team meetings with negative things that the staff needed to improve upon rather than focusing on the positive items that were taking place in the facility and department.
- Front of House- Customer service issues with the staff-
  - Not engaging with the residents on a consistent basis
  - No recent training concerning proper service of meals- setting tables, serving/clearing plates, pouring beverages, etc.
  - No manager in charge of each of the dining facilities.
  - Poor attitude from some of the staff.
- Back of House-
  - Inventory systems were not kept on a consistent basis
  - No real organization of cooler, freezer, pantry space
  - Kitchen set up was inefficient for cooking, especially for short-order meals
  - Kitchen staff was disorganized when it came to different roles
  - Executive Chef was fired as I was starting my contract and needed to be replaced

Time frame for Consulting and Training – short term contract (3-6 months)

### **Objective**

- Create a plan of action to move the food service staff to understand and deliver the “\_\_\_\_\_Way” in terms of customer service, food quality and interaction with other team members and associates at \_\_\_\_\_.

### **Process**

- Mystery Shopping the Dining Facilities
- Wanted to create a different perception of the department and recommended that the Dining Facilities change their name of each of their four food service facilities to Restaurants. And it was recommended that they be named the \_\_\_\_\_ Restaurants. This was done to change the mentality and mindset for the residents. Going to a restaurant has a much different connotation/perception than going to the dining hall.
- Meeting with Management of Food Service to review what they were currently doing for front of house, back of house and kitchen operations.
- Reviewing all staff training and implementing new training to focus on culture, core values and developing a Mantra for the team
- Training staff to work better with each other as well as with other departments this CCRC facility by focusing on teamwork and attitude
- Training Front of House Staff on proper service to use every day, for every meal.
- Creating a plan of action for both Front of House and Back of House staffs on what tasks to focus on for each shift
- Training both the staffs and management team on delivering the Black Tie Customer Experience- focusing on the culture of the Food Service department, as well as putting plans in place a culture where the staff focuses on working with the residents and their guests to deliver a positive and memorable experience.

### **Management Team Deliverables**

Restructuring of jobs for both Front of House and Back of House employees.  
Assisting with job descriptions for all employees & revising systems and policies for both staff training, inventory management, cooking of meals.

- **Challenge-** Customer service for all dining halls was inconsistent and average; there was no formal training program in place for all Front of House/Wait staff personnel.
- **Solution-** Implemented a formal dining training program to increase the level of service in all the restaurants. This step by step training was given to all Front of House (Wait staff) and their managers. It was a program that took the participants through the entire process of the dining experience- from setting tables, to dinner service and clearing, to pouring beverages, etc. Also implemented was a system to provide greater efficiencies for the flow of the plate up of all the meals. This training program was an interactive, hands-on training where all employees had the opportunity to learn and practice these new skills.

- **RESULTS-** Plate up of meals was more efficient and cut down on time; formal dining service was appreciated by the residents and their guests as they felt that they were being treated like “royalty”; Dinner service was more consistent as employees were following through on principles that were taught to them.
- *Challenge-* Flow of work in kitchen was ineffective, especially the area for short order cooking.
- **Solution-** we rearranged the work space for this function, added an “order line” to keep all orders moving through the system quicker and added detailed information like time stamping to verify how long it took the order to be made and delivered.
- **RESULTS-** More efficient and effective times for short order meals moving through the kitchen and to the dining facilities.
- *Challenge-* Higher food and non-food costs due to poor inventory, poor organization of refrigeration, and freezer space, along with stock area, and inconsistent menu system.
- **Solution-** Reviewed menus, inventory controls, food and labor costs of entire operation. Worked with General Manager and Executive Chef to create systems for where all food would be placed. In the walk-in cooler for example, we took out one entire shelf to make room for temporary carts that would have food items on them.
  - We also organized all food items together and labeled them for all three areas to improve efficiency and utilize a “just in time” inventory system in all parts of kitchen.
  - Worked with the chef to revise menus to utilize the existing inventory on a more consistent basis, while making sure to adhere to the nutritional guidelines expected.
- **RESULTS-** These changes created more efficient operations for the major equipment. Food costs decreased and inventory was streamlined.
- *Challenge-* Lack of consistent systems for both Front of House and Back of House operations (includes prep work, scheduling of food, cleaning of kitchen and food service areas)
- **Solution-** Worked with managers for kitchen and restaurants to create, implement and put into practice new systems and policies to create a more efficient, safer, healthier, and more productive work environment.
- **RESULTS-** Work spaces in kitchen and restaurants were more efficient and cleaner. Work productivity increased as employees knew exactly what was expected on them for each shift. Employees were also cross trained in other jobs within both the Back of House and Front of House responsibilities. This resulted in making them more valuable to the department.

- *Challenge- Poor culture in Food Service Department and poor attitude amongst staff in department towards management and each other.*
- **Solution-** All staff participated in a training program on how to improve the workplace culture within the department. The training concentrated in three areas-
  - Having each staff member write out core values that they possessed as well as write out the function of their job (the “what) and their purpose of their job (the “why”). Then they would meet with their respective managers to discuss and create an action plan on how they were going to implement these concepts into the overall purpose of their department and their organization.
  - Each staff member was also asked to help create the “mantra” for the Food Service department. This team building exercise created a stronger team of people and got them to start trusting to work together in a more cohesive fashion.
  - This “mantra” was then voted upon by all team members and implemented as a part of their new workplace culture.
  - Soft skills training for Front of House and management personnel- Efforts concentrated on proper dress code and appearance, communication skills between residents as well as coworker and management, body language, and what it means to act and behave as a professional.
- **RESULTS-** As a result of this training, workplace culture dramatically improved, employee retention increased and attitude among the employees improved. Also, Managers were given instructions on how to carry forth this Mantra and incentives were given to staff that were following and practicing the Three Hearts Way. Morale was improving within the entire department.
- *Challenge- Management team was inconsistent in their leadership skills.*
- **Solution-** Training for the management team only where ideas and techniques were discussed and practiced on hold to practice both appreciation and accountability on a daily and weekly basis.
  - Weekly meetings were implemented between General Manager and each individual manager where job duties were discussed and proper operational procedures were instituted and implemented.
  - Management team was also given direction on how they were to be the “face” of their restaurants (or the kitchen) in order to create a friendlier atmosphere with the residents and their families.
  - Managers were also asked to create an information sheet on each resident. This sheet was to highlight the likes of the residents.
- **RESULTS -** Managers were more focused on their departments and working with their teams. Employees became more engaged with residents and other employees. Negative comments from residents about the service and food decreased.



- General Manager of the Food Service Department improved her supervisory and leadership skills in a very productive way.
- Executive Chef who was promoted from within, became a better manager for her team, became empowered to lead her team, and became better engaged with the residents.

UPDATE- October, 2017- The Food Service Department just received a perfect score (0.00) on their evaluation from the state of Ohio. This was for both their kitchens in their four restaurants and for their main food production kitchen.