

## Connecting With the Community: Three Success Stories

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Very often in my communication with the local hospitality community, a common complaint from employers is that revenue could always be better. We also frequently discuss how to hire the right person for the right job. Historically, the hospitality industry has been known for its high turnover rate, particularly in lodging, freestanding restaurants, and quick-service concepts. Personally, I have worked in concepts where employees have either stayed decades or where there has been extensive turnover. What makes an employee want to stay at their job for an extended period of time and how does it impact the hospitality industry? According to the Incentive Performance Center:

([http://www.incentivecentral.org/employees/whitepapers/motivation\\_in\\_the\\_hospitality\\_industry.1903.html](http://www.incentivecentral.org/employees/whitepapers/motivation_in_the_hospitality_industry.1903.html)),

“Employee turnover within the U.S. fast-food and hotel industries costs those industries in the neighborhood of \$140 billion annually. In more bite-sized terms, it will cost roughly 100% to 200% of an employee’s base salary to recruit and train a replacement. Although the turnover rate for these industries hovers between 78.3 percent and 95.4 percent on a national basis, some fast-food restaurants and hotels experience much lower rates, and have significantly greater success retaining employees. Overall, higher levels of motivation and motivated performance translate into a 53 percent reduction in worker turn over.”

With this in mind, retention should be the ultimate goal, as it results in cost effectiveness and employee satisfaction. In terms of clarification and to challenge some of the national statistics, I spoke with three long-time employees of the Hilton Garden Inn in Redding, California. They each have remained with the hotel since its early days of opening.

**Jerry Scherer**, one of the Hilton Garden Inn’s original employees, started in a line-level position in the kitchen. He worked his way up to kitchen manager, and is now responsible for scheduling, food preparation, menu development, purchasing, receiving, and catering banquet functions on property. He was a graduate of the Shasta College Culinary Arts program and says his education gave him the necessary “organizational skills” to do his job. When I asked why he had stayed in a job so long, especially with the industry not being known for employee longevity, Jerry gave high marks to the management company, Rim Corporation <http://www.rimhospitality.com/>. He also mentioned that the kitchen crew was cohesive. Employees work well with each other and help each other. He also said it was a good place to come to work to every day. And, although the property is on its third general manager, a key group of employees still remains as a positive force in promoting excellent guest service.

**Dara Grove** graduated from the Shasta College Culinary Arts program in 2002. Prior to working at the Hilton Garden Inn, she worked with Shasta Regional Medical Center in Redding, and dealt with the nutritional needs of in-house patients. She said prior to joining the Hilton, she cooked in an institutional environment for about six years. Once she moved to the hotel, her prior experience at a healthcare facility enabled her to easily honor special food requests from restaurant patrons. Now a full-time employee at the Hilton Garden Inn for four years, Dara is a shift leader. Her responsibilities include

assisting with the breakfast and lunch shift at The Great American Grill in the hotel. Specifically, her duties include food preparation, inventory, and food ordering. Dara reported that her co-workers at the hotel are very much like family. They often socialize outside of workplace, as well as help each other out during work. She cites the people she works with and the accessible location as her main motivation for staying with the Hilton.

**Kathrine Lee** has been employed at the Hilton Garden Inn for the last four years and also completed all of the Culinary Arts courses at Shasta College. Kathrine's focus has been in front-of the house operations. She has gained experience in front desk operations, banquets, and restaurant service. This versatility will be an asset if she seeks a future management position in a food and beverage or lodging operation. Kathrine stated, "I've never had a job like this before. Your opinion matters here. Management supports employee ideas and listens. Of the three general managers, our current GM has been the most supportive." Kathrine mentioned that current management has allowed her to be more creative with the set-up and organization of banquet functions.

From a management perspective, high turnover costs money when factoring in the training time, hiring, advertising and potential new employee errors. Keeping long-term employees such as Jerry, Dara, and Kathrine in your organization translates directly into increased productivity, profitability, and guest satisfaction. It is a simple and inexpensive formula: treat your employees well and they will treat the organization well.

On a final note, Kathrine informed me that the current General Manager, Scott Kelly, has helped bring new business to the hotel which has in turn increased opportunities for employees. The hotel has a great safety track record, too. They've gone 1,275 days without an employee accident. Great employees are a reflection of caring leadership and that combination leads to success. It's satisfying to know the important role Shasta College has played in enabling Jerry, Dara, and Kathrine to make such a successful connection.

For more information on motivation of employees in the workplace, I would recommend the following sites:

<http://www.ttgconsultants.com/articles/MotivatingEmployees.html>

[http://www.nfib.com/object/IO\\_31121.html](http://www.nfib.com/object/IO_31121.html)

[http://www.hotel-online.com/News/PR2003\\_4th/Dec03\\_RetainEmployees.html](http://www.hotel-online.com/News/PR2003_4th/Dec03_RetainEmployees.html)