

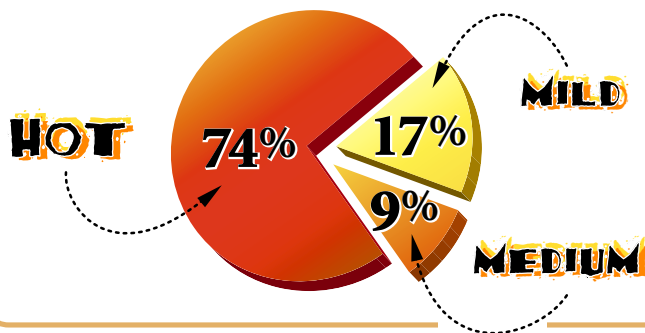
Sizzlin' News

Wings Are Hot!

According to a review by Food Beat, Inc. of the Top 200 chain menus in use the first half 2006, wings continue to reign as the most frequently mentioned appetizer. In fact, in the past two years, the mention of wings on appetizer menus has increased 35% with 80 chains in their top 200 database now offering wings as an appetizer.

When it comes to the heat index, wings are also hot...and spicy where the mention of hot or spicy wings outpaces the mention of mild or medium three to one.

Heat Index for Wings as Appetizers and on Sampler Platters, 1st Half 2006



Take a look at some wings varieties:

Habañero Wings — Crispy fried and tossed in a spicy habañero pepper barbecue sauce, \$8.99 — *Bahama Breeze*

Lucky Nickel Buffalo Wings — Choice of 1 dozen regular or fireball with Scotch Bonnet pepper sauce, \$6.99 — *Charlie Brown's Steakouse*

Jumbo Baja Chicken Wings — Tossed in honey and Cholula Hot Sauce. Served with blue cheese dressing and fresh celery, \$7.49 — *Don Pablo's*

Smokin' Hot Grilled Wings — Two skewers of grilled wings with a smoking hot chipotle sauce flavored with Tabasco, \$6.99 — *Logan's Roadhouse*

Asian Glazed Wings — Tender chicken wings fried and tossed in sweet and hot ginger sauce. Serve with blue cheese dressing and crunchy celery, \$7.49 — *Ruby Tuesday*

Did you know...

...that the top most frequently mentioned appetizers on chain menus in the 1st half 2006 were:

- Wings
- Shrimp
- Samplers
- Chicken Strips/Tenders
- Quesdailles
- Cheese Sticks
- Spinach Artichoke Dip
- Nachos
- Bread/Breadsticks/Garlic Bread
- Onion Load/Blossom/Petals/Rings

Source: Food Beat, Inc.

The 5 Firsts of Hourly Employee Retention

With the labor pool shrinking, sources of new hourly recruits are drying up.

First impressions are lasting. Newly hired, hourly employees are not. Before they've been on the job just six months, more than 50% are gone. Some were probably not a good fit for the job in the first place, but some productive, dependable, hard-to-replace employees bolt as well. And contrary to what they may tell you, they didn't really leave for more money.

"More money" is just a polite way of saying they were unhappy and went looking elsewhere for what we all want from our jobs — a sense of accomplishment, some personal recognition and the "can do" teamwork environment that makes us look forward to getting out of bed in the morning.

So what happens between the new hire's enthusiastic acceptance of a job offer and the day they leave? In a nutshell, the employee's supervisor spends most of each day firefighting — dealing with difficult employees and the problems they create. The dependable, self-directed people are left to fend for themselves, often because they can. It's the "squeaky wheel" syndrome and there's only so much oil to go around.

This wasn't much of a concern years ago when hourly employees were considered replaceable cogs in a perpetual wheel, but the labor pool is shrinking and sources of new hourly recruits are drying up. Now, more than ever, employee retention is crucial to customer satisfaction and bottom line results.

The good news is that keeping good people on board doesn't require a lot of time. It does require small doses of quality time that make the most of those lasting first impressions:

1 The First Hour on the Job

Use the first hour to make the best first impression possible. This is not the time for completing paperwork or going over safety rules. This is the time to make introductions and to make the person feel welcome and comfortable. It's the time to explain why the job is important and how job performance will affect customers and co-workers alike. This is the time to encourage the person to ask questions and to give them the answers they need to feel they'll fit in. Ask if they have any concerns or worries and then do whatever it takes to relieve them. Take the time to share a little of the company's history so the new person feels like part of the family.

2 End of the First Day

Your new employee is reeling from a day filled with the unfamiliar—a new environment, new people, new policies and procedures, and new responsibilities. This is the time for the supervisor to spend the last 15 minutes of that first day debriefing, answering questions and ensuring the new hire leaves with a positive impression. Once home, the employee will inevitably be asked: "How was your day?" Your goal is for the answer to be: "Great! It seems like a great place to work." It would be even more effective if the supervisor could do this once more before the end of the first week.

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3 End of the First Week

At the end of the first week, the manager or a representative from Human Resources needs to get with the new employee to find out how the week went. This meeting is also an opportune time to:

- Find out why they left their last job and why they took the job with your organization. This informal market research also helps reinforce in their minds that they made the right “buying decision.”
- Ask for new employee referrals by saying, “There must have been some other great people over at the company you just left. Of all those you worked with over there, who would you like to see working with you over here?” Find out why they think that person would be good and what they think it would take to get them to change jobs. Having an employee referral reward program in place gives you more leverage.

4 First Paycheck

Even though most companies use direct deposit, the majority of first paychecks don't get deposited that way and if we mess up any paycheck this is usually the one. If possible, make an end run around this potential problem and present the first paycheck to the new employee in person. If this isn't possible, present the direct deposit slip to the new employee in one of these two ways:

- If the new employee has been great, this is the time to tell him or her what a pleasure it has been to have them on board (be specific about what they have accomplished) and tell them they have really earned their check. Thank you doesn't cut it. Be specific.
- If the person has not lived up to expectations, now is the time to tell them that you wanted to personally hand them their first paycheck, but you feel they have only earned 75% of it and the specific reasons why. This is an easy conversation the first pay period, but gets more difficult the longer they are with you.

5 First Year Anniversary

If you ask any group of 100 people what day they started work for their employer, 96% can tell you. That must mean the day is an important one to most people. One of the other keys to keeping great employees is to create times of fun and camaraderie. Look for reasons to celebrate. One of the obvious ones is an employment anniversary. Some companies or departments have one celebration each month that includes birthdays and employment anniversaries.

In others, both anniversaries and birthdays are acknowledged by a card and small gift—a gift certificate, an afternoon off, movie passes, etc. It's not so important what specifically is done, it's the acknowledgement and encouragement that count.

First impressions really are lasting, but too many employers still hold to the old-world view that it is up to their employees to impress them, and that still holds true. But it would be to your advantage if it were a reciprocal agreement. Get out in front of the curve and take these five first opportunities to impress every new hourly employee with the respect, acknowledgement, and appreciation that keeps them motivated and on your team. **FB**

Source: Convenience Store Decisions