Author shares tips for creating employee loyalty

By Amy Garber

Creating a workplace community where employees feel valued and have fun can help foodservice operators capitalize on changes in America's work ethic, according to John B. Izzo, a best-selling author and longtime speaker on leadership.

During a lively session called "Values Shift: The New Work Ethic" held at the National Restaurant Association Restaurant, Hotel-Motel Show here, Izzo detailed six values that he believes can build employee loyalty:

"Why does it matter if you have an engaged staff?" Izzo asked attendees at the show. "Because people who like to work for you want to stay, and they help build customer loyalty."

Izzo, a former Presbyterian minister who has combined his spiritualism with leadership development, insisted that turnover rates are a predictor of a restaurant's sales potential. He cited a Taco Bell study that found the restaurants with the lowest turnover generated sales 50 percent higher than the chain's average. Izzo's other foodservice and hospitality clients range from Marriott Hotels and Coca-Cola to Fairmont Hotels and RHM Restaurant Group.

In explaining the first shifting workplace value, he said employees expect to be treated like partners at work.

"People want involvement and a stake in the company," Izzo said. "They have little tolerance for hierarchy and meaningless processes."

More than 60 years ago, about 2 percent of Harvard's graduate class said they would consider starting their own business, according to Izzo. Today it is the No. 1 career choice for those under 30, he said.

Izzo explained that two of the most cited reasons workers quit their jobs on the front line is because they were not recognized and because they thought their bosses didn't care about their opinions.

In order to stop that from becoming a problem, Izzo suggested that operators ask their employees on a daily basis what they think.

"Start on Day 1 and build listening into your structure," Izzo advised. "Do rounding and ask purposeful questions to get answers."

He pointed out how such restaurant chains as Hardee's and such hotel groups as Ritz-Carlton empower their staffs to find solutions to customer service problems.

"Southwest Airlines has been asking its employees for 20 years how it can save money," said Izzo, who wrote the books "Awakening Corporate Soul" and "Values Shift."

On another shift, Izzo noted that the days of employees shying away from socializing with their co-workers are gone. People are looking for a sense of community in their jobs, he added.

"Today a large majority of people now make their friends at work," he explained, adding that in 1975 most employees didn't socialize with people from work.

However, the recent shift translates into a need for a daily "expression of caring from managers" about their personal lives, according to Izzo, who added that people want "to develop a support network that contributes to personal and professional development."

He told show attendees that in creating loyal employees, it is important to develop a fun environment. Izzo (Continued on page 105)

http://www.nrn.com
Author shares tips for creating employee loyalty

(Continued from page 98)

suggested that operators make it a habit to take their team members out to dinner and “don’t talk about work. Ask them about their families, their histories and their hobbies. Get to know them as a person.”

Izzo also recommends incorporating a sense of community into staff meetings by highlighting personal achievements outside of work, for example mentioning that someone’s son won a regional soccer tournament last weekend.

A third workplace shift focuses on the expectation of growth and development. As Izzo explained to attendees, “work is more a part of people’s social identity than it ever was before. Employees want to learn and develop.”

He pointed out that the key to job growth starts during the hiring phase. For example, he said, “The Phoenix, a luxury resort in Scottsdale, Ariz., asks job candidates during the interview process what their passions are ‘because they won’t hire anyone who doesn’t have a passion for food.’

Izzo told restaurant operators to ask themselves this question: Are you hiring people into jobs that fit their specific skills? He advised them to “hire people into jobs that they love and that are good fits for their natural gifts in life?” He added, “train people to create an experience.”

In a fourth evolving work ethic, employees no longer are willing to sacrifice their personal lives for a career. Today there is a demand for balance and synergy with their jobs, according to Izzo. Both men and women want job flexibility to have a life outside of work.

He pointed out that the Tim Hortons chain from Canada airs television commercials targeted at attracting working mothers by plotting that “we love shifts that work for you.” Izzo said other restaurant chains have dubbed these the “mommy shifts,” which are typically the hours that children are in school.

A fifth evolution on the job is the expectation that “work has a noble cause,” according to Izzo, who noted that “people want to be involved in worthy causes” and they want to take pride in their workplace. He noted, for example, how Starbucks has created an image that its coffeehouses are “a cool place to work.” Izzo told attended to “sell your restaurant’s story when you are interviewing or hiring.”

The sixth changing workplace value is the expectation of trust. Employees want corporate openness, which includes honest business practices, according to Izzo. In concluding his presentation, Izzo said: “People don’t leave organizations. They leave managers.” He advised that all restaurant operators keep that in mind when dealing with their staffs.

It’s not the big things in life that make the difference,” Izzo said. “Pay attention to the small things.”