RESTAURANT WORKPLACE CULTURE GUIDE
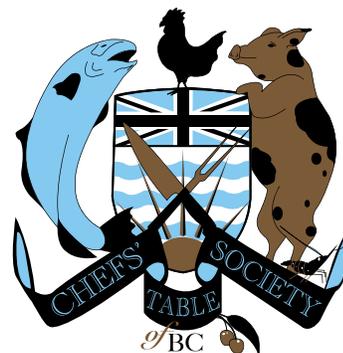
Proactive Strategies for Owners and Operators

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Chefs' Table Society of BC (CTS) received funding from the Ministry of Post Secondary Education and Future Skills to work with a minimum of 95 small and medium sized restaurants across the province one-on-one to develop hands-on solutions to the current challenges with regards to workplace culture. In surveying and speaking to operators, CTS developed a toolkit of resources, templates and best practices for supporting positive, people first workplace cultures and stronger recruitment and retention.

Resilience Through Culture Shift

The past several years have shown just how quickly the ground can shift for restaurant operators in BC. From labour shortages to global disruptions, the industry has weathered challenge after challenge with little certainty about what might come next. In this environment, the best strategy is to strengthen what you can control: clear systems, strong workplace culture, and people-focused practices. This Workplace Culture Guide is designed to help operators organize internally, build resilience, and prepare their teams and businesses to adapt—no matter what the future brings.

Changing Operational Landscape

By 2022, 95% of foodservice operators in Canada were facing staffing shortages, with job vacancies more than double pre-pandemic levels (Restaurants Canada – Restaurant Outlook Q2 2022). A year later, 66% of operators were still carrying COVID-related debt while also dealing with rising costs and reduced revenues (Restaurants Canada – Restaurant Outlook Q2 2023).

The pandemic forced restaurants to adapt quickly to lockdowns, reduced capacity, and fluctuating demand—all while managing financial instability and loan repayments. Employees faced equally heavy pressures: heightened health risks, burnout, and widespread uncertainty. Many experienced professionals chose to leave the industry or shift into roles that offered greater stability, flexibility, and balance.

At the same time, social media has transformed how restaurant experiences are shared. Guest frustrations, service reviews, and employee perspectives now circulate widely and instantly, influencing public perception and shaping workplace reputations long after the fact.

In this environment, prospective employees are more discerning. They seek employers who demonstrate supportive workplace culture, prioritize mental health, and provide fair pay and career growth. Larger chains often have the advantage, as they are proactive in communicating their story and values.

Looking ahead, uncertainty remains the constant. Economic pressures, shifting employee expectations, and rapid changes in technology will continue to shape the industry. For independent operators, the path forward lies in building internal resilience—establishing systems, culture, and practices that can withstand disruption and make restaurants stronger.

In addition to this guide, we have developed an ONLINE ASSESSMENT TOOL that will be available to support operators into the future. If you are looking for directed help or specific tools, take seven minutes to complete the onboarding form at chefs-table-evaluation.web.app When you complete the form, the tool will automatically generate a list of which of our resources are best suited to your operation today.

Building Competitiveness Through Workplace Culture

Small and medium-sized restaurants often struggle to compete with larger chains that have more resources to promote their workplace culture and attract staff. The Workplace Culture Guide addresses this gap by offering practical tools to help operators formalize policies, clarify values, and create consistent practices across their teams.

By taking the time to articulate business values and embed them in Codes of Conduct, Orientation, Training, and Development, operators can professionalize their culture without losing their unique identity. While some may see this as too "corporate," many of the restaurants we worked with found that investing in a clear people playbook paid off—especially with younger workers who value transparency, fairness, and growth opportunities.

This guide makes this process easier. With links to customizable templates and time-saving resources, operators can move beyond reactive practices and build resilient systems that strengthen retention, improve recruitment, and support long-term success. As guest expectations, workforce values, and economic pressures continue to evolve, these tools help small and medium-sized restaurants stay competitive and adaptable for the future.

→ View our comprehensive list of AVAILABLE TEMPLATES here.

PUTTING THIS GUIDE INTO PRACTICE

This Workplace Culture Guide is designed as a collection of the learnings, tools, templates and resources that were compiled after speaking with operators, hearing their stories and helping them progress workplace culture tasks that have been on the "nice to do" list to the "must do" list.

Everything we developed and included here arose from a conversation with an operator who had an idea of something they needed but didn't know where to look to find the resources or have the time to craft something custom. The goal isn't that each restaurateur that uses this guide will read it cover to cover or deploy all the strategies suggested. Rather, the goal is to have straight forward tools available and accessible so that each restaurant's custom needs can be accommodated.

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Chefs' Table Society of BC is based in Vancouver on the unceded territories of the xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), Sḵwx̱wú7mesh (Squamish), and səlilwətaɬ (Tsleil-Waututh) people. We are on a journey to learn more about First Nations cooking and ingredients - and we look forward to sharing our passion for the food of our lands with others who share this journey.

PROJECT OVERVIEW

The **Metro Vancouver Restaurant Labour Shortage Report and Recommendations** from 2018 starts out "The restaurant business is fast-paced. To ensure that every customer is served promptly and as ordered, every member of every team—wait staff, kitchen, front of house, back of house, etc.—must work together to pull off miracles every day." This couldn't be more true today. It encapsulates the essence of the restaurant industry's unique challenges grappling with evolving consumer demands, rising operational costs and the extraordinary effort it takes from each and every team to deliver outstanding hospitality.

While delivering exceptional service is still the cornerstone of British Columbia's outstanding restaurant industry, the experiences of a global pandemic have underscored another vital truth: success starts with how we treat the people on our teams. As a result, it is no longer enough for employers to expect their employees to come together each day to make miracles happen; they must create environments where employees feel valued, respected, and supported so that they commit to working together to make those miracles happen. It sounds the same but it's quite different.

Speaking to small and medium sized employers across the province, we consistently found that prioritizing workplace values and beliefs and expressing those through the workplace culture and a strong people playbook positions businesses to step forward and become an employer of choice. While higher wages are undeniably important, it's the workplace culture that can make a significant difference to how employees experience work and how they feel about their employer.

What we've learned from 95 restaurant meetings:

- **Fostering open communication and showing genuine care** for team members are no longer optional - they are non-negotiable for building resilient, thriving restaurant workplaces.

- **Respect and positivity** in the workplace aren't just moral imperatives; they are the cornerstones of attracting and retaining the talent, which is critical for long-term success.

- **Work-life balance** is a key driver of employee satisfaction and performance. Proactive, thoughtful shift scheduling sends a powerful signal that employees' time and talent are respected and valued.

- **Meaningful recognition and clear pathways for growth** are essential to sustaining long-term connections between employers and employees. People who see real opportunities for advancement and learning feel valued and are more likely to stay.

- **Access to mental health resources** is increasingly critical for both managers/leaders and frontline team members. It's a consistent priority across the province, regardless of business size or location.

- **Wrap around benefits** like meals during shifts, Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs) or community benefits - signal a deeper commitment to employees' well-being and can make a significant impact on retention and morale.

Clear and concise expectations are essential to fostering a positive workplace culture. You don't need an HR professional, but you do need a people plan—and the discipline to follow through. That's why we are using this Guide to Culture Shift to encourage restaurants to develop a playbook rather than just a handbook. A handbook documents policies, but a playbook ensures those policies and procedures are consistently executed. The shift in wording is designed to put the emphasis on how best practices can turn into daily habits that positively shape workplace culture.

We recognize that a positive culture alone doesn't eliminate the challenges of long hours and a fast-paced environment. However, it can reshape the employee experience and show employees that they're valued not just as workers, but as respected contributors to a shared goal and shared success.

For the purposes of this project, we use terms as follows:

Workplace Culture is the shared set of values, beliefs, behaviours, and practices that shape how employees interact, perform, and collaborate in their workplace. It reflects the organization's priorities, leadership style, and environment and influences employee satisfaction, engagement, and overall productivity.

People (or Employee) Playbook is the game plan for how people are guided to perform their roles effectively within the organization's culture. It's action oriented and combines the formal documents that outline the policies, procedures and expectations for employees with best practices and strategies for implementing these successfully. It takes the Human Resources handbook to the next level by being dynamic, engaging and culture-driven. It moves guiding policies into actionable plans and staff training that helps people succeed and respond in their day-to-day work. The playbook creates a template of shared understanding of how things are done within the particular restaurant business with regards to how to approach their role, how to interact with guests and how to collaborate as a team.

Restaurants and Eateries are the broad terms that we use to include all types of food and beverage establishments where food and/ or drinks are prepared, served, and enjoyed—restaurants, cafés, coffee shops, tea houses, diners, bakeries, catering companies and food trucks. We chose this inclusive wording because the toolkit is designed to have broad based use by all types of establishments in the sector.

Within the set of restaurants we consulted, we have a strong mix of:

- Single unit independent operators with small-medium staff teams.
- Businesses with two or more locations of the same concept with their own small staff teams.
- Businesses with two or more locations of different concepts with their own staff teams.
- Businesses with a single large footprint and large staff cohort.
- Seasonal businesses. Restaurants that have an annual staffing up period will benefit from hiring and recruiting strategies as they have larger annual hiring drives than year-round businesses.
- Businesses that offer catering and have a large team of casual workers and do operations off site from their core business location.

The single biggest group of businesses has been stand-alone one-unit small to medium operators that are interested in finding out about best practices in people policies that can improve their operations. Some have policies in place and want to share what is working for them. Others are revamping programs or starting fresh and are looking for everything from the ground up. A majority have a few things that are working for them but have areas within their people playbook that will benefit from additional support.

In the pages to come, we have links to templates for clear policies and procedures that can be customized by any style of restaurant or eatery. This includes a checklist for a thorough **Orientation Package** that ensures new team members understand their roles, responsibilities, and how they fit into the larger team and a template for a **Code of Conduct** that reinforces the standards for the behaviour, professionalism, and mutual respect that are key to the workplace culture.

Setting the tone for shared understanding and expectations, we've provided templates for a **Setting Expectations for New Workers** document, a **Respectful Workplace Policy** and two different **Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Belonging** sample policies. Our **Bullying and Harassment Policy** template not only defines these behaviours (what they are and what they aren't) but also how incidents that are reported will be investigated and managed by leadership. Each of these documents can play a role in helping your business capture your values and beliefs in a tangible way that sets a tone for how people present themselves and how they treat each other at work. This emphasis on clear, shared expectations is especially important for aligning with the values of next-generation workers, who prioritize transparency, respect, and a sense of belonging in the workplace.

All of our tools and templates are as much about how leadership commits to treating everyone who walks through the doors each day as they are guides to how people should behave to get the most out of their work experience.

> *"Without a playbook, you're flying blind. Every crisis hits harder. And while you're scrambling to figure out what's next, the restaurant with a stronger plan is stealing your customers. The truth is, we get so deep in the daily grind of running the place that we forget to look up and think ahead.*
>
> *The one with a playbook? They're anticipating. They've got a pipeline for hiring, a marketing calendar that keeps them front-of-mind, and a clear sense of what makes them different. When things go sideways, they don't flinch. They adjust. They adapt. Because they're not guessing, they're building."*
>
> *- **Canada's Restaurant Guy,** Jay Ashton*

PROJECT LEADERSHIP: CHEFS' TABLE SOCIETY OF BC

When the **Chefs' Table Society of BC (CTS)** was founded more than 20 years ago, the idea of the society was to promote the sustainability of local BC-based food and beverage so that as the restaurant industry grew, so would the emerging BC food and agriculture scene. The thought was that the ingredients would tell our unique story. With that clear local focus, chefs and restaurateurs got together to create a platform for regional excellence with events like the Spot Prawn Festival https://spotprawnfestival.com/ and the Wild Salmon Celebration. Over the years, CTS published two cookbooks that featured recipes from a wide stable of BC chefs using BC ingredients to empower and inspire the home cook.

Over 20 years, as CTS has seen the platform for BC ingredients grow, we identified the need to start a new conversation around what sustainability means. The heart of the conversation is: What are we doing to help sustain the workers who craft these fantastic local ingredients into great dishes?

Many supporting questions powered CTS board discussions:

- How can CTS contribute to fulfilling careers, personal and professional growth?
- How can people who find their passion in food and hospitality stay longer in jobs they love?
- Can we empower our colleagues to have open and honest conversations about mental health at work?

Out of these conversations CooksCamp https://cookscamp.ca/ was born. The two-day event is a platform for restaurant professionals to invest in people development while feasting on the bounty of BC.

> This Guide allows the CTS to take the next step toward industry sustainability. Through the project's province-wide engagement, CTS worked directly with operators to identify real needs and respond with practical tools and strategies that empower the industry and its operators from within.

With the help of the board, the project Governance Committee and industry experts, the project team of Shawna Gardham and Samantha Scholefield led the direct outreach to the industry. Through discussions, small or medium sized restaurants across the province shared their stories: some operators connected to share their stories of people successes and others reached out because they are looking for specific tools to start their journey to a stronger workplace culture.

With this guide, we aim to equip small and medium-sized restaurant employers with the tools to build a strong people plan and create a custom playbook for developing and training their teams. Our goal is to help restaurants and eateries formalize clear commitments to team support, work-life balance, and success—ensuring expectations aren't just written in policies but actively put into practice by the leaders/managers. Our collection of free resources is designed to be easy to access and implement, so restaurant owners can quickly integrate them and build up their workplace culture in a way that attracts, retains, and empowers great people. We hope that by having the documents be customizable and the best practice processes be repeatable that it will help to free up time for owners and operators to help build other aspects of their business.

We acknowledge the contribution of all the talented, enthusiastic owners/operators/leaders/professionals who participated in this project for sharing their passion for hospitality, for helping us understand a diversity of operational needs and for showing us how to create broad-based tools that will help others around the province.

The industry leaders who joined our Governance Committee (Margot Baloro, Pepe Barajas, Robert Belcham, Johnny Bridge, Cindy Conti, Eva Gates, Steve Lewis and Melody McLorie) made this project possible with their thoughtful guidance, insight, industry knowledge and lived-experience.

True to CTS' approach, every project begins with setting the menu and the table. **The menu** in this case includes many tools, templates and best practices—none of which will disappoint for their clear vision, defined goals, and the actionable steps they support towards sustainable, people-focused workplaces. **The table** here is where collaboration happens, where we bring together diverse voices, resources, and expertise to turn the vision into reality.

We are pleased to have worked alongside the talented team of regional Human Resources consultants from go2HR. With experts around the province, we were able to connect each restaurant with a person in their region that can support them over the long term with solutions and suggestions at the end of an email or a phone call.

If you don't know about go2HR, we recommend you check out their Human Resources advisory services at https://www.go2hr.ca/human-resources/hr-advisory

Putting people first is an ongoing process.

We invite everyone who reads this guide to please share any feedback. If we have missed something or you have ideas to help support other operators on their journey to build a stronger, more robust workplace culture, please email **ed@chefstablesociety.com**.

14 WORKPLACE CULTURE SHIFT IDEAS

The following 14 Workplace Culture Shift Ideas offer fresh approaches—and creative twists on proven strategies—to help restaurants and eateries stand out as employers of choice. These ideas are designed to be practical, adaptable, and easy to implement, whether you're looking to improve team morale, streamline operations, or invest in tools that foster a more supportive work environment.

We're starting here because small shifts can lead to big results. Even putting a few of these ideas into action can help you strengthen your team, improve retention, and create a workplace where people want to stay, grow and thrive.

Visit **CHEFSTABLESOCIETY.com**
for a comprehensive list of

→ AVAILABLE TEMPLATES

1. Know and promote your company core values

Making the effort to clearly outline your core beliefs and sharing them with your employees and prospective employees will help you to create a cohesive team motivated by the same goals. Each restaurant has company values—it's often a question of highlighting and prioritizing them. This can be achieved through defining your core values in a stand-alone statement or in a Code of Conduct.

Example of Core Values Statement

At [Restaurant Name], our values guide every plate we serve, how we support our team members, and every guest experience we create.

- **Hospitality from the Heart** - We welcome every guest and team member with genuine warmth, care, and respect.
- **Excellence Every Day** - We take pride in quality—from ingredients and presentation to service and teamwork.
- **People First** - We invest in our team and celebrate a culture of respect, growth, and belonging.
- **Community Connection** - We support local, uplift each other, and believe in the power of food to bring people together.
- **Integrity Always** - We do the right thing, even when no one's watching.

→ Download and start working on your
CODE OF CONDUCT with our sample template.

2. Build an employee perks package that aligns with your values

Once you've outlined what your company values, you can determine what will help you cement those values with your team. Small, targeted perks can make your workplace culture stand out relative to other businesses and by aligning perks to your values, you can stand out as a great place to work.

Company Values _____   →   Employee Perk that exemplifies that value

Work-life balance

- Transparent Scheduling: Advance scheduling and easy process for shift changes.
- Fitness Memberships: Access to discounted monthly gym or yoga memberships at a location near to work.
- It's Your Day: A free day off for employees to celebrate their birthday or anniversary or a child/grandchild birthday (one per year); must be requested at least two weeks in advance.
- Off Season Flex Days: Allow employees to request a set number (say up to five) non-busy season days off in advance.

Mental health & wellness

- Flexible mental health leave days or additional sick leave above the five paid illness and injury days that are legally required in BC.
- Opportunity to sign up for an EAP (Employee Assistance Program) that offers online counselling.
- Annual wellness account that can be used for purchasing bikes, skis, running shoes, yoga gear etc.
- One paid a "No-Questions-Asked" Mental Health Day. Offer one day a year that a person can take off without any justification (must provide the employer notice the day before).

Financial success

- Set up parameters for employees to earn bonuses for quarterly/semi-annual/annual results that meet or exceed established targets.
- Offer employee referral bonuses where you reward staff who successfully refer new hires who stay past probation (three months). Suggested minimum of $100.
- Connect employees with financial coaching. You can do this by partnering with a financial advisor or bank to offer free or discounted financial planning.

Sustainability

- Provide safe bicycle parking or free monthly bus passes to encourage people to use greener transportation methods.
- Introduce a reusable cup and takeout container program. Provide staff with branded reusable cups and meal containers to take home food at the end of their shift.

Food equality

- Provide staff with the option of having a comp meal while on shift or access to a set number of discounted meals per month to host friends/family in the business.
- Host team meal nights, like a scheduled monthly group meal, to build camaraderie and reinforce food culture.
- Have an employee pantry. This can be a stocked pantry with essentials like bread, rice, and pasta available for staff in need and can include close dated products that might otherwise go to waste.

3. Provide tangible people-focused benefits

Employee longevity is increased when your company offers a strong benefits package: staff who have medical and dental plans will stay longer than those without these valuable benefits. While many of these have a monthly per person cost, there are some less costly options available that still provide great people benefits. No cost programs like Mind the Bar Foundation (www.mindthebar.com) offer people focused, mental health resources for hospitality workers for free.

If a full benefits package isn't in the cards, consider negotiating discounts with local health/lifestyle businesses your employees might use. By leveraging community connections and creative alternatives, you can provide meaningful benefits that improve employee satisfaction and well-being without the need for traditional medical or dental packages.

Non-traditional people-focused benefits include:

- **Glasses:** Connect with an optometrist to offer your staff discounts.
- **Wellness:** Partner with nearby spas, physio, counsellors or wellness centres for discounted rates.
- **Health and Fitness Incentives:** Arrange for discounted passes for fitness classes, spin classes, running groups or gym memberships.
- **Lifestyle perks:** Local shops, cafés, hair salons may offer discounts to your staff in exchange for the same for their team.
- **Free or Discounted Meals:** Provide free meals on shift or discounts for employees dining with their families/friends.
- **Transportation Assistance:** Offer bus passes, rideshare credits or secure bike parking.

- **Community Experiences:** Collaborate with local attractions (museums, theatres, tourism experiences, sports teams) to offer your team members free or discounted tickets.
- **Skills-building Opportunities:** Provide access to free classes for bartending, wine knowledge or language learning. Another option is to provide membership to MasterClass.com online so individuals can pursue other personal interests.
- **Financial Wellness Supports:** Offer sessions on budgeting, savings or credit management partnering with a local financial advisor or bank.
- **Volunteering and Giving:** Organize paid volunteer days or charity events allowing employees to give back while fostering team building.

4. Formalize a Flexible Time off Policy

A flexible time-off policy allows employees greater control over their schedules and work-life balance while ensuring the restaurant remains adequately staffed. This kind of policy can give employees the confidence to manage important personal or family needs with less stress. From an employer perspective, allowing employees to manage their schedules conveys trust, responsibility and respect. You may already have flexibility for your team this way.

→ Download and start working on your SCHEDULING AND SICK LEAVE POLICY with our sample template.

The benefit of formalizing your time off policy into something well-structured and part of an employee playbook ensures that all employees understand and know what steps to take if they need shift flexibility for personal reasons. You can:

- **Formalize Personalized Leave Banks** that allow employees to accrue paid time off (PTO) hours that they can use for any purpose, such as vacation, mental health days, or family needs, without having to specify a reason.
- **Support Shift Swapping:** Encourage and facilitate staff to trade shifts easily using an app or internal system, ensuring coverage while accommodating personal schedules. Online scheduling systems have real benefits with regards to allowing employees to trade shifts, set availability and view schedules in real time.
- **Provide Clear Understanding of Unpaid Leave Options:** Allow employees to take unpaid time off

with manager approval for important life events or personal emergencies without fear of penalty.

- **Accommodate Short-Notice Requests:** Create a clear policy for short-notice leave to ensure staff feel supported in urgent situations.

Make Flexible Time Off easy by:

1. Using scheduling software to streamline requests, approvals, and shift swapping.
2. Training managers to handle time-off requests for all employees equally and without bias.
3. Cross-training employees to handle absences during critical times.
4. Reviewing the policy with employees to identify improvements and address challenges.
5. Limiting blackout dates for when employees can request time off, making it clear that early requests are prioritized and which critical days require coverage.

5. Encourage Mentorship Relationships

New employees will come to your workplace with a range of work and life experience. Informal and formal mentorship relationships between staff members or between an employee and an external industry partner allows you to encourage staff to develop skills, build industry connections, and advance in their careers. By pairing people thoughtfully and fostering open communication, restaurants can create an environment where mentorship is an accessible, integral part of daily operations. This approach supports individuals to grow in their position, stay longer with the company and enhances the workplace culture.

Here are some steps to setting up mentoring relationships:

Pair with Purpose
- Match employees with mentors based on shared interests, career aspirations, complementary skills, gender, ethnicity, etc. For example, a chef could pair with a business coach to learn operational strategies, or a brewmaster could connect with a peer in a neighboring community to exchange ideas.
- Pair new workers with seasoned team members in a buddy system to provide mentorship, foster confidence, and ease their transition into the workforce. The mentor-mentee relationship can involve everything from fielding basic questions to offering a first-hand experience of workplace protocols, to facilitating orientation and conducting hands-on training.
- Create a shadow shift program that allows employees to shadow different roles within the restaurant to explore career growth opportunities (e.g., a bartender interested in management shadows the General Manager for a shift).

Expand Mentorship Beyond Direct Teams
- Encourage cross-department mentorship (e.g., a line cook learning about Front of House management from a senior server or bar manager). This helps employees understand the bigger picture of restaurant operations.
- Offer mentorship connections with industry professionals such as local suppliers, sommeliers, food writers/influencers or food photographers.
- Enroll employees in industry mentorship programs. For example, a cook could join Chefs' Table Society of BC's cook mentorship program. Annual intake info is on www.chefstablesociety.com.

Create Opportunities for Connection
- Host informal "mentor introduction" events or staff socials where you can encourage staff to be interested in peer development.

- Incorporate career progression conversations between mentee and mentor. This can be in the form of regular check-ins where mentors help mentees set personal goals, such as moving from prep cook to line cook or server to shift lead.
- Normalize the idea of asking colleagues for advice by highlighting stories of team members who have benefited from mentorship.

Encourage Open Communication
- Set the expectation that mentors are approachable for questions, feedback, and brainstorming. A chef reported having a business mentor that helped him brainstorm solutions and become more business savvy.
- Keep the relationships flexible, allowing mentees to seek feedback and guidance on how to enhance their skills, grow an interest or advance their career path without structured schedules. New employees are more likely to seek advice when the relationship feels organic and free of rigid expectations.

Share and Celebrate Accomplishments
- Publicly acknowledge mentorship moments, such as when an employee implements a successful idea inspired by their mentor's advice, fostering a culture of shared learning.
- Offer leadership training opportunities for individuals who want to become mentors to help them develop their coaching skills. (go2HR has some great free training videos: HERE.)
- Create an incentive, such as "Mentor of the Month" recognition, bonuses, or small perks for mentors who go above and beyond.
- Publicly celebrate mentorship success stories at staff meetings or on internal message boards.

6. Formalize Support of New Workers

Supporting new-to-work or new-to-Canada workers involves dedicating space in your workplace culture to understanding the challenges of first-time transitions and investing time in tools to help workers orient themselves and thrive in their new environment. By investing in some of the supportive and impactful strategies, employers can help employees build strong foundations, integrate into the workplace, and thrive as valued team members.

These include:

- **Instigating a Buddy System** and/or Peer Support Groups to provide the opportunity to ask questions and immerse into the culture with the help of a fellow employee.
- **Introducing workers to wrap-around services:** financial, wellness, lifestyle and language learning resources that they may not be aware of if they are new to the neighbourhood or community.
- **Recognizing the unique issues of working away from home** or family for the first time or what it's like to miss traditional family events for work.
- **Adding additional check-ins** and training steps for new to work or new to speaking English at work. This can include ensuring that team members learn terminology and common phrases used in the workplace. In the back of house, this can include additional steps with hands on training of culinary techniques with the restaurant's individual standards in mind as the restaurant standard may be different than learned.
- **Celebrating milestones** with new workers like successfully completing training, getting a promotion and completing a year, along with personal milestones like birthdays, graduations or anniversaries.

→ Download and start working on your SCHEDULING AND SICK LEAVE POLICY with our sample template.

7. Support Staff who show interest in Professional Development with Personalized Growth Paths

Restaurant jobs are often presented as starter jobs—which sounds negative. We believe that as "starter jobs" restaurant jobs actually promote the development of soft skills and confidence for all workers by encouraging workers to develop building block skills in teamwork, customer service, attention to detail and problem solving for future work. Encouraging employees to stay longer in a restaurant—or to make work in restaurants a lifetime career—can be fostered by a proactive, supportive workplace culture. One strategy to do this is to assist staff who show interest in professional development to craft a personalized growth path/plan with your support.

This approach allows employees to select from different personal and professional development tracks, such as leadership training, specialized skills development (e.g., bartending, wine training or pastry art), or creative contributions like menu design or marketing.

Personalized Grown Paths & Plans:
- Empower Employees: Giving workers control over their development fosters a sense of ownership and alignment with their personal goals.
- Increase Engagement and Retention: Creating a clear path to achieving professional growth fosters loyalty and longevity.
- Celebrate Individuality: It respects that each employee has unique aspirations, creating a more inclusive and fulfilling workplace culture.

This idea transforms jobs into opportunities, making employees excited to contribute and grow.

→ Download and start using our PERSONALIZED GROWTH PLAN template with key staff.

8. Amplify Employee Passions through Special Projects

Being a culinarian is a passion. For many workers in kitchens, cooking has become routine rather than creative. Providing opportunities for employees to leverage their passion can bring meaning back into work, build engagement and support business growth. This idea is a good fit for employees who are expressing interest in advancement, personal or professional growth. On the other side, providing the opportunity to do something unique can also invigorate an employee who seems to be struggling with the routine of the day to day.

A great fit for kitchen team members but also applicable in front of house positions, staff can be encouraged to propose and lead short-term creative projects or events that align with their personal interests and the restaurant's vibe like a themed dinner, a charity fundraiser, or a limited-edition menu feature.

The idea can also extend to team challenges or team-based innovations. A shift crew can be challenged to develop a feature menu together or a sommelier team can be encouraged to develop a feature wine list around a theme. A front of house team could collaborate on a new social media marketing campaign for Reels or TikTok.

Amplify passions by:
1. **Fostering Creativity:** Encouraging employees to bring their unique ideas to life can add excitement and variety to their roles.
2. **Building Team Spirit:** Supporting projects that require collaboration strengthens relationships and creates a sense of shared accomplishment.
3. **Energizing Employees:** Showcasing their passions/talents in the workplace allows employees to feel valued beyond their regular duties.
4. **Engaging Customers:** Seeing authentic, creative touches can make the dining experience more memorable for guests.
5. **Providing a Unique Perspective:** Investing time in the special project will provide positive insights on the existing food and beverage offerings without asking expressly for critiques or feedback.

9. Provide Support for Mental Health and Occupational Health and Safety

Today's workers expect employers to prioritize mental health and safety. Employees increasingly link their mental well-being to their productivity and overall job satisfaction. Nearly every owner, leader, and manager we spoke with reported that mental health concerns are among their most pressing employee-related challenges. Many also noted a steady increase in mental health-related incidents since 2020.

The goal for employers isn't to become mental health experts or replace professional resources. Instead, it's about creating a workplace culture that is open to conversations around mental health, learning the current terminology and having access to tools and resources to refer employees to when situations arises. Awareness, training and access to appropriate resources equip managers to respond with empathy and clarity. Since every mental health challenge is unique, what's needed isn't a fixed set of solutions, but a flexible set of skills that managers and leaders can onboard to support their teams effectively.

From a workplace culture perspective, a leadership team that's trained to handle mental health challenges sends a strong message: you care about your staff as whole individuals, not just employees. This fosters trust, loyalty, and a sense of psychological safety, critical factors for retaining staff in a competitive labour market.

Without training, managers may feel unsure or overwhelmed when mental health issues arise, leading to missteps that can escalate the situation.

Training equips leaders with skills to:

- **Recognize signs of distress**, for example, changes in mood or morale, reduced productivity, or increased conflicts.
- **Respond appropriately**, creating a space for open communication without judgment.
- **Seek outside help**, understanding the limits of their role and connecting employees with professional resources, like counseling services or mental health call services.
- **Prevent escalation of issues**. Mental health issues can impact not just the affected employee but the entire team. Early intervention by an empathetic and prepared leader can prevent small problems from snowballing into larger crises, such as burnout, absenteeism, or turnover.

go2HR Mental Health at Work
Connect with industry experts and gain access to resources and one-on-one advice. https://www.go2hr.ca/health-safety/mental-health-at-work

People Working Well - Free Online Resource
Professional training programs are available online through Canadian Mental Health Association and go2HR https://peopleworkingwellbc.ca/. On this website, you'll find short video modules that make this training accessible at no or low cost.

10. Be transparent with employees

Openly sharing operational updates during staff meetings helps to build confidence among your team. This doesn't mean focusing on the negatives: it's about being clear and consistent with information about upcoming events, busy periods, seasonal changes and shifts in priority. For example:

- If a number of new employees joined the restaurant at the beginning of the busy summer season and it's shifting into fall, it's worth sharing with the team what to expect in the fall.
- If December brings a lot of off-site catering events, what does that look like for staff? Are there different expectations that can be handled in advance?
- If a team member recently resigned, can you update the team on the staffing plan for the period before a new person is hired? Can you seek insights from the team on what the new hire can bring to complement the team dynamic?
- If an upcoming period is going to require overtime, can you ask for volunteers or provide advance warning?

If your team is unsure about the restaurant's financial health, they may worry about their long-term job security and start exploring other opportunities—potentially costing you valued employees. If there are financial changes or challenges, communicate them. For example, if tips are down, acknowledge it with your team. Let them know you're aware of how this impacts their ability to pay bills and that you're looking at ways to support them. Even a simple conversation shows you're paying attention and that you care.

We recommend that if things are going well, share the good news. If a shift or a week has been particularly successful or a group of employees is standing out for driving your business' success, share those milestones in a timely manner too. The same goes for a particularly bad day, acknowledge it and have a feedback session on what could have been done differently. This helps take the sting out of things going wrong and drive a future focus for the team.

11. Foster Belonging for All Workers

British Columbia is a rich and diverse province. In today's workplaces, it's essential that people of all beliefs, abilities, backgrounds, and experiences feel genuinely welcomed and appreciated. Fostering this sense of belonging is key to building equity and inclusion—it helps every employee feel safe to bring their full selves to work.

Restaurants extend hospitality to guests every day. Belonging is how that same spirit is extended to your team. When employees feel welcome, wanted, and valued, it strengthens your workplace culture and connects people not only to each other, but to the core values of your restaurant.

Fostering belonging also means addressing unconscious bias within your leadership team. Unconscious bias is the tendency to form opinions or make decisions without fully realizing the influence of stereotypes, gut instincts, or personal experiences. It can show up in subtle but impactful ways—like assuming a candidate is a better "fit" because their name or background feels familiar, while unintentionally overlooking equally or more qualified individuals from diverse backgrounds.

Awareness is the first step. By recognizing and addressing these biases, restaurant leaders can create fairer, more inclusive workplaces where every team member has an opportunity to thrive.

→ Download and start using our RESPECTFUL WORKPLACE POLICY or our DIVERSITY, EQUITY, INCLUSION AND BELONGING templates to dial in your commitments to belonging at work.

If you need help with specific issues around belonging and workplace culture, the regional Human Resource Specialists at go2HR are available to consult one-on-one. **https://www.go2hr.ca/human-resources**

12. Reward financially when you can

Money talks. While many positions in restaurants start at minimum wage there are some key aspects of financial compensation that reflect on your workplace culture to consider:

- Do you have a policy of pay transparency and ensure compensation is consistent?
- Do you conduct wage audits to make sure people in like positions are paid like wages?
- Do you have a timeline or competency check list for when a new worker is eligible for a raise or promotion?
- Do you raise the pay of mid-level workers when minimum wage goes up for those at the bottom tier of your salary grid?
- Does your staff have a straightforward tip-out policy that is clearly explained to new hires?

How you financially recognize your workers helps to set a workplace culture that acknowledges effort. Even a small raise shows appreciation. If you can't give a raise, options include offering small bonuses, paying for parking/bus passes, providing gas or grocery cards. These tokens of your appreciation can help recognize the high cost of living.

13. Connect one-on-one

Meeting with employees is no longer just an opportunity to review performance or salaries. one-on-one discussions with employees are the way to connect with each employee's motivations and aspirations. Loyalty and trust are built on a platform of genuine connection. This can be achieved by hosting weekly or monthly meetings to touch base with workers on how they are doing, to recognize their successes and to ask what supports the person needs to do their job better. Connecting one-on-one can include getting to know:

- Does a person like working part-time or are they really looking for full-time hours?
- Is a student planning to go back to school in the fall?
- Does an employee have strict obligations that keep them from working certain hours?
- Does an employee have personal and professional growth goals that your restaurant can help them achieve?

→ Download and start using our PROBATIONARY EMPLOYEE RATING TOOL to access in five minutes where new workers are struggling and succeeded.

→ Download and use our CONDUCTING COACHING CONVERSATIONS – QUESTIONS document to ask thoughtful questions and help workers develop skills, align with company goals, and stay engaged in their roles.

14. Empower through Role Rotation and Cross-Training

Skills development is a major driver of engagement for today's workforce. Cross-training and empowering employees to try out different roles supports this need by giving employees practical experience in different areas, while also meeting your operational goals. This builds new skills and opens eyes to new career paths within your restaurant, while also ensuriing that team members can confidently cover shifts or step into new roles duirng short absences. This exposure helps team members develop empathy for their coworkers' responsibilities, deepens their understanding of the business, and creates a culture of shared responsibility.

Even entry-level staff benefit from this approach. Offering soft-skills training—like communication, time management, or conflict resolution—alongside cross-training helps lay the groundwork for confident, capable teams. For back-of-house team members or emerging leaders, development might include learning about food costing, budgeting, or coaching others.

For managers, cross-training is especially powerful. It helps chart a path for growth by revealing strengths, pinpointing development areas, and reinforcing leadership capabilities. A structured approach to professional development equips your managers to better support their teams and strengthen your overall workplace culture.

When learning and growth are embedded into daily operations, employees feel valued and empowered—and that's a win for everyone.

→ Download and use our MANAGER SELF-ASSESSMENT TOOL to help your managers reflect on their skills and map out development goals.

Why trying these 14 ideas for Workplace Culture Matters

A positive workplace culture isn't just a "nice-to-have"—it's a strategic advantage in the restaurant industry. Proactively investing in culture helps attract and retain great people, boosts morale, and lays the foundation for a more successful and sustainable business.

When core values are woven into daily operations, they create a shared sense of purpose and build a motivated, cohesive team. Clear communication, personalized perks, and flexible policies—like mental health days, mentorship, or growth opportunities—signal to staff that they are seen, supported, and valued.

In an industry where employee satisfaction directly shapes guest experience, culture matters. A thoughtful, people-first approach can ease recruitment challenges, reduce turnover, and strengthen your team's resilience. By amplifying employee passions, celebrating contributions, and offering meaningful rewards, restaurant owners can foster loyalty and drive long-term profitability.

THE TRANSFORMATIVE POWER OF FOSTERING BELONGING

Navigating Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) initiatives can feel daunting for many employers. While some organizations have scaled back DEI programs in early 2025, this rollback doesn't reflect the priorities of employees or the realities of workplaces in BC. These changes may influence how we talk about DEI—but they shouldn't weaken our commitment to building inclusive, respectful environments.

In the restaurant industry, cultivating a sense of belonging is essential for building a cohesive team that delivers exceptional guest experiences. Whether you implement a **Respectful Workplace Policy** or a **Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Policy**, what matters most is clarity and consistency. Clear expectations create a workplace where every employee feels valued, safe, and part of something bigger.

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Understanding the Fundamentals:

Diversity means placing value on and making a workforce composed of individuals with varied backgrounds, experiences, and perspectives feel welcome.

Equity ensures fair treatment, access, and opportunities for everyone, addressing any imbalances and removing any barriers.

Inclusion is about creating space for all employees to share their unique perspectives and ideas.

Together, these foster a workplace culture where all employees feel respected, valued, safe, and able to contribute and employees feel able to be more innovative and productive.

The new terms in this space:

Belonging is the feeling of being an accepted, valued, and an integral part of something. In the workplace, when employees experience this connection, their engagement, productivity, and overall well-being improve significantly.

Respectful Workplace Policy is a framework that defines the rights and responsibilities of staff, promoting a safe and inclusive environment free from harassment.

For restaurant leaders and managers, nurturing a sense of belonging can transform team dynamics, enhance overall performance and be a powerful driver of positive employee engagement. Focusing on belonging makes DEI principles more tangible and actionable and can serve as the foundation for a Respectful Workplace Policy.

→ Download our RESPECTFUL WORKPLACE POLICY template.

The Impact of Prioritizing Belonging

- **Enhances Employee Engagement and Retention**
  Employees who feel they belong are more emotionally invested in their work and the organization and are less likely to seek opportunities elsewhere.

- **Fosters a Positive and Inclusive Culture**
  A sense of belonging ensures that employees feel safe to express themselves without fear of judgment. This leads to feeling more willing to collaborate with others and to support their colleagues.

- **Boosts Productivity and Innovation**
  Employees who feel a sense of belonging are motivated to go the extra mile and to contribute their ideas because they feel like they will be recognized by managers/leaders.

- **Supports Mental Health and Well-being**
  In a work-world that is seeing more stress and anxiety, feeling connected and valued can alleviate feelings of isolation and stress and help team members better manage workplace pressures.

- **Builds Trust**
  Belonging fosters trust between employees and the organization. This trust translates into loyalty, helps people feel better equipped to navigate change and make them more likely to stand by the organization during challenging times.

- **Aligns values**
  Next-Gen workers seek out employers whose values align with their own. Fostering belonging as a guiding principle of workplace culture encourages your team to proudly attract like-minded individuals.

Practical examples for fostering belonging:

- **Support Newcomers:** Provide training materials in multiple languages and pair new employees with mentors who speak their primary language to ease their transition. You can use visual and video guides that show how to do a task rather than using words to explain them and support this by providing multilingual signage or a short guide to key words with translations.
- **Leverage Diverse Skills:** Create roles that utilize the unique skills of employees. A recently retired accountant applies to join your team as a part time worker. Could you carve out a role where they do the ordering and bill payments that are normally a manager's job? If you create a position that takes advantage of unique skills, and free up someone to something they haven't had time for, you will empower the individuals and strengthen your whole team through maximizing potential.
- **Accommodating Health Needs:** Adjust work schedules and duties to support employees returning from injury or leave. For example, a person is returning to work after an injury and can't stand for as long as they used to while they recover. Employers do have a duty to accommodate this. By customizing shifts and/or offering role adjustments to suit their current strengths and physical capabilities, you encourage a quicker recovery and a stronger sense of belonging.

Regulatory Considerations in British Columbia

Under B.C.'s Human Rights Code, employers are required to uphold workers' human rights and maintain a work environment that is free from discrimination. Employment equity goes beyond creating a discrimination-free work environment. It's about employers taking action to remove and prevent barriers at work for workers who belong to groups that have often been treated unfairly, for example, because of their race, age, gender or disability. http://www.bchumanrights.ca/employment-equity-toolkit

WorkSafeBC's Occupational Health and Safety standards and guidelines require employers in our province to provide healthy, safe and respectful workspaces, including providing work that is free of Bullying and Harassment. www.WorkSafeBC.com/en/health-safety

Choosing the Right Policy for Your Restaurant

Emphasizing belonging ensures that efforts are sustainable and embedded in your restaurant's culture AND its smart business. It allows your managers and leaders to unlock potential in your team members through higher engagement, better problem-solving and more innovation. From a customer perspective, seeing workers who are their best selves enhances customer satisfaction and loyalty.

Whether adopting a DEI Policy or a Respectful Workplace Policy, aligning the approach with your team's composition and values is essential. If you employ a large number of university students, you may choose to have a DEI policy because the terminology and expectations will align with those set in the university setting. If you are introducing something new, a Respectful Workplace Policy that cements the behaviours that foster belonging for all team members may be a better fit.

→ Download and start using your choice of our RESPECTFUL WORKPLACE POLICY template or DIVERSITY, EQUITY and INCLUSION (DEI) template to implement these principles into your restaurants culture.

PROACTIVE COACHING CONVERSATIONS

In the BC Restaurant and Foodservices Association's *Metro Vancouver Restaurant Labour Shortage Report* (2018), feedback from 300 young workers, industry students, and job seekers made one thing clear: frequent career advancement opportunities and real-time feedback are key factors in choosing and staying in restaurant jobs.

Proactive coaching conversations—brief, consistent check-ins that focus on growth, encouragement, and clear expectations—help employees feel seen, supported, and motivated. When you create space to talk about progress and development, even informally, it builds trust, improves retention, and strengthens your team culture.

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The need for feedback and development aligns with Statistics Canada (2021) data, which shows that 80% of restaurant employees are between the ages of 15 and 44. Most workers leave the industry long before retirement—only 9% are aged 45–54, and just 11% are 55 or older. That means if you're not helping younger staff see a future in your workplace, they're more likely to leave. The BC Cooks Labour Market Analysis (2016) adds further context: early turnover is often driven by a lack of visible growth paths and mentorship.

To retain and develop this predominantly younger workforce, it's important to understand what kind of feedback and support they're actually looking for—and to deliver it in ways that help them see a future in the industry.

> In our outreach for this project, restaurateurs confirmed that young workers increasingly value real-time feedback, mentorship, and continuous development opportunities that help them build skills, stay aligned with business goals, and remain engaged.

A coaching conversation can be as simple as checking in about:

- **Role clarity:** Are expectations and responsibilities clear?
- **Recent successes:** What wins can we celebrate?
- **Future goals:** What skills or milestones do you want to achieve next?
- **Improvement ideas:** How can we make your job or the workplace better?

Framing these as "coaching conversations" signals that your business values continuous development—and helps attract and retain the next generation of restaurant talent.

Coaching Conversation versus Performance Review

Coaching conversations are regular one-on-one check-ins that focus on strengthening employee relationships, identifying growth potential, addressing concerns, and creating clear development pathways. Unlike traditional annual reviews—which often emphasize past performance and can trigger defensiveness—coaching conversations are forward-looking. They support engagement, retention, continuous development and satisfaction. In the fast-paced, people-focused restaurant industry, they:

- Identify what motivates employees and keeps them engaged.
- Uncover potential frustrations or obstacles to job satisfaction.
- Prioritize goal setting, career aspirations and growth opportunities.
- Accelerate skill development and align individual goals with business objectives.
- Foster collaboration and a more constructive, team-oriented environment.
- Encourage ongoing, open communication between employees and managers.
- Allow for real-time feedback and swift issue resolution.
- Strengthen manager–employee relationships and show employees that their growth is valued.

When to use coaching conversations?

Regular touchpoints build trust, address challenges early, and reinforce a culture of growth.

- **New hires:** Schedule weekly or biweekly 15–20 minute check ins for the first three months.
- **Existing staff:** Hold monthly or quarterly 20-30 minute sessions.

The key is that coaching needs to be ongoing because it helps new hires integrate, supports existing employees, and reinforces open communication. To facilitate meaningful discussions, a pattern can be established as soon as a new hire joins the team. The direct manager/leader should schedule regular check-ins that focus on building a strong relationship and helping the employee grow into their role.

These discussions should provide opportunities to answer questions, gather suggestions for improving workflow, set goals, troubleshoot challenges, and assess the new hire's integration into the team.

→ Looking to have a formal Coaching Check-In process? Download, review and customize our ONGOING ORIENTATION AND COACHING CHECK-INS checklist.

Structure for a Coaching Conversation or 'Stay Interview'

Effective coaching conversations or stay interviews rely on a blend of structure and personal engagement. Managers should aim to create an environment that encourages honest, open dialogue while also keeping the process focused and efficient.

The key elements to keep in mind are:

- **Keep it informal and conversational:** Encourage openness without making it feel like a formal evaluation.

- **Set a clear window of time:** Aim for sessions under 30 minutes to respect time and attention spans.

- **Create a platform for honest feedback:** Ask questions that gather feedback without 'digging' or feeling interrogative.

- **Formalize the process:** Ensure consistency by making it repeatable and standardized.

- **Commit to positive change:** Demonstrate a genuine commitment to improving the employee experience through open dialogue.

- **Focus entirely on the employee:** Eliminate distractions—no phones, checking emails or interruptions.

- **Start with positive questions:** Set a constructive tone to encourage candid conversation.

- **Listen actively and validate experiences:** Avoid minimizing feelings; show empathy and understanding.

- **Show interest and ask thoughtful questions:** Understand the employee's views, goals, and challenges.

- **Capture action items:** Take note of key takeaways and follow up on agreed-upon actions.

- **Share insights with leadership:** Report recurring themes to help drive broader changes within the organization.

- **Conduct regularly:** Consistent check-ins build trust and track progress.

Handling Difficult Conversations

While most coaching conversations are focused on identifying and reinforcing the positive factors, some negative factors might also arise. Some employees might share negative feedback, make a difficult request or present an issue without an obvious solution. Handling the challenging part of the conversation well will speak highly of your leadership team and their engagement and interest in supporting team members.

Absorb & Analyze: Managers should analyze the person's motivation for the feedback with a lens for how the workplace culture could benefit from the ideas or suggestions that are being brought forward. Even if you completely disagree with an employee's comments, listen without speaking or reacting. Chances are there is some basis to it or the employee would not be making the effort to share their thoughts.

Clarify: For challenging feedback, repeat back your understanding of the feedback provided. Ask the person if you captured the feedback correctly. By rephrasing feedback in your own words, you can make sure that both manager and employee are leaving with the same understanding of the conversation.

Be Open: Show thankfulness for the person's authenticity. Commit to absorbing the feedback and looping back after the meeting to provide a response rather than committing to make a change: changes can be multi-layered and not always possible.

Sample Coaching Questions

→ Download our list of possible questions in our CONDUCTING COACHING CONVERSATIONS template.

This Word document is available for you to customize for your business. We recommend you select the 5-7 questions that are most appropriate for the workplace and the employee's role. The questions are organized into theme headings.

Key questions to consider using are:

- What's one thing you look forward to when coming to work?
- Is there anything about your role or the workplace that's frustrating or challenging? How can we address that together?
- How can we work together to make your work more meaningful?
- What skills would you like to develop or improve?
- Are there any roles or opportunities you'd like to explore here?
- How could your role expand to use more of your strengths?
- What changes in availability or scheduling should we be aware of in the coming weeks?
- What can I do as a manager to best support you in your role?
- What goals would you like to achieve in the next 3-6 months?

THE OPPORTUNITY OF PEOPLE FIRST SCHEDULING

Implementing innovative scheduling practices can play an important role in empowering both employees and employers. Why? Because scheduling is one of the most direct ways to build a balanced, fair, and predictable work environment. It supports a strong workplace culture that attracts and retains top talent while also allowing owners/operators to understand and control hard costs.

Efficient scheduling is not just about managing hours. It's a strategy to boost profitability, streamline operations, and improve workplace culture—for both staff and management. One easy win, if you haven't already done so, is to make the shift to online scheduling technology. Today's workforce expects digital tools that align with their changing availability and lifestyles, and technology offers a better way to stay connected.

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While there is a cost to implementing scheduling software, the benefits go far beyond simply filling shifts. These tools allow you to align employee availability, skills, and business needs more cohesively. By programming rules and parameters in advance, they save time and enable leadership to focus on people—not just logistics.

Many scheduling solutions integrate directly with restaurant POS systems, giving your team access to real-time data and accurate cost tracking. The strategic connection between scheduling and POS systems empowers smarter decisions and stronger business outcomes.

That said, technology alone doesn't make your scheduling people-focused. You still need to set clear expectations around scheduling practices, including shift changes, vacation, and sick leave. When the right parameters are in place, scheduling software becomes a powerful tool to support both operational efficiency and employee well-being.

Strategic Employee Scheduling: THE EMPLOYER UPSIDE

Fair, predictable scheduling isn't just good for employees—it's smart business. It shows you value your team's time and your operational efficiency.

Key Benefits:

1. Smarter Staffing and Cost Controls through Data
- Scheduling software helps spot trends (peak hours, seasonal spikes) so you can forecast staffing needs.
- Better forecasting = optimized labour costs and service levels.
- Real-time performance metrics help you make faster, smarter decisions.

2. Accurate Tracking and Legal Protection
- Eliminate payroll errors and stay compliant with labour laws (e.g. overtime, breaks, max hours).
- Easy access to historical data supports budgeting, audits, and compliance.
- Detailed time records protect against disputes and simplify audits.

3. Better Alignment with Employee Availability
- Scheduling tools manage employee availability and shift swaps more efficiently.
- You can build stronger shift teams by aligning skills, experience, and business needs.

4. Reduced Manager Stress
- Less time spent on logistics means managers can focus on leadership, training, and guest satisfaction.
- Reduces burnout for leadership teams.

Proactive Employee Scheduling: THE EMPLOYEE UPSIDE

Today's workers—especially those aged 15–24 who make up close to 50% of the restaurant workforce—expect schedules that respect their time, support their lives, and reduce stress. With restaurants unable to offer remote work, flexible scheduling is one of the few ways you can show your team that their time matters. It's also one of the strongest tools to improve employee satisfaction and retention.

Connect with Employees by:

- Getting to know each person's story. Some may need a mid-week day off, longer breaks, or split shifts to manage childcare or appointments.
- Checking in regularly to ensure hours worked match employees' needs. This builds trust and creates a more resilient culture.
- Providing schedules 10–14 days in advance. This lead time lowers stress and helps team members organize their lives—resulting in greater focus at work.

The benefits of this approach are:

1. **Work-Life Balance and Wellbeing**
   - Predictable, consistent schedules allow employees to plan around school, family, and other responsibilities.
   - Advance notice reduces stress, improves focus, and helps employees manage errands, appointments, and mental load.

2. **Financial and Life Planning**
   - Knowing hours in advance helps employees budget for essentials like rent, tuition, and transportation.
   - Stable schedules allow for better income predictability and greater personal security.

3. **Safe and Reliable Transportation**
   - Advance scheduling gives time to coordinate rides, public transit, or biking—reducing lateness and no-shows.
   - Being mindful of safety (e.g., avoiding late-night solo travel) shows care for your team's wellbeing.

4. **Trust, Respect, and Retention**
   - Respecting availability and personal needs fosters loyalty and professionalism—especially for new workers or newcomers to Canada.
   - Clear, consistent scheduling practices reduce burnout and turnover while reinforcing a professional, people-first culture.

Considerations for Shift Scheduling Software

There's no shortage of scheduling platforms out there, but the right one should meet your specific needs and integrate seamlessly into your operations. Look for software that connects with your Point of Sale (POS), payroll provider, and reservation or booking tools.

Before you commit, get clear on the scheduling challenges you want to solve—whether that's reducing understaffing, avoiding overtime, simplifying shift swaps, or improving communication with your team. Many platforms come loaded with features you may never need. Don't buy the BMW if the Toyota gets the job done better. Choose a tool that's user-friendly, effective, and focused on your actual goals.

Ask these questions before choosing a platform:

- **What specific problems are you solving?** Are you trying to reduce shift conflicts, improve peak-time coverage, or make shift swaps easier for staff?

- **How many users will need access—now and in the future?** Select software that can grow with your business over the next one to two years.

- **What systems does it need to integrate with?** Platforms that sync with your POS, payroll software, or HRIS reduce errors and save time on data entry.

SCHEDULING STRATEGY 1: AVERAGING AGREEMENTS

As we've discussed, proactive and predictive scheduling has a huge role to play in how employees perceive work in restaurants. One opportunity, particularly for managers/leaders and back of house is entering into a formal **Averaging Agreement**. Section 37 of BC's Employment Standards Act allows employees and employers to agree on work schedules that would otherwise be subject to overtime.

With the hours that restaurants are open, averaging agreements are often appealing to employers and employees because they provide a degree of flexibility. For employers, they reduce the number of people they have to schedule per day. For employees, it means working fewer but longer shifts, giving them more full days off to spend on other pursuits.

What is an averaging agreement?

An employer and an employee can agree to an average of work hours scheduled over a cycle of one, two, three or four weeks.

Employees can agree to work up to 12 hours in a day, averaging no more than 40 hours per week, without being paid overtime.

For **example,** you can make an averaging agreement to change your standard workweek to 4 x 10 hour days (three days off) or 3 x 12 hour days (four days off) on a one week-cycle.

With a two-week cycle, an option is the nine-day fortnight. This compresses 2 x 40 hour weeks into nine shifts over two weeks: 8 x 9 hour days and 1 x 8 hour day. Employees have one two-day weekend and one three-day weekend during the two-week rotation.

All three models reduce overtime and give staff an extra day off. This kind of change can be a win for employers and employees—and can set you apart from another employer who has more unpredictable scheduling or less days off.

Overtime and Averaging Agreements:

Under the averaging agreement, overtime is applied based on the approved schedule.

- An employer who requires or allows an employee to work more than the scheduled hours in an agreement is required to pay daily overtime at time and one half regular wage for unscheduled time worked over eight hours.
- An employer is required to pay daily overtime at double time regular wage for all time worked over 12 hours.
- Unscheduled hours worked totalling eight or fewer a day do not qualify for daily overtime.

Example: An employee is scheduled to work a 10-hour shift but ends up working 12 hours. The employee is paid time-and-a half for the two hours added to the work schedule for that day.

If an employee works more hours in the week than the agreement provides for, they are entitled to be paid time-and-a-half for any hours over 40 hours in a one-week cycle or 80 hours in a two-week cycle.

Example: An employee who works 4 x 10-hour days per week over a four-week period is asked to work on another day for eight hours. The employee must be paid time-and-a-half for the extra eight hours worked.

If the cycle specified in an averaging agreement is more than one week, the employer must ensure that for each week covered by the agreement, the employee has an interval free from work of 32 consecutive hours. Any time worked during the 32-hour rest period must be paid at time-and-a-half.

Elements of an averaging agreement

An averaging agreement must be made in writing and be signed by the employer and employee before the start date. It must:

- Be an individual agreement between the employer and employee;
- Provide the number of weeks (one to four) over which hours will be cycled/averaged;
- Outline the work schedule for each day covered by the agreement;
- Commence the week schedule on Sunday, 12:01 am and end on Saturday at midnight;
- Provide for a start date and an expiry date and the number of cycles that the agreement applies for.

For example, if the cycle is a one-week cycle. You could agree in writing to have 52 cycles and have the agreement in place from January 1 to December 31 of a given year.

NOTE: Verbal agreements are not valid.

The employee(s) must receive a copy before the agreement takes effect. There is no restriction on how long (e.g. how many "periods") the averaging agreement may be in place.

Changing an averaging agreement
Employees can make a written request to change their averaging agreement schedule as long as the total hours scheduled in the agreement remain the same.

Getting paid for statutory holidays
An employee qualifies for statutory holiday pay if they have been employed for 30 calendar days and have worked under an averaging agreement within the 30 days before the statutory holiday.

Approval Process
There is no requirement to notify the Employment Standards Branch when the parties enter into an averaging agreement. However, as of 2021, employers must retain the agreement for four years after the expiry of the agreement or any agreed upon extension of the agreement.

For a more detailed view of the averaging agreement provisions see Section 37 of the ESA.

→ Download and customize our AVERAGING AGREEMENT template.

SCHEDULING STRATEGY 2:
PEOPLE FOCUSED STATUTORY HOLIDAYS

With restaurants operating evenings, weekends and holidays, making sure staffing levels are met on statutory holidays can increase operational cost and frustration.

One new approach in this space is the concept of "cultural flexibility". Most applicable for your full-time or permanent part-time staff, the idea is simple: you offer the option of swapping a statutory holiday for another day that holds more personal, cultural, or spiritual significant for the employee. The Employment Standards Act of BC allows substitutions: "If the employer and employee agree, the employer may substitute another day off work for a statutory holiday." Once a signed agreement is in place, the substitute day carries the same rights and benefits as the original stat holiday.

By getting to know your staff and their lives outside of work, you can formalize a common-sense solution to reduce your statutory holiday scheduling pressure while making your workplace more inclusive and respectful.

Statutory Holidays in BC

There are **11 annual statutory holidays** in British Columbia:

New Years Day - January 1

Family Day - 3rd Monday in February

Good Friday - Friday before Easter Sunday

Victoria Day - Monday before May 25

Canada Day - July 1

BC Day - 1st Monday in August

Labour Day - 1st Monday in September

National Day for Truth and Reconciliation - September 30th

Thanksgiving - 2nd Monday in October

Remembrance Day - November 11

Christmas Day - December 25

Legal requirements in BC

To be eligible for statutory holiday pay, an hourly employee must:

- Be employed for at least 30 calendar days before the holiday, and
- Have worked at least 15 of the 30 days before the holiday.

If eligible, the employee is entitled to:

- A paid day off, or
- If they work the holiday:
  - Time-and-a-half for the first 12 hours
  - Double-time for any hours over 12
  - Plus the pay for an "average day" (To calculate: Total wages ÷ number of days worked = statutory holiday pay (an average day's pay). Using the 30 days prior to the stat.)

Encoding Cultural Flexibility into your Statutory Holiday Policy

A clear policy helps make this option part of your restaurant's scheduling rhythm, building both equity and efficiency. Make sure you include the stat swap option in onboarding materials so new staff are aware from the start.

Here's how to structure it:

- Clarify how many swaps are permitted per year, and if any holidays are excluded from substitution.
- Define eligibility: Does this apply only to full-time staff (e.g., 30+ hours/week), or can part-time staff participate?
- Decide how substitute days must be chosen: Will they need to reflect a cultural, religious, or personal significance to avoid being treated as vacation days (e.g., not just taking July 2 to extend a weekend)?
- Create a simple annual request form, with a recommended request deadline (e.g., January 15 or February 15) to support advance scheduling.
- Set a policy on changes: Once submitted, are swaps locked in? Can they be changed with notice?
- Be transparent about acceptance:
    - How will employees be notified if their request is accepted or declined?
    - What is the notice period if a request can't be accommodated due to business needs?
- Explain default procedures: What happens if no substitution is requested? Clarify how standard statutory holidays are handled.
- State on which statutory holidays your restaurant is closed, if any, to set team expectations in advance.
- Consider a rotating holiday shift system (especially for key holidays) to ensure fairness if staffing coverage is needed but limited.

Note: In BC, employers can require employees to work on a statutory holiday, but you must still provide all applicable entitlements if they haven't made a swap.

Encouraging Uptake and Understanding

Offering stat holiday swaps is just the beginning. Employees will be more likely to use them when they understand the advantages.

- **Communicate the "why" behind the change:** Employees are more likely to embrace the option when they understand it's part of a people-first, inclusive workplace culture.

- **Give it time:** Not all employees will take advantage of the policy immediately. Some may still prefer to take the standard holidays off—especially when they align with family time or community traditions.

- **Stay open:** Employees' needs evolve. Revisit preferences and scheduling strategies annually or during regular check-ins.

- **Track participation annually** to see how many employees use the stat swap option. This can help refine your policy and make the business case for inclusive scheduling.

TIME-OFF-FRIENDLY WORKPLACE CULTURE

In today's restaurant workplace, time off is just as important as time on the job. One of the key takeaways from the COVID-19 pandemic is that employees are placing greater value on work-life balance. And yet, hospitality is one of the few industries where work is busiest when others are off enjoying leisure time. This often makes it feel like time off and restaurant work are at odds.

Building a people-first time off strategy isn't just possible—it's essential. A time-off-friendly culture improves employee retention, boosts moral and strengthens recruitment. Start by making time off a core part of your workplace culture—talk about it, plan for it, and actively encourage it at every level of your team.

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Consider Three Types of Proactive Time-Off:

- **Functional:** Regular days off, plus statutory holidays. These are essential for recovery between shifts and managing personal responsibilities—the basic building blocks of balance.

- **Life/lifestyle affirming:** Traditional vacation time to rest, travel or celebrate personal milestones. These days allow staff to recharge and return energized.

- **Personal Days**: Flexible days that employees can use proactively for rest, mental health, wellness, or personal needs—helping them maintain balance and well-being before challenges escalate.

Why it Matters in Hospitality?

Hospitality exists to serve people who are celebrating, traveling, and enjoying time off. Great guest experiences are only possible when staff are rested, focused, and energized. If we value our guests' vacation time, we must also build a workplace culture that values time off for staff.

The idea that—even after a global pandemic and a wave of growing mental health challenges—a manager or owner would make a team member feel guilty for having a life outside of work, or would glorify work at the expense of employee wellbeing, simply doesn't resonate with today's workforce.

Making a conscious effort at the leadership level of your restaurant to commit to a strong time-off strategy will meet the needs of both business and staff because when employees return refreshed, they're more productive, motivated, and ready to contribute—benefitting your workplace culture and your bottom line.

Building a Time-Off-Friendly Culture

A time-off-friendly workplace starts with how you talk about vacation, plan for it, and support it. While it's legal to offer vacation pay in lieu of time off, many employees today prioritize actual time away. Even the planning for a vacation can boost morale and mental health for team members.

Encouraging your team to take time off isn't just a kind gesture—it's a smart business move. Here's how to make it part of your workplace culture:

- Talk about time off openly and positively.
- Plan ahead to accommodate peak time requests fairly.
- Make vacation planning part of scheduling norms.
- Recognize and celebrate time away as part of a balanced work life.

These strategies send a clear message to staff: **your wellbeing matters to our company.** And that mindset can set your restaurant apart as an employer of choice.

Vacation Entitlement in BC

Under BC's Employment Standards Act, all part-time and full-time employees accrue vacation.

The law provides for a minimum vacation accrual as follows:

- Employees are entitled to vacation pay of 4% of total wages earned. This equals two weeks of paid vacation for full-time employees who complete a full year.
- After five consecutive years, this increases to 6% of earnings. At the end of the 5th year, a full-time employee will have accrued three weeks of vacation.

Vacation pay must be provided at least seven days before vacation begins, unless the employee agrees in writing to receive it on each pay cheque. Any vacation pay received is considered part of the employee's total wages for the year.

Note: Full and part-time employees who chose to get vacation paid out on each cheque are not accruing paid vacation days. It's important to be transparent about this with new hires to avoid confusion. A people-first approach encourages employees to accrue and take earned vacation time—not just bank the pay—so they can reset and recharge.

Strategies for Effective Time Off and Disconnection

Restaurants thrive on teamwork—making them ideal for fostering a workplace that supports disconnection. Try these practical strategies:

- **Empower staff to solve problems independently.** Create a policy to avoid after-hours communication except in emergencies. Even casual texts about small issues create stress and blur boundaries.
- **Plan coverage before time off.** Define who will handle both urgent and non-urgent items in a team member's absence and ensure that team members know who is away and who is stepping up. This builds confidence that things won't fall apart while a person is away.
- **Cross-training staff.** When team members can step in for each other, it's easier to ask for time off—and to grant it.
- **Make vacation planning part of coaching check-ins.** Ask staff about their vacation plans. It sets the tone that time off is normal, expected, and valued.
- **Proactively manage coverage.** Avoid the trap of just "getting through" vacation season. Build a staffing plan that supports everyone's right to rest.
- **Make space for honest conversations.** If someone is stressed or burned out, time off might be part of the solution. Normalize that option.

Lead by example

- **Take your own time off.**
  When managers and owners model balance, it encourages the rest of the team to do the same.
- **Don't glorifying long shifts or marathon workweeks.**
  No team member—including managers—should be overworked or exhausted. Normalize taking breaks and rest periods.
- **Celebrate time off.**
  Ask team members about their vacations, welcome them back warmly, and encourage them to share highlights. It builds camaraderie and reinforces rest as part of the job.

Build Trust and Transparency

- **Protect job security for part-time staff.**
  Let them know when they'll be scheduled again after vacation—and have them check in to confirm when they are back from longer trips.
- **Monitor vacation use.**
  If someone is building up hours without using them, check in. They may need encouragement or support to take the break.
- **Be clear about how vacation is approved.**
  Whether by seniority or specific timelines, be transparent and consistent.
- **Encourage mini-breaks.**
  Not everyone can take a full week. Long weekends, half-days, or just a morning off can still help reset and recharge.

WORKPLACE HEALTH AS A LEADERSHIP PRACTICE

Workplace health isn't just about policies—it's about people. Coming out of the pandemic, restaurant leaders have an opportunity to shape how illness, injury, and mental health are treated in their workplaces—not just as logistical challenges, but as moments to build trust and show care. When managers handle health-related time off with clarity, consistency, and compassion, they send a clear message that well-being matters.

This section explores how a proactive, people-first approach to sick leave, injury and mental health strengthens workplace culture, improves retention, and reduces the hidden costs of burnout and absenteeism. How you manage health-related leave sends a powerful workplace culture signal: encouraging rest, avoiding guilt-tripping, and respecting privacy shows that your workplace values employee wellbeing—and that ultimately protects your business, too.

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Understanding BC's Illness and Injury Leave

Sick leave in BC is officially illness and injury leave because it incorporates leave for being sick and/or being unable to work because of injury. Being sick was treated very differently before the pandemic of 2020. People came to work and did their best regardless of how crummy they felt. This is not today's reality—or the law. As of 2022, BC enacted paid illness and injury leave, granting all full- and part-time employees **five paid days** and **three unpaid days** each calendar year. This is a statutory entitlement, not subject to employer discretion.

A worker who joins your company at any time during the year is eligible for all five "average days" of paid illness or injury leave plus the three days of unpaid leave for that calendar year after 90 days of consecutive employment. This sick leave cannot be prorated for an employee who starts after January 1, nor is it accumulated over time. For example, a person who leaves your company in May—but had already worked 90 days by January 1—would still be entitled to all five paid days.

SICK LEAVE NOTES IN BC

While it may seem important to require employees to provide reasonable documentation, such as a doctor's note or therapist's letter, BC has introduced legislation to ban the use of sick notes for short-term absences. This is because most people with cold or flu or even COVID don't need a doctor visit BUT do spread disease by going to a doctor office and because writing the notes takes valuable time away from patient care.

The best practice around sick leave is not to require notes and to trust that people are taking time in order not to spread their sickness.

MORE INFO on ILLNESS & INJURY LEAVE in BC:
https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/employment-business/employment-standards-advice/employment-standards/forms-resources/igm/esa-part-6-section-49-1
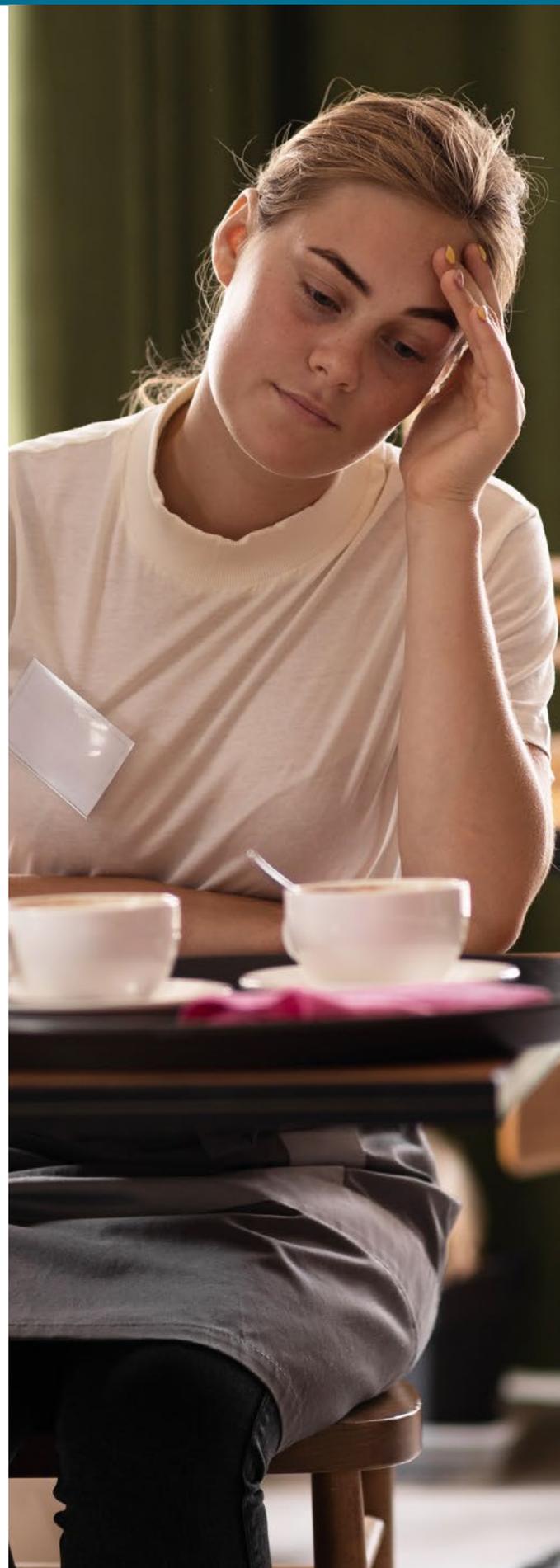
Mental Health & Time Off

Managers and leaders are reporting a sharp rise in mental health concerns being brought to their attention over the past 2-3 years. Anxiety, burnout, and stress-related illnesses are now some of the most common reasons for time off. These signs of poor mental health don't just affect how someone feels—they impact how they show up, solve problems, manage pressure, and interact with others. In hospitality, where we rely on positive, people-facing interactions, this impact is especially pronounced.

The old restaurant culture of long hours, last-minute overtime, and back-to-back closing and opening shifts doesn't resonate for the workers of today. That adrenaline-fueled pace may get you through a busy week, but over time it creates a burnout, absenteeism, and disengagement.

To build everyday awareness in your managers and leaders, they need to know how to recognize early signs of mental strain—not just for others, but for themselves too. Small actions—like encouraging breaks, addressing scheduling strain, and having regular check-ins—help reduce the risk of full-blown burnout and long-term absences. go2HR has online training available for managers/leaders to build their mental health IQ at low or no cost: the link is provided below.

Four Simple Commitments for Better Mental Health at Work:

- Offer predictable schedules, for all staff including managers and leaders, whenever possible so staff can plan their lives and manage their wellbeing with confidence.
- Promote time off and breaks as a key part of your culture. Don't just allow people to rest—actively encourage it.
- Talk about mental health in coaching conversations—ask employees how they're feeling, and what support they need.
- Address known stressors directly by focusing on solutions. When staff bring up concerns, take them seriously and act when you can.

If you need support in this space, reach out to these free mental health at resources for employers:

Canadian Mental Health Association | Learning Hub - https://peopleworkingwellbc.ca/learning-hub/

go2HR | Mental Health at Work - https://www.go2hr.ca/health-safety/mental-health-at-work

Practical Tools for Managers and Leaders

Supporting employee health—including mental health—isn't just about complying with BC's current illness and injury laws. It's a leadership practice that should be trained and encouraged.

Illness and injury may seem straightforward, however, understanding stress, anxiety and burnout are also essential in helping your restaurant spot organizational strain early—before it leads to absenteeism or deeper performance issues. Taking a strategic approach to illness, injury, and mental health doesn't mean doing more—it means managing time off and wellness more thoughtfully, for the benefit of your team.

Providing managers with the right tools and mindset will remove the guesswork from managing illness and injury leave and ensure consistency, fairness, and efficiency in managing absences.

Here are 12 key strategies to deploy:

1. Document and implement solid policies.
Start with the foundation. Ensure managers and leaders know and can communicate both BC's Illness and Injury Leave entitlements and your company policies around them. These policies should be communicated as protections—not punishments—allowing your team to set the tone for a supportive, trust-based culture around sick leave and wellness.

2. Integrate expectations into onboarding and communication.
Build clarity early. When expectations are communicated during onboarding and reinforced regularly, it makes it easy for employees to report illness or injury or mental health challenges without hesitation.

3. Lead by example.
Show your team that health and wellness are central to how your team functions at work. Managers and leaders should take sick leave when needed, encourage others to do the same, and respond consistently and fairly when absences occur. When leaders model the behaviours they expect from their team, it sets a clear, visible standard—while favouritism or uneven treatment quickly erodes trust.

4. Encourage responsible sick leave.
Normalize the sick part of illness and injury leave. Reinforce that staying home when unwell is a responsible act—one that protects the team, the guest experience, and the business.

5. Equip managers with a plan when a person reports illness or injury.
People will call in sick or get injured. Make sure that managers and leaders have a plan on what to (and how to) communicate with other team members that someone is going to be off, what language or tone to use, how to show which shift(s) needs filling and when the shift has been filled.

6. Discuss mental health openly.
Expand the conversation: recognize that anxiety, burnout, and stress are legitimate health concerns. When mental health is acknowledged as part of your sick leave policy, employees are more likely to seek help early—before problems escalate.

7. Encourage mental health days.
Prevent burnout before it builds. Make it okay for staff to take time for emotional and mental recovery, just as they would for physical health.

8. Communicate with compassion.
Lead with empathy, even when it feels challenging. Offer guidance and support to help managers and leaders feel confident in showing compassion when staff bring up concerns about illness, injury, or mental health.

9. Train managers to spot signs of overload.
Equip your team leaders to recognize the signs of strain, stress and burnout in themselves and in their co-workers. If they know the signs, they can intervene early and constructively. Address known stressors directly by focusing on solutions.

10. Spot patterns early and act supportively.
Repeated short absences can signal rising stress or deeper issues. Don't ignore the signs: address them with curiosity and support, not assumption.

11. Be proactive about illness prevention.
Prevention is protection. Provide hand sanitizer, support optional mask use, and encourage openness when someone's been exposed to a communicable illness like COVID or measles.

12. Follow up.
Specifically with injury and mental health challenges supportive check-in are important to managing recovery and return to work, especially if return to work requires accommodations or adapted schedules.

Tools to support effective sick leave management:

1. Policies and Guidelines
- Include a comprehensive scheduling and leave policy in your Employee Handbook or Code of Conduct.
- Use quick-reference guides or flowcharts for common absence scenarios. (eg. paid leave, unpaid leave, short term disability)
- Document how mental health fits into your company's illness and injury leave.

→ Download and customize our SCHEDULING and SICK LEAVE POLICY template.

2. Scheduling and Communication
- Stick to a consistent scheduling format: 10 days or two weeks in advance is the best practice.
- Consider scheduling software for ease of shift coverage and peer-to-peer shift swaps.
- Use real-time communication platforms like Slack or WhatsApp for real-time updates and coverage coordination.

3. Health and Wellness Support
- Ensure managers know how to direct employees to health resources, such as Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs), Mind the Bar https://mindthebar.com/ or telehealth services.
- Managers or leaders can also be empowered to reach out to go2HR for free professional support with human resources or mental health challenges with team members. Find your Regional HR Consultant contact info here: https://www.go2hr.ca/human-resources/hr-advisory

4. Documentation and Compliance
- Designate a contact for sick leave questions and how leave is tracked.
- Set up alerts when an employee reaches:
    - three consecutive sick days, or
    - four total days in a year.
- Use these alerts to trigger a supportive check-in, discuss patterns, and initiate a next steps conversation—whether that's planning a return to work, discussing unpaid leave, or referring the employee to short-term disability options.

How to handle questionable illness or injury leave

A positive workplace culture around illness and injury days helps managers trust that staff are using the time appropriately. In rare cases where someone is seen skiing or posting vacation content while supposedly unwell, it's appropriate to follow up with a conversation and provide written notice that this is not acceptable. Repeated dishonesty may be grounds for discipline or dismissal.

Effective strategies to managing concerns around sick time are:
- Track usage and monitor for unusual patterns.
- If there seems to be a repeat concern, talk to the employee about the problem—approaching it with concern and empathy.
- Privately follow up to understand the situation.
- Consider whether a duty to inquire exists (i.e., if a health or mental health issue is affecting their work).

If a situation seems usual or a conflicting pattern is developing, this is another time to reach out to go2HR's for their complimentary human resources advisory services before taking formal action. Find your Regional HR Consultant here: https://www.go2hr.ca/human-resources/hr-advisory

Your Scheduling & Sick Leave Policy should include:
- ✓ How and when schedules are shared with staff;
- ✓ The steps for requesting and approving schedule changes and sick leave;
- ✓ How and who to notify when they are unwell or unable to work due to an injury or mental health challenge;
- ✓ Who manages sick leave questions and approvals;
- ✓ Who tracks paid vs. unpaid days;
- ✓ Where they can access the sick leave policy.

TIP: We've created a template for a dedicated document, but you can also integrate these guidelines into your Code of Conduct or Employee Handbook.

EMPLOYEE-REPORTED CHALLENGES IN RESTAURANT WORKPLACE CULTURE

So far, this guide has focused on the employer's role in shaping proactive, people-first workplace cultures. However, each restaurant's success is also deeply rooted in how its employees perceive their work environment.

We've identified 12 common employee-reported concerns. Each is presented with examples in employees' own words and linked to workplace culture tools or practices you can implement or adapt. Viewing challenges through an employee lens can help uncover blind spots, identify opportunities for improving communication, and build trust.

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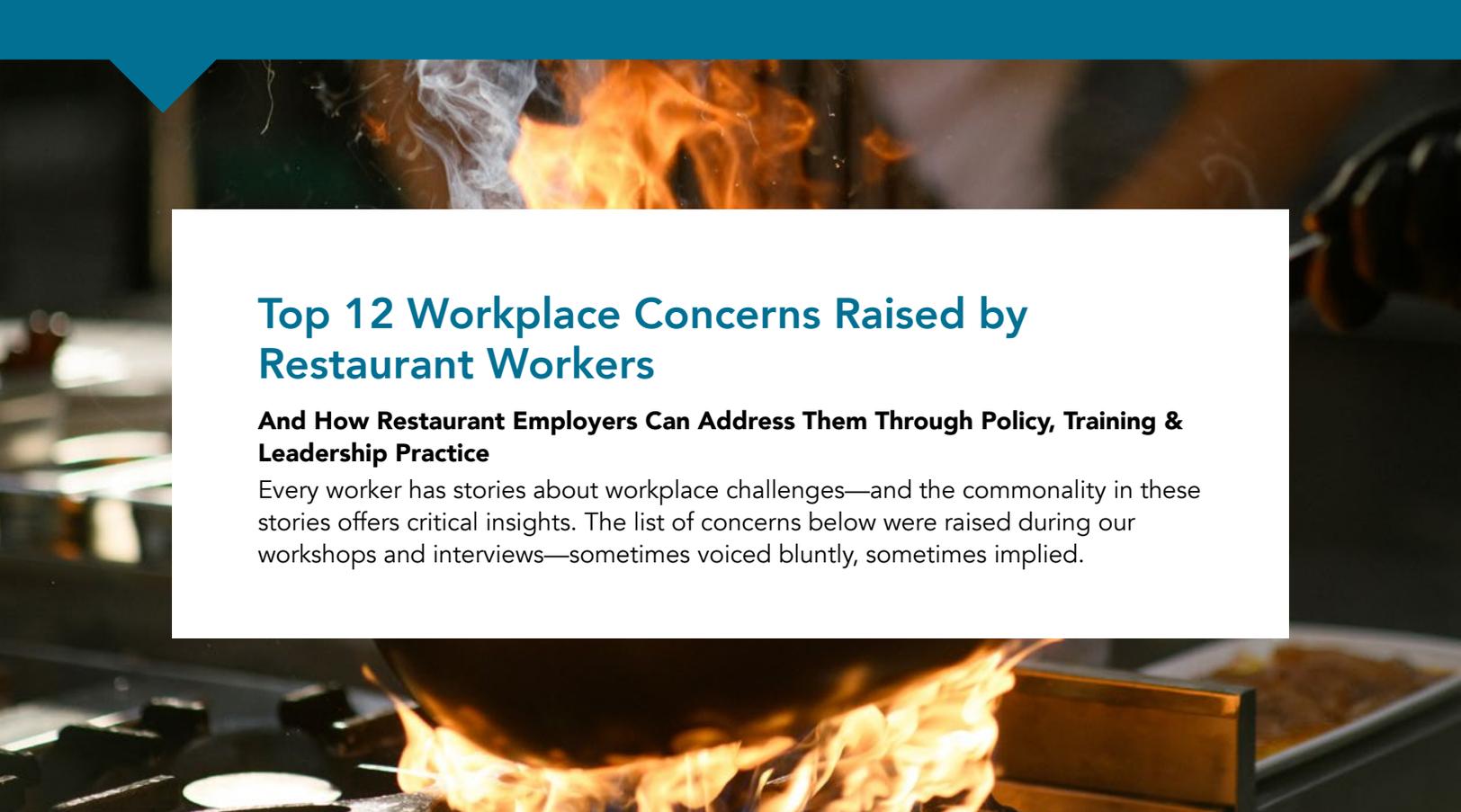
Top 12 Workplace Concerns Raised by Restaurant Workers

And How Restaurant Employers Can Address Them Through Policy, Training & Leadership Practice

Every worker has stories about workplace challenges—and the commonality in these stories offers critical insights. The list of concerns below were raised during our workshops and interviews—sometimes voiced bluntly, sometimes implied.

Whether concerns are stated outright or more subtly, they point to key opportunities for leadership to guide positive change. Two leadership practices rose to the top for helping to address a range of concerns: **active listening**—including noticing what is left unsaid and how messages are received—and **staying open to feedback in all its forms**. Managers and leaders can make a lasting difference by deploying values-based policies and procedures, consistently and clearly, whether resolving a single issue or a recurring pattern.

In this section, we highlight tools and templates from earlier in the guide when they can help address a specific employee concern.

SUMMARY OF CONCERNS

→ **CONCERN 1:** Feeling invisible, undervalued or unrecognized/unappreciated

→ **CONCERN 2:** Feeling out of the loop and experiencing a lack of consistency

→ **CONCERN 3:** Struggling with work-life balance and/or poor scheduling

→ **CONCERN 4:** Rising burnout, stress and mental health challenges at work

→ **CONCERN 5:** Conflict or drama at work

→ **CONCERN 6:** Unequal treatment and lack of accountability

→ **CONCERN 7:** No room to grow or opportunity for wage increases

→ **CONCERN 8:** Lack of job clarity, inconsistent training and/or unclear expectations

→ **CONCERN 9:** Feeling unsafe at work

→ **CONCERN 10:** Lack of opportunity for input or not feeling heard

→ **CONCERN 11:** Frustration with resistance to change

→ **CONCERN 12:** Struggling with poor leadership and poor communication

CONCERN 1: Feeling invisible, undervalued or unrecognized/unappreciated

Employees report a lack of recognition for their hard work and contributions and/or that acknowledgment takes a back seat to the day-to-day rush of operations.

What your team might be saying:
- "I feel like no one notices how hard I work, even on the toughest shifts."
- "Management never says thank you or gives any feedback unless I've done something wrong."
- "Sometimes I wonder if they even see how much I care and the effort I put in."

Actions you can start today:
- Train managers to make appreciation and real-time feedback part of a daily habit, even small acknowledgements go a long way.
- Celebrate team wins publicly and individual effort privately.
- Ask your team what kind of recognition feels meaningful to them.
- Introduce a recognition program that celebrates employee achievements (e.g., Employee of the Month, shout-outs during team meetings).
- Establish a structured rewards program to acknowledge exceptional performance and milestones.

Specific Strategies:
- **Recognition Tracker or Calendar:** Use a shared manager/leader calendar to track and schedule personal and team milestones (e.g., birthdays, work anniversaries) as well as performance achievements (e.g., "Employee of the Month" program). Google and Outlook both have shared online calendar options.
- **Manager/Leader Tool Folder:** Create a shared drive with ready-to-use recognition templates (thank-you notes, social media shout-outs, or in-house recognition posters) to make highlighting employee contributions easy.
- **Staff Shout-Out Wall or Whiteboard:** Create a space where team members can write positive notes to each other.
- **Weekly Rituals**: Build in a ritual that makes appreciation part of the weekly culture. This can be as easy as starting each new week by recognizing a recent success story.
- **Thank You Notes:** Hand-written notes still go a long way in showing authentic appreciation.

CONCERN 2: Feeling out of the loop and experiencing a lack of consistency

In fast-paced restaurant environments, communication can break down—leading to confusion, unclear instructions, lack of consistency and a lack transparency around policies, scheduling, or organizational changes.

What your team might be saying:
- "Nobody told me the menu changed until a customer asked me."
- "I always feel like I'm guessing at what's expected."
- "We find out about new policies from customers or colleagues before we hear it from managers."
- "I've brought up concerns before, but it feels like they just ignore us."
- "Every manager tells me something different."

Actions you can start today:
- Hold regular team huddles or check-ins to share updates.
- Train managers/leaders to apply company policies consistently.
- Use dependable channels (like text groups, Slack or WhatsApp) for real-time, team-wide important updates.
- Set a 24-hour rule: big changes must be communicated to all staff within a day.
- Invite staff to ask clarifying questions at every meeting.

Specific Strategies:
- **Employee Handbook:** Maintain a current handbook (digital or print) that clearly outlines workplace policies, expectations, and available resources—and make sure staff know where to find the most current version.
- **Standards Meetings with Managers:** Meet with managers regularly to review your core expectations and any updates to policies. This helps ensure managers deliver consistent training and coaching.
- **Communication Board:** Use an old-school whiteboard or bulletin board in the business to showcase certain key policies, updates, new dishes, promotions, and reminders.
- **"First to Know" System:** Make it clear that if expectations change, it's the manager's responsibility to retrain employees and introduce the updated standards before they go public (e.g., before social media announcements).
- **Policy Update Tracker:** Use a simple tracker (calendar or spreadsheet) for managers to log when key updates are made and when they have been communicated to staff.
- **Set a recurring calendar:** Revisit and update policies annually with staff input where possible.
- **Daily or Weekly Huddles:** Host 5-10 minute team meetings to cover key updates, events, or changes, include timely policy refreshers.

Available Template:

→ **Download our CODE OF CONDUCT template:** This resource helps outline clear behavioural expectations and share values to foster a respectful, ethical, and professional environment.

CONCERN 3: Struggling with work-life balance and/or poor scheduling

Erratic schedules, last-minute changes, and a lack of flexibility wear down even the best team members. Many young workers report that scheduling practices do not respect their pre-existing personal commitments.

What your team might be saying:
- "I never know what my hours will be week to week. It's impossible to plan my life."
- "They always change the schedule at the last minute without asking if it works for me."
- "I always get stuck with shifts that don't match my stated availability."
- "It's impossible to rest or take time off without feeling guilty."

Actions you can start today:
- Be consistent about when shifts are posted (e.g. every other Tuesday) and aim to give at least 10-14 days' notice.
- When employees make a good-faith effort to accommodate the business—like picking up last-minute shifts— show respect by accommodating their time-off requests when possible.
- Avoid last-minute schedule changes unless absolutely necessary. When they happen, communicate the changes clearly, directly, and respectfully.

Specific Strategies:
- **Availability tracking:** Use a scheduling software or other tracking tool that lets staff set availability in advance, making it easier to build stable schedules and reduce shift changes.
- **Standardize the time-off process:** Create a clear, standardized process (paper form, shared calendar, or software option) for requesting time off, and make it easy for managers/leaders to track and approve requests.
- **Post shift coverage guidelines:** Provide clear instructions for how employees should request shift coverage or report an absence—and who must approve changes.
- **Restrict back-to-back close-open shifts:** Build a rule into your scheduling that limits the ability to schedule the same person for a closing shift one day and then an opening shift the next to protect rest.

CONCERN 4: Rising burnout, stress and mental health challenges at work

Employees are increasingly reporting mental health struggles. This highlights a growing need for industry-wide wellness supports and for workplaces that talk openly about mental health.

What your team might be saying:
- "I'm feeling really overwhelmed, and it's starting to affect my work and well-being."
- "I'm exhausted, but I can't afford to say no to extra shifts."
- "I love this job, but I don't think I can keep this pace up."
- "I've told them I'm struggling, but they just don't care about my mental health."
- "I go home exhausted every night and dread coming back the next day."

Actions you can start today:
- Build a fair and predictable scheduling system—and avoid always asking the same people to cover.
- Encourage rest by respecting days off and discouraging guilt-tripping around taking time off.
- Educate employees on BC's Illness and Injury leave and encourage your leaders/manager to take leave themselves so they model the behaviour they want in their teams.
- Conduct proactive mental health check-ins and offer wellness initiatives, such as access to mental health resources, free training or paid wellness/personal days where possible.

Strategies:
- **Predictable Schedules:** Publish schedules at least 10-14 days in advance whenever possible.
- **Mandatory Break Policies:** Enforce regular breaks during shifts—no skipping.
- **Normalize Time Off:** Encourage taking earned vacation days and normalize sick days as necessary rest.
- **Manager/Leader Sick Leave Talking Points:** Create a practical primer for managers and leaders on BC's Illness and Injury Leave, how to respond when a staff member cannot work due to illness or injury, and how to track leave usage.
- **Scheduling and Sick Leave Policy Statement:** Formalize your policy for how employees request time off, switch shifts, or report illness or injury.

Resources:
- **Mind the Bar** https://mindthebar.com/: Free memberships for hospitality employees give access to online mental health and wellness resources.
- **People Working Well** https://peopleworkingwellbc.ca/: Free training videos and practical resources for leaders/managers looking to build stronger mental health awareness and support in the workplace.

CONCERN 5: Conflict or drama at work

Employees report feeling excluded due to cliques, bullying and harassment or conflict. Without proactive leadership, issues like disrespect, gossip, or inappropriate language can fester and create a toxic or isolating environment. Even if not reported, some staff may experience exclusion or unfair treatment related to identity, background, or other personal characteristics.

What your team might be saying:
- "There's a lot of drama here, and management just lets it happen."
- "I've seen people get treated unfairly or talked down to, and nobody steps in."
- "Sometimes I feel uncomfortable because of how people joke or act, but I don't think reporting it would make a difference."
- "There are cliques here, and if you're not in one, you feel left out."
- "We're supposed to work as a team, but everyone is just looking out for themselves."
- "If we make a mistake, we get embarrassed instead of coached."
- "Managers talk down to us or yell in front of customers."
- "I feel like some people are given more respect or opportunity because of who they are, and others get overlooked."

Actions you can start today:
- Train managers and leaders to:
    - Recognize and address inappropriate behaviour—and ensure they follow through when issues arise.
    - Model calm, respectful communication even under pressure.
- Set team norms and expectations during onboarding and refresh them regularly. Make clear that gossip, exclusion or disrespect won't be tolerated.
- Conduct team-building activities to improve trust and reduce cliques.
- Encourage collaboration through cross-training or team-based projects.
- Ask about team dynamics and inclusion during one-on-one check-ins.

Specific Strategy:
- **Coaching Over Criticism:** Train managers to give corrective feedback privately and constructively.
- **Top-Down Accountability:** Hold owners and managers to the same (or higher) behavioural standards as employees.
- **Mentorship Program:** Pair new team members with an existing staff mentor to help them build early connections and feel welcomed from day one.
- **Anonymous Feedback Box (digital or paper):** Set up a way for staff to report conflicts, issues and ideas. Ensure that there is a follow-up process to deal with any issues that are brought forward.

Available Templates:

→ Download our ZERO-TOLERANCE BULLYING AND HARASSMENT POLICY: Our policy template includes reporting procedures and a commitment to impartial investigations, as required under WorkSafeBC.

→ Download our DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND INCLUSION POLICY and RESPECTFUL WORKPLACE POLICY templates: Choose from three customizable versions to clearly define the behaviours and values you expect from your team, helping foster a respectful, inclusive workplace culture.

CONCERN 6: Unequal treatment and lack of accountability

Connected to Concern 5, employees raise concerns about unequal treatment or lack of consequences for poor behaviour. This can show up in how shifts are assigned, how promotions are awarded or how conflicts are handled. Even perceived unfairness can seriously affect morale and damage trust. It's also important to be mindful that inequities may sometimes be felt most by employees who are hesitant to speak up, or who already feel they're on the margins of the team.

What your team might be saying:
- "The same people always get the best shifts or opportunities." Or "If you're friends with the boss, you get better shifts or second chances."
- "I always get asked for the worst, last-minute shifts, and I feel like if I say no, I won't get any shifts at all."
- "When there's an issue, it depends on who you are whether it gets dealt with or ignored."
- "No one deals with problem coworkers, so we're stuck picking up the slack."
- "Policies change depending on who's working."
- "Sometimes it feels like people with certain connections or backgrounds are treated better."

Actions you can start today:
- Set clear expectations for staff and management behaviour—this can be done using our **Code of Conduct Template**.
- Rotate opportunities intentionally—whether it's leading a shift, training others, or taking part in special events—to keep things equitable.
- Foster open discussions during team meetings to surface concerns early and keep communication open.
- Encourage anonymous feedback to catch blind spots.
- Make sure you review it for patterns that might highlight concerns from staff who are less comfortable speaking up directly.

Specific Strategies:
- **Document Policies:** Be transparent about how scheduling, raises, promotions, and discipline decisions are made so they're not open to interpretation.
- **Manager Training:** Teach managers to apply rules and policies equally to everyone—no exceptions—and ensure they recognize and reduce their own and their staff's unconscious bias..
- **Conflict Resolution:** Have a standard, fair process for addressing complaints and concerns.
- **Incident Logs:** Keep a record of performance concerns or interventions—not to punish, but to stay consistent and support growth.
- **Scheduling Matrix:** Track shift assignments to ensure equitable hours, sections, or roles.
- **Performance Reviews:** We recommend regular one-on-one coaching sessions as the best way to gain insight into employee development—but performance reviews still have a big role to play in promotions and raises.

Available Templates:

→ Download our DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND INCLUSION POLICY and RESPECTFUL WORKPLACE POLICY: Be clear about how you expect workers to interact respectfully with one of three customizable templates.

- **Progressive Discipline Templates**: go2HR has tools and templates to support you with letters and conversations regarding progressive discipline. Find the contact for your Regional HR Consultant here: https://www.go2hr.ca/human-resources/hr-advisory

CONCERN 7: No room to grow or opportunity for wage increases

Employees become discouraged (or quit) when they don't see a pathway to advancement—especially in regions of the province where wages struggle to keep up with the rising cost of living. In addition, many restaurant employees say they struggle to make ends meet, especially when hours are unpredictable or part-time. The absence of benefits also impacts retention—particularly for those with families or health needs.

What your team might be saying:
- "I've been here for years, and I'm still in the same role with no idea how to move up."
- "This is just a job—not a place to build a future."
- "I want to take on more, but no one notices or offers support."
- "It's hard to stay motivated when my pay doesn't reflect the work I do."
- "My boss expects full-time commitment but offers part-time hours and no benefits."

Actions you can start today:
- Hold regular one-on-one coaching check-ins that touch on employee goals, interests, career development, and pathways to promotions.
- Explore cost-effective benefits (e.g., health spending accounts, meal perks, or wellness stipends).
- Consider offering guaranteed minimum hours for key roles.
- Offer cross-training to build new skills and break up routine.
- Subsidize training programs or certifications as an investment in your employees' long-term success.
- Celebrate small wins and recognize and develop leadership potential when you see it.

Specific Strategies:
- **Total Rewards Summary:** Create a one-page handout that outlines all employee perks—wages, meals, discounts, time off, recognition—so staff see the full value of working for you.
- **Skills Matrix:** Create a visual roadmap that outlines the skills and competencies tied to each role, so staff can clearly see how to grow from their current position.
- **Raise & Review Policy:** Draft a simple document outlining how wages are set and when raises or reviews are considered. Keep it transparent and consistent to reduce confusion and boost motivation.
- **Mentorship Program:** Pair experienced team members with newer or junior staff to share knowledge, foster professional growth, and build team connections.
- **Career Ladder Snapshot:** Through one-on-one coaching, create a simple visual showing what skills or responsibilities lead to promotions (e.g., growth steps from Host → Server → Shift Lead).

Available Template:

→ Download our EMPLOYEE BENEFITS OVERVIEW: Use the customizable template to create your one-page handout that outlines all employee perks—wages, meals, discounts, time off, recognition.

CONCERN 8: Lack of job clarity, inconsistent training and/or unclear expectations

Staff often report being thrown into roles with little training, unclear direction, shifting priorities, lack of structure, or inconsistent feedback. This leads to frustration, mistakes, and confusion about what success looks like.

What your team might be saying:
- "I had to figure my job out by trial and error."
- "They threw me on the floor with no real training."
- "They get mad when I do something wrong, but no one ever told me how to do it right."
- "Every manager wants my tasks done a different way and has different expectation of me during my shift."

Actions you can start today:
- Standardize your onboarding and training process starting on day one.
- Train managers/leaders to coach, not criticize, especially in public.
- Regularly review and update training materials to reflect the latest practices and expectations.
- Offer feedback early and often—not just when something goes wrong.
- Encourage a supportive atmosphere where questions are welcome.

Specific Strategies:
- **Onboarding Email Template:** Create a sample email that can be adapted for all new hires that their manager/leader can send them the week before they start with your company. Include "what to expect" on the first day, parking or bus info, and what the dress code or uniform will be.
- **Structured Training Plan:** Create a checklist of what employees must learn in milestones over the first 30–60 days. Helps managers track what's been covered and spot gaps early.
- **Training Buddy/Mentorship Plan:** Pair new hires with experienced staff for their first five to ten shifts.
- **Task Cards or Cheat Sheets:** Post mini how-to guides for key tasks (e.g., closing checklist, coffee bar steps, POS entries).
- **Follow-Up Touchpoints:** Set up a quick check-in at the end of the first week to review questions and build confidence.

Available Template Downloads:

→ **PERSONALIZED GROWTH PLAN TEMPLATE:** Use this tool to track skills and training employees want to pursue and outline what leadership will do to support that growth. Include short-term and long-term training or experience goals.

→ **ORIENTATION CHECKLIST:** Customize this checklist to ensure consistency and thoroughness in your onboarding steps including training on operations, workplace policies, health and safety, workplace tour, and team introductions.

→ **ORIENTATION ACKNOWLEDGEMENT FORM:** Have both trainer and trainee formally sign an acknowledgement of training and that they understand key policies/procedures.

→ **NEW HIRE PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT:** Aligned with our Prospective Employee Rating tool, this grid allows to you benchmark where the new hire is compared to where you thought they would be when you interviewed them. Recommendation is that you use seven different categories to assess "fit" that are consistent over the two processes.

→ **COACHING CONVERSATIONS QUESTIONS / CHECKLIST:** This tool provides a framework and a list of questions that incorporate professional development into regular one-on-ones, discussing employees' goals and providing resources or opportunities for advancement.

CONCERN 9: Feeling unsafe at work

Employees report an increase in safety concerns. This includes kitchen safety, broken equipment and cleanliness, safety with regards to harassment, aggression or unsafe situations from customers, and safety with regards to the work hours (late nights, early mornings, or the environment around the workplace)—all of which can affect safety, productivity, and morale. It's also important to recognize that some staff may feel more vulnerable than others in certain situations, depending on their role, schedule, or personal circumstances.

What your team might be saying:
- "The kitchen gets so hot, and we don't have proper ventilation or fans."
- "Equipment is always breaking down, and it feels dangerous sometimes."
- "We're supposed to clean, but we're not given enough time or the right supplies to do it properly."
- "We're told the customer is always right—even when they're being abusive."
- "There's no real plan for what to do if a guest crosses the line."
- "I don't feel safe closing (or opening) alone."

EQUIPMENT/CLEANING - Actions you can start today
- Ensure proper ventilation, PPE, tools, and cleaning supplies are available and maintained.
- Train employees on safety protocols during onboarding and conduct annual refreshers: include physical safety but also environmental safety and not-working or broken equipment.
- Empower employees to speak up about safety concerns without fear of retaliation—and respond quickly when they do.

Specific Strategies:
- **Monthly Safety Audits:** Set up an automated calendar reminder to conduct regularly scheduled safety and equipment audits to catch risks before they become hazards (e.g., every 20th of the month). Track anything identified in your log.

CUSTOMERS/ENVIRONMENT - Actions you can start today
- Have a clear plan for manager/leader response and follow-up when issues arise around guests.
- Outline your plan for the safety of employees arriving or departing from work, specifically noting strategies for late nights or early mornings or other high-risk times (e.g., high traffic, low-light, events impacting hours of business).
- Train staff on de-escalation techniques and what to do in unsafe situations that arise.
- Post guest Code of Conduct policies in visible areas—your team should know what's not tolerated.
- Back your staff—make it clear that abuse from customers will not be tolerated.

Specific Strategies:
- **Signage for Guests:** Post signage in a guest area (bathroom or reception) that sets the tone and outlines your company's zero-tolerance policies for harassment, discrimination, or aggression toward employees and other guests.
- **Role Play Scenarios:** Practice how to respond to tough situations during team meetings or training.
- **Incident Logs or Incident Report Form:** Track and respond to safety-related incidents or complaints using a log or reporting tool to identify patterns. If you choose a form, make it straightforward, and confidential. If you choose a log, decide whether employees can access it directly or if managers must enter reports based on employee input.

Note: WorkSafeBC has a specific form 6 that must be used for reporting a work related illness or injury: https:// www.worksafebc.com/en/resources/claims/forms/application-for-compensation-and-report-of-injury-or-occupational-disease-form-6

- **Health and Safety Orientation:** WorkSafeBC requires all employees to complete a comprehensive workplace health and safety process and to sign off after the training they receive. Additional training is required for young and first-time workers. Link to WorkSafeBC: https://www.worksafebc.com/en/health-safety/create-manage/getting-started
- **Health and Safety Training:** Jump to go2HR's Health and Safety video training tool. https://train.go2hr.ca/search?q=Health+and+Safety Free industry-specific video training available through go2HR.

Available Template Downloads:

→ RESPECTFUL WORKPLACE POLICY and BULLYING AND HARASSMENT POLICY: Customizable frameworks for defining expectations with regards to employee right to a safe and respectful workplace.

→ GUEST CODE OF CONDUCT: You can create a standalone Guest Code of Conduct or include it in your larger Employee Code of Conduct. Our template includes a section for guest section on the last page.

CONCERN 10: Lack of opportunity for input or not feeling heard

When employees feel they have no say in decisions that affect them—like scheduling, policies, or menu changes—it leads to frustration, disengagement, and a disconnect from leadership. It also results in missed opportunities for valuable insights.

What your team might be saying:
- "They make decisions that affect us without ever asking what we think."
- "If I make a suggestion, nothing comes of it."
- "It's like our opinions don't matter as long as the restaurant keeps running."
- "We're the ones doing the work—we should be part of the conversation."

Actions you can start today:
- Involve employees early in discussions that impact their day-to-day experience—not just after decisions are made.
- Ask for improvement ideas during staff meetings or pre-shift huddles.
- When implementing employee suggestions, publicly acknowledge and celebrate those contributions to reinforce that input matters.
- Communicate the "why" behind decisions clearly to build understanding and trust.
- Close the loop. Share what input you acted on and how it was used.

Specific Strategies:
- **Employee Feedback Survey Template:** A simple, anonymous survey (4-6 questions) covering work satisfaction, communication, management, workplace culture, and suggestions for improvement. Distribute quarterly using paper forms or free tools like Google Forms to track trends and progress.
- **Suggestion Box (Digital and Physical):** Make it easy for employees to submit ideas, suggestions, or concerns: this can be a basic, paper form that provides space to outline the issue and the suggestions. Monitor it regularly and consider offering a small monthly prize for an employee whose idea was implemented. Acknowledge that it's okay for staff to provide their feedback anonymously.
- **Monthly or Bi-Monthly "Town Hall" Meetings:** Host open forums where employees can ask questions, share ideas, voice concerns, or suggest improvements directly—creating open, two-way communication with management.

- **Designate a Feedback Champion:** Assign a team leader or manager to collect, track and elevate staff input. This person can also provide regular updates on what's being actioned, ensuring the feedback loop stays visible and consistent.

Available Template Downloads:

→ **CONDUCTING COACHING CONVERSATIONS – QUESTIONS:** This template includes a large number of questions for managers to consider using during one-on-one check-ins, covering topics like workload, motivation, career goals, and team dynamics.

→ **MANAGER GUIDE TO OFFBOARDING:** Use this tool to gain honest feedback from departing employees and identify recurring issues or blind spots that may not surface during regular operations.

CONCERN 11: Frustration with resistance to change

Some employees report feeling frustrated when restaurants are slow to adapt to modern workplace practices, such as flexible scheduling, mental health support, or incorporating technology to improve operations.

What your team might be saying:
- "The industry is changing, but we're stuck doing things the old way."
- "They don't want to hear new ideas or try new systems that could make our jobs easier."
- "I feel like we're behind other places because management is afraid to try online scheduling. Shift changes are so difficult."

Actions you can start today:
- Invite employees to suggest ideas for improving operations, technology or scheduling practices.
- Pilot new tools or systems with team input and adjust based on their feedback.
- Share the why: Be transparent about the reasons behind adopting or not adopting changes—it's critical for enlisting employee support.
- Identify one outdated system this month and evaluate options to modernize it with employee involvement.

Specific Strategies:
- **Small-Scale Pilot Projects:** Choose one outdated system (e.g., manual scheduling) and run a 30-day trial with a modern tool like 7shifts, Sling, or another scheduling app. Gather employee feedback throughout the pilot to make adjustments before fully rolling out.
- **Change Champion Team:** Invite a few employees to form a small "Innovation Team" that tests new tools or processes first. Their experience can help troubleshoot problems early and build peer support across the team.
- **Quarterly Technology Review:** Every 3-4 months, set aside time to ask your team: "Is there anything we're doing now that could be easier, faster, or safer with the right tool or system?" Use the feedback to prioritize what changes are most important.
- **Training and Transition Plans:** When implementing new technology or systems, provide hands-on demos, quick tip sheets, and clear transition timelines so employees feel supported rather than surprised.
- **Celebrate Successful Changes:** When a new process or system works well, recognize and celebrate the team's adaptability—even something simple like a thank-you note or small reward helps reinforce a positive mindset toward future changes.

CONCERN 12: Struggling with poor leadership and poor communication

Employees report that managers and leaders sometimes lack the skills, empathy, or the consistency needed to effectively support staff and resolve conflicts.

What your team might be saying:
- "Our managers don't really listen. They just tell us what to do without explaining what's going on."
- "When there's a problem, it feels like managers avoid it instead of dealing with it."
- "Management doesn't check in unless something has gone wrong."

Actions you can start today:
- Focus manager/leader training on communication, empathy, and conflict resolution.
- Set and communicate clear expectations for manager behaviour—especially around respect, fairness and approachability.
- Use a consistent method to share updates (e.g., group chat, whiteboard, or shift notes).
- Gather regular, anonymous feedback about leadership to spot trends and identify coaching opportunities.
- Support your managers with the tools, coaching, and feedback they need to grow into effective leaders.
- Normalize manager/leader check-ins with their team members regularly—not just during issues.
- Share team huddle or pre-shift meeting notes with people who aren't working that shift to keep everyone in the loop.

Available Template Downloads:
- **go2HR Supervisor Training:** go2HR offers a combination of free and low-cost training options.
  https://www.go2hr.ca/training
  https://train.go2hr.ca/products/9114-supervisor-training-module-developing-your-leadership

→ **MANAGER ONBOARDING AND TRAINING CHECKLIST:** A practical guide that ensures every new leader understands your expectations around respectful communication, conflict resolution, accountability, and customer service.

→ **MANAGER SELF-ASSESSMENT TOOL:** A simple yet powerful reflection tool that encourages managers to evaluate their leadership habits and identify areas for growth.

→ **CONDUCTING COACHING CONVERSATIONS:** Our template offers a wide range of questions for managers to consider using during one-on-one check-ins with employees, helping them to connect with employees on topics like workload, motivation, and career goals.

Addressing Employee Reported Issues

Employees want work to be rewarding and respectful. Most often, it's not the position or the tasks that reduce job satisfaction—it's how people feel while doing the work. By listening to your team and taking small, consistent actions to address concerns, you'll build a stronger, more motivated, and more loyal workplace.

In addition, using our tools and suggestions to build a clear, consistent response will help chart a path towards a stronger workplace culture going forward.

If one or two of the areas above resonate with you, start there. When you make meaningful changes, make sure you are transparent about them. You don't have to change overnight— just start by showing your team that you're willing to listen, learn and take action.

FINDING THE RIGHT CANDIDATES FOR YOUR WORKPLACE CULTURE

One of the first ways prospective employees interact with your company culture is during the hiring process. An intentional approach to recruiting—one that puts your company values at the forefront—can help you find candidates who will not only integrate into your team but also elevate it.

Visit **CHEFSTABLESOCIETY**.com
for a comprehensive list of

→ AVAILABLE TEMPLATES

Here are three tools we've developed to help support that process:

→ Download our SETTING EXPECTATIONS FOR NEW WORKERS template: A one-page snapshot of your workplace culture that gives prospective employees a clear picture of what to expect if they join your team.

→ Download our INTERVIEWING CANDIDATES FOR CULTURAL FIT template: A guide with questions designed to explore the motivation, style, attitude, and values of potential team members.

→ Download our PROSPECTIVE EMPLOYEE RATING TOOL: A consistent scoring system to assess alignment between candidate responses and your company's values and expectations.

By focusing on clear expectations, strategic interview questions, and a consistent rating system, you can quickly assess a candidate's potential to thrive within your unique workplace environment. This process improves hiring outcomes, reduces time spent on poor-fit candidates, and helps you build a team that works well together. Importantly, assessing fit should focus on operational values and behaviours—such as a love of food, respect for colleagues, teamwork, reliability, and commitment to sustainability—rather than personal characteristics like age, gender, or background. This approach ensures that all candidates are evaluated fairly, based on shared workplace values rather than identity, giving everyone an equal opportunity to thrive.

The long-term benefits? Stronger engagement, smoother onboarding, lower turnover, and greater team cohesion. A consistent rating tool also gives you a solid starting point for coaching and development once new hires are on board.

Why does this matter?

Whether there are fewer employees looking for work or more workers competing for fewer jobs, standing out as an employer of choice should always be a priority. A thoughtful hiring process signals that your business respects its team, values contributions, and prioritizes a positive workplace culture—making your restaurant more attractive to talent. By ensuring that your hiring team has consistent expectations around what makes a strong candidate, you can avoid mismatches in attitude, availability, and alignment with the restaurant's values.

Restaurants also frequently rely on first-time workers—whether it's their first job ever or their first job in Canada. Entry-level roles rarely require prior experience or formal education, so hiring people whose values, adaptability, and approach to teamwork align with the restaurant's commitments—such as supporting local producers, valuing sustainability, celebrating diverse cuisines, prioritizing guest experience, or caring about employee well-being—can make training more effective and lead to stronger long-term results.

Setting Expectations for Prospective Workers

Our Setting Expectations Template was created to help restaurateurs clearly communicate key company information to applicants before the hiring process moves too far along.

Many applicants drop off resumés without having eaten at the restaurant, reviewed the menu, visited the website, or even checked the hours of operation. In the past, that might have been seen as inexcusable—but today, it's up to the business to communicate key details early, so candidates can make informed decisions about whether the role or workplace aligns with their availability, values and personal/working style.

We asked: How can restaurant operators ensure candidates are aligned with the business's core requirements before the interview—or before accepting a job?

Our solution? A simple, one-page document that outlines your restaurant's expectations, values, and non-negotiable policies. This one-pager can be shared with anyone submitting a resumé or entering the interview process. It sets the tone for your workplace culture—and helps candidates understand what it means to be part of your team before they commit.

Use your one-pager to share your "MUSTS"—the essentials to succeed in your workplace. These might include:

- **Shifts and availability:** If all employees work evenings or weekends, make that clear.
- **Dress code or hygiene:** If nail polish, jewellery or certain clothing are not permitted, say so.
- **Transportation:** If your business isn't accessible by public transit and staff are required to have or arrange their own reliable transportation, let candidates know.
- **Early mornings or late nights:** If Sunday brunch or late closings are non-negotiable, be upfront.

These expectations should never come as a surprise after someone is hired. Being clear from the start helps avoid drop-off after the first few shifts and build a more engaged, committed team.

The Benefits of Setting Expectations Early

By offering upfront clarity, you not only save time in the hiring process—you also lay a stronger foundation for long-term success. Here's how this approach helps:

- First-time workers know what to expect before their first day.
- Unusual shift patterns or staffing needs can be discussed earlier, with fewer changes later.
- Fewer post-hire conversations about uniforms, grooming, or clothing standards.
- Shortener onboarding and training times in busy, fast-paced restaurants.
- Fewer generational misunderstandings between managers and new hires because expectations are clearly stated up front.
- Faster pathways to attracting like-minded individuals. When prospective workers see that their values align with the company's— like a vegetarian working at a vegetarian restaurant—clear statements help them recognize that alignment from day one.

What to include in Your Expectations Document

To help you create your own one-pager, our template provides sample content for key aspects of your business to give prospective employees a strong, realistic picture of your workplace. You can customize our sample statements to reflect your specific operations and culture.

- Company Profile
- Company Values
- About our Workplace Culture
- Code of Conduct
- Clothing Standards
- Shifts & Scheduling
- Contact Us

→ Download and try our simple one-pager to save time, reduce confusion, and help you hire people who truly belong on your team.

Active Selection of Employees for "Fit"

In this context, "fit" refers to alignment between an employee's values, motivations, and working style with the operational culture, company values and priorities of the restaurant.

An employee with strong "fit" demonstrates:

- **Shared Values:** They share alignment with the restaurant's mission and operational priorities. Examples include a love of food, commitment to sustainability, supporting local producers, valuing teamwork, providing excellent guest experiences, and caring about employee well-being.

- **Compatible Work Style:** They thrive in the day-to-day environment—whether fast-paced counter service, late-night or early-morning shifts, working in a high-pressure setting, providing guest-focused table-side service, balancing speed and attention to quality, or providing exceptional one-on-one service.

- **Aligned Motivation:** Their reasons for wanting to work match the restaurant's purpose—such as a passion for hospitality, a love of seafood, a shared interest in plant forward cuisine, or a passion for people getting together over food.

- **Adaptability:** They integrate into the team while contributing their strengths, showing openness to feedback, growth, and collaboration.

Focusing interview questions and employee rating scales on observable behaviours and operational values helps ensure consistency, fairness, and fosters a sense of belonging and shared purpose—two key drivers of job satisfaction and retention.

Fit First, Skill/Experience Second

Prioritizing workplace culture fit over experience sets your restaurant up for long-term success, higher employee satisfaction, and better guest experiences. Key considerations include the employee's ability to thrive in the specific operational demands of your restaurant—such as multitasking during busy service, following culinary techniques accurately, problem-solving in real time, confidently engaging with guests, using the required POS system, and reliably working core shifts. From a food-values perspective, it also includes sharing a love of seafood, a passion for plant-based foods, a commitment to gluten-free or healthy eating, a love of a high-octane cup of local roast, or a drive to support local farmers and producers. For example, having employees at a seafood restaurant who actively eat and enjoy seafood or ensuring that the new hire for the brunch restaurant is a skilled multi-tasker who thrives in a busy environment, can make or break operational success.

Why this strategy works:

- Employees are more likely to stay when they feel valued, respected, and connected to their managers and peers.

- Employees who enjoy their roles are better equipped to anticipate customers' and coworkers' needs, problem solve, and show empathy—even under pressure.

- When employees are motivated by more than just a paycheque, they are more likely to stick around thereby reducing the costs related to turnover, recruitment, retraining, and lost productivity.

- Employees who connect with your mission and values are typically more engaged, enthusiastic, and willing to go above and beyond—improving service quality, collaboration, and consistency.

Hiring for values and alignment with your culture is an investment—in your team and your guests.

Selecting Interview Questions for Fit

Our Interviewing Candidates for Fit tool includes a wide range of questions to help address:

- Cultural Fit
- Motivation
- Communications Skills
- Problem Solving
- Logic and Reasoning
- Empathy
- Leadership Potential
- Location and Commute Feasibility
- Seasonal Worker Considerations

Each restaurant should select a custom mix of the questions depending on the position, location, and your team's core values. Be intentional about choosing questions that reveal how a candidate thinks, interacts, and solves problems. Problem-solving is a critical, hard-to-teach skill in fast-paced service environments.

Practical Tip: Ask About Commute Early On

Where someone lives and how they plan to get to work is more than logistics—it's about safety, reliability, and long-term fit. If a candidate must walk long distances at night, take infrequent transit, or commute far without a plan, the role may not be sustainable for them. Bring this up early to set realistic expectations on both sides.

Be Inclusive in Your Evaluation

Many candidates—especially youth, newcomers, or those new to the workforce—may lack formal experience or polished interview skills. Look beyond first impressions and create space for them to show their values, adaptability, and potential. *Consider these cues:*

- **Body Language and Presence**
  Candidates who actively listen and ask clarifying questions are likely to engage well with guests and coworkers. However, some people need time to warm up. Start with easier questions to build comfort and confidence.

- **Presentation**
  A candidate who dresses appropriately for your workplace likely pays attention to non-verbal clues—a strong signal for front-of-house roles. BUT remember that some candidates may only have one interview outfit or limited access to professional clothing. Focus more on attitude and effort than appearance.

- **Self-Reflection**
  Look for candidates who can talk about past challenges (even non-work related) and what they learned. This indicates self-awareness, coachability, and resilience—all valuable in dynamic restaurant environments. If they struggle prompt them with no-work examples like school, sports or family responsibilities.

Consistent Rating of Prospective Employees

Interviews aren't just for asking questions—they are your chance to evaluate how well someone might integrate into your team.

→ To support clear, consistent, and fair decisions, download and try our PROSPECTIVE EMPLOYEE RATING TOOL.

It will help you assess candidates based on defined criteria instead of relying on gut instinct or informal impressions.

Why Use a Structured Rating Tool?

Using a consistent framework:

- Makes it easier to compare candidates side-by-side
- Ensures company-wide consistency when multiple individuals do the hiring for your company
- Reduces bias based on age, experience, or background
- Helps your team focus on soft skills, mindset, and cultural fit

How the Tool Works

The template includes a customizable rating grid that can be tailored to different roles—from leadership to front-of-house (FOH) or back-of-house (BOH) positions.

You'll find several pre-loaded rating catergories to choose from, such as:

- Teamwork and Collaboration
- Work Ethic and Reliability
- Passion and Enthusiasm
- Handling Pressure

Each category includes a success statement—for example, under Passion and Enthusiasm, you'll see: "Shows genuine interest in the role. Has passion for culinary or great service."

This is followed by five rating statements, each describing what a score of 1-5 might look like: 1 (not a fit) to 5 (a strong display of what you are looking for).

Customizing the Tool for your Restaurant

From the provided categories, we recommended that you pick 7-8 that reflect your business values, the key soft skills you prioritize and the demands of the role.

Once you've chosen your categories:

1. Customize the rating statements (1–5 scale) for your workplace.

2. Use the grid to score each candidate based on your selected categories.

3. Interpret the results:

Mostly 4s + 5s	→	Outstanding candidate, strong fit
Mix of 3s + 4s	→	Good fit, minor coaching needed
Mostly 3s	→	Acceptable fit, will require some training
Mix of 2s + 3s	→	Weak fit, consider alternatives
Mostly 2s or below	→	Not recommended

More Than Just a Score

This tool isn't just about who to hire—it's also a launchpad for onboarding, training, and coaching. Use the notes section to capture impressions or development areas you can revisit after the hire. These insights help set new employees up for success from day one.

SUPPORTING NEW AND YOUNG WORKERS

The restaurant industry in BC is a vibrant, fast-paced environment powered by a diverse workforce that includes many new and young workers. These include a high percentage of workers under 25 and newcomers to Canada. For these employees, a first job or new workplace culture can be exciting AND overwhelming. It's essential that your orientation process makes them feel welcome and gives them the tools to succeed.

Traditional orientation and onboarding processes may not fully support someone with limited or no prior Canadian work experience. This isn't a reflection of their skill, interest, or potential—but often the result of limited exposure to workplace expectations.

Adding just a few extra steps to your onboarding process can build confidence, set clear expectations, and help new hires thrive. This approach benefits the entire team and strengthens your business by reinforcing your workplace culture.

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First Time Workers

Young workers (ages 15-24) make up nearly half of BC's food and beverage workforce. go2HR's BC Tourism and Hospitality Labour Marketing Information Research Project (March 2022) found that 47% of food and beverage workers are in this age group, representing nearly 63,000 early-career employees.

Today, many restaurants report that their youngest workers are 18 and 19 years old—and many joined the company with no prior work experience. Compared to previous generations, fewer youth hold part-time jobs during high school, due to increased academic demands and a stronger focus on post-secondary education. Economic instability—particularly during COVID—also reduced the availability of entry-level positions.

Why this matters?

Hiring an 18 or 19-year-old differs from hiring a 16-year-old. It influences how you evaluate resumés, conduct interviews, and onboard new hires because these workers often bring higher expectations—competitive wages, reliable scheduling, and a clear sense of purpose—despite having little experience. By contrast, younger teens may be looking for general experience, flexible hours, and a fun team environment. They often come in with curiosity and an openness to learning from scratch.

Older first-time workers may also feel greater pressure to succeed. This can lead to frustration or disappointment if they don't quickly meet expectations. Recognizing these differences—and responding with **patience, structured support, and consistent feedback**—helps both the employee succeed and eases the burden on the trainers.

New Workers and Newcomers

go2HR identifies youth, international workers, and newcomers to Canada as three key labour groups in the restaurant industry. Even with ongoing changes to Canada's immigration and temporary foreign worker programs, newcomers continue to make up a significant portion of BC's restaurant workforce.

While onboarding newcomers brings some unique considerations, many of the same practices that support young workers also apply—such as clear communication, cultural orientation, and hands-on training.

Language barriers, legal and administrative processes, and unfamiliarity with BC's employment laws can all create challenges. Offering extra support—especially around workplace rights, expectations, and communication norms—can help newcomers feel secure and set up for success.

Strategies for Onboarding New and Young Workers

Supporting young, new, or newcomer workers means acknowledging the stress of transitions and intentionally building space in your workplace culture to help them succeed. By investing in the strategies below, employers can help employees build strong foundations, feel valued, and understand how they contribute to the success of the business.

→ Review and customize our NEW & YOUNG WORKER ORIENTATION CHECKLIST.

Our checklist is separated into theme sections to make it easy to customize. Select the components that best fit your business and standardize them across your team. This ensures consistency in how your managers and supervisors support new hires.

For information on WorkSafeBC's Occupational Health and Safety Regulations for new and young workers, visit: https://www.worksafebc.com/en/health-safety/education-training-certification/young-new-worker

Innovative Ideas to Support New Staff

These ideas are designed to support young, new and newcomer workers—but they benefit your entire team by building a more connected, inclusive workplace.

IDEA: Support people working away from home

New hires may be living away from friends and family for the first time. Ease that transition by:

- Creating a welcoming culture with resources like housing guides, local area maps, or listings for nearby services.
- Checking in regularly and acknowledging the emotional impact of being away from loved ones.
- Hosting team meals, casual check-ins, or small celebrations during the year for those without local support networks.

IDEA: Talk about finances & financial literacy

Money is a top stressor for many employees. Nearly half (46%) of employees believe their workplace should offer an employee assistance program that includes access to financial counselling. (HR Reporter.com Health and Wellbeing Report - https://www.hrreporter.com/focus-areas/compensation-and-benefits/canadians-struggling-with-mental-healthand-missing-out-on-available-support-report/392291)

You can support financial literacy by:

- Helping new hires set up a local bank account and/or direct deposit.
- Offering a simple annual tax-season primer—especially useful for workers filing independently for the first time.

- Partnering with a financial advisor or bank to host simple sessions on budgeting, banking, and managing taxes. An expert or bank that is walkable from your business is the best option.

IDEA: Make onboarding interactive and engaging

When bringing on multiple new employees, consider these ideas to make the experience more engaging:

- Replace sit-down orientation with interactive learning. Try training modules or a "scavenger hunt" style training where new hires are tasked with finding key areas of the restaurant (e.g., kitchen, storage, supplies) or learning important tasks (e.g., clocking in or locating safety equipment) in a fun way.
- Hosting a casual welcome meet-up with icebreakers. Invite existing team members to share a favorite food or hobby or restaurant memory to make newcomers feel at ease.
- Using shadow rotations for the first week. Let new hires spend a few hours in different roles (e.g., host, expo, bar, dishwasher) to better understand the operation and meet more team members.

ONBOARDING: BUILDING CONFIDENCE, CULTURE AND LEADERSHIP

Orientation isn't just about showing someone where the mop is or how to clock in. In a people-first workplace culture, a structured orientation process is one of your most valuable leadership tools.

It welcomes new employees, builds their confidence, and lays a foundation for success. A rushed or inconsistent welcome can lead to confusion, stress, and early turnover. A clear, thoughtful orientation shows that leadership is organized, professional, and committed to supporting team members.

When done right, orientation goes beyond just onboarding—it's your first opportunity to show new hires what kind of team they've joined, and what kind of leaders your restaurant develops. It's a chance to set the tone, share your vision, and create clarity from day one.

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> Download and try our ORIENTATION CHECKLISTS (General, Managers and New Worker versions): they can help you formalize your processes and deliver a more consistent, supportive, and professional experience for every new hire.

Why Orientation Matters to Leadership and Culture

1. It Saves Time and Reduces Repetition

A structured orientation means every new hire gets the same essential information—freeing managers and leaders from explaining the same things over and over and reducing the chance of missing critical topics.

2. It Builds Team Consistency

When everyone hears the same message about your values, safety practices, expectations, and service standards, it strengthens alignment across your team. This consistency leads to better guest service, fewer conflicts, and smoother shifts.

3. It Protects Your Business

A documented orientation process—especially one that includes health and safety training, clear anti-bullying and harassment policies and a signed acknowledgment—adds a layer of legal protection. It shows you've met your responsibility to inform and train your staff.

4. It Improves Retention and Performance

A well-run orientation helps employees feel prepared, respected, and part of the team. That sense of belonging and clarity improves both early performance and retention.

5. It Sets the Stage for Accountability

Introducing performance expectations, communication norms, and policies right away helps confusion later. When people know what's expected, it's easier to coach, correct, and lead.

What Makes a Strong Restaurant Orientation?

Whether your orientation takes an hour or a few days, it should be structured around the essential areas of your business. Even without a full HR department, you can deliver a professional and effective process.

An strong orientation typically includes:

- **Pre-Employment Welcome Package** - A pre-employment letter, team intro, and what to expect on day one.

- **First Day Welcome** - Introductions to team members and a physical tour of the workplace.

- **Company Values & Vision** - What you stand for and how your team contributes.

- **Job Roles & Responsibilities** - Duties, tools, expectations, and a first-week schedule.

- **Administrative and HR Essentials** - Code of Conduct, scheduling, pay, and time-off policies.*

- **Health & Safety** - Safety protocols, emergency response, and incident reporting.

- **Culture & Conduct** - Service standards and how your team treats guests and each other.

- **Training Plan** - Job shadowing, mentoring, check-ins, and short-term goals.

- **Resource & Contact Information** - Where to go to get information, get help or ask questions.

- **Acknowledgement Form** - Signed confirmation that orientation was completed and understood.

- **Follow up** - Check in after one week and then again after 30 days to check on progress and answer questions.

> **TIP 1:** Assign a dedicated person—ideally the new hire's supervisor or trainer—to lead the orientation. A familiar face makes all the difference in how supported someone feels on day one.
>
> **TIP 2:** When possible, use visual or digital aids (e.g., posters, videos, or slides) to supplement in-person training.

* Note: Use this time to ask about any accommodations the new employee may need (e.g.; related to religion, ability, or health). These should be reviewed and documented during the HR portion of the orientation to ensure an inclusive workplace.

Orientation Acknowledgement

Once orientation is complete, have the employee sign an **Orientation Acknowledgement Form**. This step confirms the employee has received key information—especially related to health and safety—and understands your workplace standards and expectations.

It also serves as a record that:

- You've provided essential training,

- The employee agrees to uphold your Code of Conduct and safety practices,

- And the employee knows how to report concerns without fear of retaliation.

We offer two versions of a customizable acknowledgement form to download:

→ MANAGER/LEADER VERSION: A more detailed form for supervisory roles.

→ BASIC VERSION: A simpler form focused on Code of Conduct and Health & Safety.

Make sure the version you customize reflects the topics in your orientation checklist and aligns with your restaurant's values, policies, and tone.

RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

We have found several resources are available to help restaurant and eatery operators strengthen their workplaces and support their teams. Whether you're looking for guidance on HR issues, leadership tips, free or low-cost training options, or just need to talk through a challenge, there are professionals and support programs that can help.

These resources are designed to make it easier for owners, managers, and leaders to build strong, healthy workplace cultures and access expert advice without added cost. Don't hesitate to reach out—support is available. We've listed four strong options in the pages that follow.

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go2HR

What do they do?	Support strong workforces and safe workplaces in BC's Tourism & Hospitality Industry.
Who can use go2HR?	All employers in tourism and hospitality, this includes all restaurants and eateries.
Why do we recommend them?	Think of this resource as "HR on speed dial". They offer one-on-one advisory services by phone and email.
Is there a cost for this service?	No cost
More info:	www.go2hr.ca

go2HR is BC's non-profit human resource and health and safety resource for tourism and hospitality. They are an essential ally for any restaurant or eatery as they offer tools, information, and consulting services to elevate employers' human resources and health and safety practices.

Six HR Consultants provide dedicated, regionally based services. They live and work in the regions they serve so they have access to the best advice and best practices for the area. Their one-on-one consulting services allow you to ask the HR questions that are relevant for you.

When you reach out to go2HR, you can get direct to business tools, information and consulting services in the following areas:

- Recruitment Strategy & Planning
- Onboarding Employees
- Retention and Performance Management
- Bullying and Harassment
- Mental Health and Wellness
- HR Advice (Compensation & Benefits, Progressive Discipline, Employee Exit)

Take the first step by finding your Regional HR Consultant here:
https://www.go2hr.ca/human-resources/hr-advisory#consultants

MIND THE BAR

What do they do? Mental health support for hospitality workers.

Who can use Mind the Bar for help? Individual restaurant and hospitality employees.

Why do we recommend them? Created by hospitality workers for hospitality workers—services are tailored to the unique challenges of working in the industry.

Is there a cost for this service? Membership is required, but service is free.

More info: www.mindthebar.com

Mind The Bar is dedicated to providing information and free resources for those in the hospitality industry who are struggling with depression, anxiety, thoughts of suicide, substance abuse disorder, addiction or workplace harassment. They are committed to breaking the stigma of talking about mental health and supporting positive actions in achieving mental wellness.

Members get confidential 24/7 access to the TELUS HEALTH App which includes access to specialized professionals for:

- **Mental Wellbeing:** Immediate access to specialized professionals in counseling, social work, human services and psychology.
- **Work and Life Issues:** Support from specialists in financial and legal, childcare and elder care, future planning and debt support, retirement and more.
- **Health Assessments:** Individual health assessment of key risk areas such as general health, physical activity and emotional stress PLUS resources for quitting smoking, stress management, and weight management.
- **Financial Well-Being:** Improve financial well-being with savings on everyday purchases and important life events, such as getting married, buying a home or car, family outings and holidays.

Take the first step by becoming a member or to volunteer.
Email: info@mindthebar.com
More info: www.mindthebar.com

PEOPLE WORKING WELL / go2HR

What do they do?	Offer practical support, tools, and training to help employers foster mentally healthy workplaces.
Who can use this help?	Restaurant and hospitality employers.
Why do we recommend them?	Through go2HR's partnership with CMHA BC, People Working Well offers amazing Mental Health and Psychological Safety Consultants that can work with restaurant employers one-on-one to tackle mental health and wellness issues in their workplaces. The experts are BC based professionals with lived experience.
Cost for using this service?	One-on-one advisory services, online training and resources are all free of charge.
More info:	www.peopleworkingwellbc.ca www.go2hr.ca/health-safety/mental-health-at-work

Through their partnership with the Canadian Mental Health Association (BC Division), with funding from the Province of British Columbia, go2HR provides tools and one-on-one guidance to help you build a workplace culture that prioritizes psychological safety. The services are specifically designed to help tourism and hospitality employers foster resilient teams, reduce burnout, and improve overall workplace culture.

The People Working Well website www.peopleworkingwellbc.ca is a free resource that makes health and safety more understandable and provides free training for employers looking to build healthier workplaces and more engaged managers/leaders.

Get Expert Guidance & Resources: Free tools for workplace mental health and safety. one-on-one answers to your questions.

Learn About Stress and Burnout: Learn the terminology and get tools for helping understand and tackle stress and burnout in your staff.

Build a Culture of Care: Receive support in establishing a workplace culture that prioritizes psychological health and safety.

Integrate PH&S into your People Programs: Get help embedding mental health best practices into existing health and safety programs.

Attend Virtual Training and Presentations: go2HR offers many virtual training opportunities for mental health and safety training. Join the mailing list to get info about opportunities.

Mental Health Training for Workers: Access straightforward mental health training videos that you can share with your workers and supervisors.

 Take the first step:
Email: mentalhealth@go2HR.ca
More info: https://www.go2hr.ca/health-safety/mental-health-at-work

CTS MENTORSHIP PROGRAM

What do they do? — Annual mentorship program for emerging leaders.

Who can use this help? — Restaurant leaders and culinarians seeking to grow their culinary skills, people skills, culture, or business practices.

Why do we recommend them? — Specifically well suited to young chefs working in industry this program offers hands-on learning from experienced mentors who understand the local industry.

Cost for using this service? — No cost

More info: — https://chefstablesociety.com

This program connects restaurant professionals with experienced mentors for guidance on leadership, HR, people management, and building sustainable workplace culture.

Get matched with experienced Chef members to support you along your culinary journey.

The Chefs' Table Society offers a six-month mentorship program to Society members who satisfy eligibility criteria. The program is intended for mentees to gain valuable industry insight and advice, develop new knowledge and skills, build their network and learn more about the hospitality industry, in general.

Since its beginning the CTS mentorship program has paired 20 cooks located throughout BC with Chef board members willing to guide them through the next phase of their professional journey. The goal is to enrich on the job training by offering advice, constructive feedback and encouragement.

We are here to help!

Some examples of Mentorship guidance include:

- Setting career goals
- Assisting with industry connections
- Resume writing and interview tactics
- Networking opportunities
- Introduction to Chefs' Table Society programs and events
- Insight into industry standards and practices.

Application deadline for our annual intake is June 1st for our August 1st to January 31st session. Mentee Selection and Mentor Pairing completed by July 21st.