

Employee Guide

At some point in your hot dog business it may become necessary to hire employees. Since any potential employees can be viewed as spokespersons for your hot dog cart you don't want to make employment choices lightly. We are going to review practical suggestions in finding employees, interviewing, training and firing.

Where to find employees

- Referrals

Good people know good people. If you have any employees, family members, or other individuals you trust, why not seek their recommendations. These can be easily verified and can save valuable time and cost of pursuing other recruiting methods.

- Other Customer Service Establishments

If you have received good service from an employee of other customer service establishments why not hand them your business card. Let them know to keep you in mind if they are ever looking for new employment. This should be done discreetly. You don't want to aggressively try to steal employees from other businesses (especially if they are in your locality).

- Classified Ads

You can place ads in your local newspaper and online classified sites. You would want to outline the minimum requirements that you are looking for. As a courtesy, if the job position fills it would be good to remove the ad. This prevents having to deal with needless inquiries when the job is no longer available. Understanding clearly what you are looking for will help speed up the process of shifting through the responses.

- Schools

High schools, colleges, universities and trade schools can be a rich resource for part-time and seasonal help. Quite often schools have job bulletin boards where ads could be placed. Communicating with guidance counselors or teachers can be a good way to receive recommendations. Keep in mind this kind of employment is typically short term as these individuals still prioritize their schooling over work.

- Community Organizations

Boy scouts, church groups, Rotary and Kiwanis clubs, etc... can be a good source of capable potential employees. In many instances these individuals have already received valuable training which lends itself to the workplace.

- Government Employment Agencies

These are free services for both employers and employees. Communicate directly with a job placement officer for best results. Just like with help wanted ads you would need to sift through the résumés to find the most suitable candidates.

Reviewing Résumés

One important aspect of finding suitable employees is shifting through the résumés. To help with this process you need to have a clear understanding of what you are looking for.

One thing you will want to take note of is past work experience. Do they have any related customer service experience? Do they have any other skills which could translate well to your hot dog cart business? Do they include references and past employer contact info? If they don't you may obtain that during the interview. But if you have access to that ahead of time, you can check their references prior to calling them in for an interview. When you check references, ask specific questions that would relate to the person's qualifications. You may try to ascertain their reasons for leaving any employment and ask if they would be willing to hire them again. Take a note of any hesitancy to answer any questions.

Also if they have worked a number of jobs in a short period of time, this could serve as a red flag concerning their potential to stick around.

The Interview Process

One of the most important parts of the interview process is exploring past employment history. Ask specific questions concerning their job role and any challenges that they faced in connection with their employment. Ask them specific questions concerning their reasons for leaving any employments. Take note of any hesitancy to answer any questions.

It would be good to ask their viewpoint of past employers. If they are critical of their previous employer then you would want to be wary.

Also if it wasn't included in their résumés, it would be good to obtain at least two references from previous employers. If they are reluctant to offer these references take this as a warning sign.

Another aspect to take note of during the interview is their dress and grooming. If they don't have enough self respect to dress and groom in a respectful and clean manner during the interview, they probably won't while they work.

Also if they show up late for the interview this could be an indicator about their dependability and reliability.

During the interview you can provide training which could help qualify them for the job. This can include role playing certain scenarios which could be commonplace to hot dog carts. This could include how they would handle disgruntled customers. You can also test their ability to make change.

During the interview be upfront about the job specifics. Be honest about the earning potential, job requirements and all other job aspects. This will avoid to potential disappointment. You don't want them to quit with in the first couple of shifts because it didn't meet up to your expectations.

Remember that in a sense the potential employee is also interviewing you as well. Invite them to ask any questions they have. Ask if they have any potential concerns or challenges in connection with the employment. If they appear to be the most suited for the job it may be possible to accommodate any reasonable needs.

Training Employees

Once you hire a new employee you want to provide them with the necessary training to help them succeed in the job.

You want to make sure they receive clear direction on any policies concerning dress and grooming, health and safety, customer service, etc.... It would be good to put these directives in writing and to get them to sign a written agreement. Even if it is not legally required it would be wise to have them take a food handlers course offered by the local health department.

Here is four points to keep in mind to help with the training process:

- 1) Give immediate feedback right after the occurrence. If it was good, you want the immediate positive reinforcement. If it was an area of concern you don't any bad habits to develop
- 2) Give any correction in private. Employees are more receptive to correction if there are no customers or co-workers around.
- 3) Don't spend too much time dwelling on the negative. Explain the area that needs improvement and move on. Spend most of your time discussing solutions instead of problems.
- 4) Give praise in public and give it generously. The positive reinforcement will make them feel good and will motivate them to continue to do a good job. By pointing out areas where they do well, you are letting them know the expectations in a positive way.

To further assist with the process here is a helpful training chart.

On-The-Job Training Chart

Step	Purpose	What To Do
1. Prepare the learner.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ To relieve tension. ◆ To establish training base. ◆ To stimulate interest. ◆ To give the trainee confidence in 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Put the trainee at ease. ◆ Find out what the trainee already knows about the task. ◆ Relate task to overall objective.

	performing the task.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Link task to the trainee’s experience. ◆ Make sure the trainee is comfortable to see you perform the task clearly.
2. Present the task.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ To make sure the trainee understands what to do and why. ◆ To ensure retention. ◆ To avoid giving the trainee more than he or she can absorb. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Tell, show and question carefully and patiently. ◆ Emphasize key points. ◆ Instruct clearly and completely one step at a time. ◆ Keep your words to a minimum. Stress action words.
3. Try out trainee's performance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ To be sure the trainee has learned the correct method. ◆ To prevent poor habit development. ◆ To be sure the trainee knows how the task is to be performed and why. ◆ To test the trainee's knowledge. ◆ To avoid putting the trainee on the job prematurely. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Observe the trainee perform the task without your instruction. If the trainee commits a substantial error, repeat Step 2. ◆ Upon correct completion of the task, have the trainee repeat the task. This time, the trainee should explain the task as he or she performs it. ◆ Ask questions to ensure that the key points are understood.
4. Follow-up	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ To show your confidence in the trainee. ◆ To give the trainee self-confidence. ◆ To be sure the trainee has been trained properly. ◆ To foster a feeling of self-sufficiency in trainee 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Make favorable comments about trainee's current work and progress to date. ◆ Let the trainee work independently. ◆ Frequently monitor trainee's work. ◆ Gradually reduce trainee monitoring.

Firing Employees

Your due diligence in the hiring process will cut down on the possibility of having to terminate a negligent employee. But if issues arise which makes this a necessity here are some tips which could help in the process.

To begin with it would be good to be aware of any local laws concerning probation periods. Most localities allow a period which could range from anywhere from 1-6 months where you can let an employee go without the fear of legal penalties. If this is the case, if you have any doubts about employees’ qualifications during this period, it would be wise to let them go before bigger issues develop. You also don’t need to legally explain the reasons for termination.

After the probation period has elapsed make sure you are aware of all applicable employment laws to avoid wrongful termination lawsuits. Before you get to the point of firing an employee you want to make sure that sufficient warning was provided and appropriate steps were taken to correct the delinquent behavior.

Any warning should be put in writing and presented in writing. It would be could to get there signature acknowledging the warning. Be familiar with any laws concerning their legal right to respond to any written warning. Make sure the employee is ware of any rights that they have. Keep a file of any written warnings and all steps that have lead up to an employee's termination.

Here is a sample of what a record of disciplinary action may look like:

Record of Disciplinary Action

Employee Name	Employee Title
Manager Name	Manager Title
Today's Date	Incident Date
Incident Time	Incident Location

Description of the incident that occurred:

Witnesses to the incident (if applicable):

Names of those in attendance at current disciplinary action meeting:

Corrective or disciplinary action to be taken:

Verbal Written Probation Suspension Other (explain below)

(If on probation, period begins _____ and ends _____.)

Goals to be achieved:

Consequences for failure to improve performance or correct behavior:

Prior discussions or warnings on this subject, whether oral or written:

Employee statement:

I acknowledge that I have read and understand the above information and consequences.

Employee Signature

Date

Supervisor Signature

Date

Before you can fire an employee without penalty, you need to establish good cause. Good cause generally involves a test of reasonableness and knowledge. So they would have to be in violation of a reasonable employment policy and they have to have sufficient knowledge of the policy. They also have to have sufficient knowledge of any consequences that result from violation of the clearly outlined policy.

Here are a few tips to help in making this difficult process easier:

- Focus discussion clearly on performance related issues.
- Clearly specify why the employee is being fired, along with the effective date and time of the termination. It would also be good to put in writing and have them sign it.
- Ask them clearly if they understand the reasons for being fired. Have them repeat back to you the reasons for dismissal.
- Document everything that has occurred the process

- Avoid saying “I feel really bad about this.” This comes across as insincere and only makes matters worse.
- Avoid getting defensive. Give them the opportunity to vent. You don’t want to say or do anything which would just create further resentment.
- Try to end on a positive note. If possible try to end with a handshake.

So hopefully the following guidelines will help in attaining and maintaining suitable employees. Employees who will serve as qualified spokesperson which will help build up your hot dog cart business.