



## Exploring the training needs of older workers in the foodservice industry



Swathi Ravichandran<sup>a,\*</sup>, Kelly E. Cichy<sup>b,1</sup>, Monica Powers<sup>c,2</sup>, Kara Kirby<sup>d,3</sup>

<sup>a</sup> Hospitality Management, Kent State University, 300A White Hall, Kent, OH 44242, United States

<sup>b</sup> Human Development and Family Studies, Kent State University, 405 White Hall, Kent, OH 44242, United States

<sup>c</sup> Hospitality and Tourism Management, Kent State University, 316 White Hall, Kent, OH 44242, United States

<sup>d</sup> Cultural Foundations, Kent State University, 316 White Hall, Kent, OH 44242, United States

### ARTICLE INFO

#### Keywords:

Older workers  
Foodservice  
Training method  
Technology  
Training pace  
Training benefits

### ABSTRACT

The current study explored older workers' perceptions of the training they receive in foodservice establishments, including perceptions of training methods, pace, and the use of technology in training. Data for this study were collected through two focus groups of foodservice employees 55 and older, where participants responded to semi-structured questions about their training experiences. Analysis of the focus group data revealed three overarching themes: (1) need for better leadership, (2) training structure, and (3) pride and enjoyment at work. Respondents emphasized the importance of managerial support, were eager for continued training, perceived the greatest benefit to on-the-job training, and appreciated the use of technology in training but were frustrated with the short time allocated to learning new technologies. Recommendations are made for training practices endorsed by older workers that organizations could adopt to improve the retention and performance of older workers, who are increasingly becoming important to the hospitality industry.

© 2014 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

### 1. Introduction

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, nearly 12 million of the 12.6 million jobs projected to be added during 2008–2018 will be in the 55-and-older age group (Toosie, 2009). Workers in this age group are projected to make up 24% of the labor force by 2018 (Bureau of Labor Statistics [BLS], 2008). The hospitality industry, particularly, could benefit from developing strategies to recruit and retain older workers because of a projected decline of 6.9% in the 16–24 age group during 2006–2016; the group most heavily relied upon to satisfy labor needs (BLS, 2008). During the same time period, the number of workers aged 55–64 is expected to increase by 36.5%. Throughout this study the term “older worker” refers to those 55 and over who are in the workforce.

Older workers seek hospitality jobs for a variety of reasons including flexible hours, a desire to continue to contribute to

society by working with people, and the need to alleviate financial stress (Feuer, 2013). Over a third of retirees aged 65 and older receive 90% or more of their retirement income from Social Security; however, monthly Social Security benefits averaging \$1178.80 are not sufficient to meet their needs, and so many are seeking additional employment (Brandon, 2011). Older workers possess several desirable job-related attributes that include: fewer accidents, generating a positive image, the ability to learn as much as younger workers, self-motivated, disciplined, have a respect for authority, and are happier or more satisfied on the job (Magd, 2003). Older workers also excel in customer relations and bring an extensive knowledge base to their job (McNaught and Barth, 1992) along with the capacity to serve as mentors for younger employees (Potochny, 2005). Despite the well documented benefits to organizations of hiring and retaining older workers, few attempts have been made to implement policies and procedures to retain older workers (Armstrong-Stassen and Ursel, 2009), and compared to younger workers, older workers are less likely to have access to training opportunities (Taylor and Urwin, 2001) or are presented with inappropriate training methods (Farr et al., 1998). Although critical to attracting and retaining the 55-plus workforce (Koc-Menard, 2009), very little is known about training techniques that would be most effective for older workers within specific contexts, such as foodservice.

\* Corresponding author. Tel.: +1 330 672 7314.

E-mail addresses: [sravicha@kent.edu](mailto:sravicha@kent.edu) (S. Ravichandran), [kcichy@kent.edu](mailto:kcichy@kent.edu) (K.E. Cichy), [mhoffer@kent.edu](mailto:mhoffer@kent.edu) (M. Powers), [kkirby4@kent.edu](mailto:kkirby4@kent.edu) (K. Kirby).

<sup>1</sup> Tel.: +1 330 672 2449.

<sup>2</sup> Tel.: +1 724 420 1524.

<sup>3</sup> Tel.: +1 216 688 5350.

## 2. Literature review

### 2.1. Benefits of employing and training older workers

Upon completing a review of studies profiling older workers, O'Reilly and Caro (1994) concluded that there was more job satisfaction, better attendance, a smaller number of accidents, and less illness and turnover among older workers compared to younger workers. Previous studies also suggest that older workers are more reliable, loyal, and dependable compared to younger workers (Hayward et al., 1997; Steinberg et al., 1994), are relatively productive, and offer a good return on investment (Hayward et al., 1997). In a case study of a UK food retailer, Arrowsmith and McGoldrick (1996) concluded that older workers possessed more motivational attributes including pride in the job, cheerfulness, and reliability. However, some studies have reported a general bias that supervisors have against older workers. For example, Waldman and Avolio (1986) reported an increase in performance with age when measured objectively by productivity, whereas supervisor reported data suggested a decline in performance with age, which may be exacerbated by the fact that age awareness training for managers of older employees is rare (Armstrong-Stassen and Templer, 2005).

Herrbach et al. (2009) stated that the typical smaller amount of training offered to workers 55 and over may decrease commitment, whereas the opportunity to develop new skills and competencies may be viewed by older workers as a sign that their organization is willing to invest in them. Armstrong-Stassen and Schlosser (2008) concluded that employees aged 50–70 who perceived their job as providing them with more development opportunities were more committed to the organization and intended to remain with their company compared to older workers whose organizations did not provide them with development opportunities.

Still, compared to younger workers, older workers are less likely to agree that training improved their skills and working practices (Felstead, 2011). This finding, however, underscores the current disconnect between the training older workers receive and older workers' training needs and preferences. Further, a great deal of training and development occurs through informal learning or "on the job" training, however, much less is known about older workers' preferences and experiences with both formal as well as these informal learning opportunities (Felstead, 2011).

### 2.2. Definition and benefits of training in the foodservice industry

Training in the hospitality industry can be defined as, "a process that provides new and currently employed staff with the short- and longer-term knowledge and skills required to perform successfully on the job" (Hayes and Ninemeier, 2009, p. 172). Eaglen et al. (2000) found that training, when executed properly, can be considered a competitive strategic advantage for restaurants to use to increase customer and employee satisfaction while also improving the productivity of employees.

Previous research reveals multiple benefits to training that include: improved performance, reduced operating costs, more satisfied guests, reduced work stress, increased job advancement opportunities, improved staff relationships, more professional staff, fewer operating problems, lower turnover rates, increased morale, higher levels of work quality, improved ability to recruit new staff, and increased profits (Acton and Golden, 2003; Hayes and Ninemeier, 2009). Based on data collected from one of Australia's largest bakery retail franchises, Choo and Bowley (2007) recommended that job satisfaction of employees can be enhanced through the provision of effective training and development programs. Poulston (2008) also stated in a study involving employees from 27 Auckland-based hospitality businesses that inadequate

training may lead to high staff turnover and other workplace problems that could exacerbate turnover.

Sommerville (2007) identified several additional benefits from training foodservice workers that include: greater ability to reach personal goals, increased self-confidence and self-development, improved ability to become problem solvers, higher productivity levels, reduced accidents and safety violations, enhanced employee development, and a sustained positive attitude toward customer service. Further, Pearlman and Schaffer (2013) identified possible benefits such as higher employee retention and engagement and reduced training costs associated with incumbent worker training programs.

### 2.3. Training methods used in the foodservice industry

Several training methods have been used and found useful throughout the foodservice industry. Harris and Bonn (2000) found that on-the-job training was the most frequently applied method followed by: classroom instruction, textbooks and manuals, case studies, and simulations. Training tools that were used the most included texts and manuals followed by: transparencies and flip charts, teleconferencing, computers, and audio-videotapes. Other foodservice training methods include: discussions, demonstrations, practice, skills rehearsals, case studies, guest speakers, role-play, simulations, dramatization, instructional games, brainstorming, and field trips (Hayes and Ninemeier, 2009). Foodservice training methods have also kept up with technological advancements. In a more recent study, Medeiros et al. (2011) found that the most commonly used resources for training foodservice workers were: interactive media, audiovisual materials, videos, lectures, and recreational activities. Studies suggest that interactive media and hands-on activities are among the most accepted training activities by employees and are cost effective and viable options (DiPietro, 2005; Medeiros et al., 2011). Interactive computer-based training also has been found to be an effective retraining tool by improving work practices without management reinforcement of those changes (Eckerman et al., 2004), particularly for workers with limited education and English-language skills.

Another modern form of training that is predicted to gain popularity is internet-based training. Singh et al. (2011) found that only 40% of multi-unit restaurants use internet-based training. However, they predicted an increase in internet usage for employee training in multi-unit restaurant companies generating between \$50 million and \$99 million annually. Some examples where online training is implemented include: ServSafe®, NFSMI, AIB Intl., Training Achievement Programs (TAPs Series), Alchemy systems, and FMI Super Safe Mark Program, among others (Neal et al., 2011). Internet-based training allows employees to train at their own pace and at a time and place that is convenient for them. For example, graduate students in hotel and restaurant management rating online training modules indicated the objectives of the program were clear, concise, and relevant and responded positively to the program's content, instruction, design, and packaging (Neal et al., 2011).

### 2.4. Training older workers

Training design and methods must be tailored to allow for the learning styles and experience of older employees (Armstrong-Stassen, 2008; Armstrong-Stassen and Templer, 2005) and attuned to workers' age and experience levels (Doeringer et al., 2002). However, after interviewing hospitality managers, Furunes and Mykletun (2005) concluded that training programs were not designed specifically for older workers. There is some disagreement as to the training methods and instructional factors most suitable for older workers. Callahan et al. (2003) concluded that three

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/1009429>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/1009429>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)