

How to Hire the Best Restaurant Manager for Your Business





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Who do you want wearing the manager hat?

Successful owners have to wear many hats when it comes to creating a sustainable business, and restaurant owners often feel compelled to wear both the manager and owner hats. And with good reason, for the most part.

Restaurants have tight profit margins — with less room for frills than most small businesses. But if you've been one of those owners wearing multiple hats for years (or even decades), it can be hard to change out of that routine, even if you have achieved significant success. If you want to start moving towards retirement or trying to expand to more locations, the time will come when you need to hire a separate person for managing a restaurant.

Hiring a manager to handle the daily responsibilities of managing a restaurant can be extremely helpful when you want to slowly step away from the business you've created — while still making sure it stays on its feet. Any successful business owner deserves to enjoy leisure and continued success. It's completely possible to have the best of both worlds, as long as you plan, and hire, accordingly.

Or maybe you have already had a manager doing the work and — for good or bad,— they're on their way out. Making sure you have a strong replacement to keep your business on track is critical.

Getting it right starts even before the interview process. In seeking out the right person for the job, you should be able to see a clear picture of how they will help you hold the reins of the business.

Beyond reaching out to former employers and colleagues for recommendations on a new hire, there's a lot to be done to ensure you hire a manager who will be a perfect fit for your restaurant.

In the following four chapters, we walk through a few of the steps that will get you to that new manager hire faster and with a great result, through crafting the right job description, identifying what things on a resume should stand out, establishing the right salary for the position, and then getting ready well in advance for the new manager's arrival.

First up: writing a **job description** that resonates with potential managers.



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The Job Description

In many ways, finding a new restaurant manager is one of the biggest hiring challenges a restaurant owner can face. After all, restaurant managers take on so many different roles and work with so many different people on your team.

Having a well-composed job description will help you attract high quality candidates who have the experience you need and the right mindset for the job. It's all about getting your hiring process off on the right foot.

The Title

The job title on your restaurant manager job description should be specific and detailed, but also concise. That might seem like an oxymoron, but it's more about balancing

the two aspects. Depending on the job website, you might have a limitation on characters for your job listing title. Keeping it under 80 characters is usually a best practice in order to keep their attention yet concisely highlight what you expect from the candidate.

People will often search specifically for "restaurant manager," so having those two words back-to-back in your job title is important. Highly qualified candidates will be scanning these sites for job titles that specifically fit where they are and where they want to go with their careers. You want the title to stand out.

So, if you're hiring a back-of-house restaurant manager, that's how you should title it. Or if you're hiring for a fine dining

restaurant and want a manager specifically with similar experience, using "Restaurant Manager – Fine Dining" works as well.

Avoiding Gender Bias

While you're describing the ideal candidate, stay away from using he/him pronouns. Using masculine pronouns sends the message that you assume the best applicant will be male, which means you might miss out on excellent female applicants even sending their resume at all.



Instead, stick with they/them pronouns (it's grammatically correct and unbiased). Also consider working in more second person tense with "you" pronouns, like "you will be managing a team of 20" or "your daily routine will include..." Besides avoiding gendered pronouns, using "you" is a more proactive approach, putting the potential candidate already in the mindset of the role.

Opening Paragraph

The introductory paragraph in your restaurant manager job description should also include an overview of the restaurant. This is your chance to sell the applicants on why they should want to work there.

Using "you" is a more proactive approach, putting the potential candidate already in the mindset of the role.

Discuss the overall brand, the menu, the work culture you've developed, and any achievements or connections to your community. If you're an entirely vegan restaurant, say so. If your team does volunteer work for local organizations, mention it. If you've won a prominent culinary award, discuss it up here.

Give the potential manager a sense of who you are so they feel like applying for the job is worth their time. That being said, aim to keep this part to a paragraph only — if you make it any longer, the applicant won't read it and will just scroll past to get to the job requirements.

Listing Benefits

As with the opening paragraph, listing the benefits you offer your restaurant manager is meant to further entice the applicant. It's part of you selling them on the position with a restaurant manager job description, and why they should be excited about the opportunity. But it's important to be honest and accurate in this section to set the correct expectations about insurance, paid time off, and any other benefits you're offering beyond the paycheck.

Think about the kind of leader you're looking for in your new manager.

Necessary Skills and Traits

Before you get to the official responsibilities in the restaurant manager job description, this bulleted list sets up your own expectations for a great candidate.

Think about the kind of leader you're looking for in your new manager.
Organizational skills, interpersonal skills, detail-oriented, and even just the ability to efficiently delegate tasks are important.
Consider asking your employees (especially those who will be working with this person) what they appreciate in a manager. You might just get a sense of the traits the whole team wants in a leader.

You should also mention more specific experience-based traits you're looking for in your manager. Experience working with food vendors, handling paperwork and financial records, overseeing stock levels, and supervising shifts are all good examples. And if you expect your new restaurant manager to have specific certification (ServSafe, for example), you should mention it here.

Responsibilities

This is the core of the restaurant manager job description, where the applicant gets a good overview of what this job would look like both in terms of their tasks each shift and their larger responsibilities within the business.

There are a few different levels to this section. First you should lay out the big picture responsibilities that come with the position. Next, go over the basic day-to-day tasks you'd expect from the position.



Finally, explain how this position fits into the business as a whole, including who they would report to and who will report to them.

The idea is for the applicant to be able to skim this section, not get bogged down by big paragraphs. The responsibilities should be in bulleted lists to make them as easy to read as possible, and try to err on the side of brevity for each item.



Salary

It's recommended that instead of a specific salary, you list a salary range that is competitive with this position in the industry. This will let you adjust the official salary depending on the new employee's pay history and experience. It also gives applicants a good sense of what you're offering in terms of compensation and if it fits their needs upfront.

Just make sure you can back up this estimate when you eventually offer a candidate the job. It's advisable to bracket down on the high end of your range in order to allow some wiggle room for negotiation (and not to show your hand too much before salary negotiations even start). Also important: don't go so low that you might end up turning away the kinds of applicants who have the skills you're looking for.

Do a little research ahead of time to see what other restaurants like yours are paying for a comparable position – whether that's through online research or networking with other restaurant owners in your area.

Posting Online

As you start jumping into posting your restaurant manager job description, it's important to remember that different websites handle the job description format differently. If you're posting on multiple sites (which is usually a good idea to get the word out), you may possibly have to organize or phrase the job description a little differently as you go. But if you have to adjust your job description from website to website, just make sure the actual information you're giving is consistent.

Of course, once you start posting the job description, you'll hopefully start seeing resumes roll in. In our next chapter, we walk through what to look for in a strong **restaurant manager resume.**



The Resume

Being able to read and evaluate job resumes is a skill unto itself. When you're a busy restaurant owner, it becomes that much more difficult. But when you're hiring a new manager, you have to be ready to comb through lots and lots of restaurant manager resumes to find viable candidates.

The good news is that evaluating resumes effectively is a learnable skill. By looking at the different parts of restaurant manager resumes, you can start to build an idea of your applicants and how each of them might fit with your established staff.

Overall Work Experience

Before you even look at the restaurant manager resumes you were sent, make a list of the ideal work experience you're looking for in your next manager. At what level would the ideal candidate be in their career? How many years of experience and at what kinds of restaurants in particular would be a good fit for the position? You might not be able to match a particular applicant's experience exactly to your list, but it's a good way to hone in on those with potential.

That being said, while it's important for your restaurant manager to have solid experience in restaurant management, don't dismiss applicants who have a combination of some background in other management and experience in the restaurant industry. It's less about the titles of their previous positions and more the roles they played in those jobs ... and the skillsets they used.

Plus, a management background in other kinds of businesses brings a very different point of view to the table, and different points of view can be a major asset when building a work culture.

Room to Grow

Also, don't be afraid of pulling candidates with a little more "junior" work experience than you were expecting. Remember, you want to hire someone who has the solid foundations to do the job, but you also want someone who can grow into the position. It's not always a good idea to only respond to overqualified applicants with only restaurant manager experience, who might not feel like they have room to grow. They could very well leave for another job quickly.



Projects

Keep an eye out for any information on restaurant manager resumes that highlights projects the applicant has overseen and completed. This could be part of their work history itself or in its own "Projects" section.

Also, don't be afraid of pulling candidates with a little more "junior" work experience than you were expecting.

Have they successfully helped open a new restaurant? Did they implement a new, more efficient POS system in their last job? Did they work with their head chef to successfully start a restaurant garden? Have they organized team building workshops for their teams? Did they implement a new catering service? These are all things that give you more insight into what kind of manager they are and how they approach initiative.

Certifications and Awards

Certification is of course a big part of the restaurant industry. You should already know which certifications your managers and general staff need to have, so keep an eye on restaurant manager resumes that specifically list them.

But you can also keep a lookout for other kinds of professional certification. You can learn a lot about the extra skills applicants can bring to your restaurant by their accreditations and certifications. Similarly, any awards mentioned on the resume can give you a better sense of who this applicant is as a manager.

Education

Yes, a formal education is perceived to be less crucial in the restaurant industry than in other industries. Many restaurant managers learned completely on the job, and a lack of a formal degree could easily be outweighed by their many years of experience.

That said, if the applicant does have a formal education along with on-the-job experience, that's always a good sign. And when it comes to manager positions, a business, accounting, or communications degree can all have their skillsets applied to the work the applicant would be doing for you.

Volunteer Work

If you're a very community and charityfocused restaurant, keep an eye out for any restaurant manager resumes with volunteer work listed, especially if it lines up with the business' charitable focuses. It's always good to pinpoint potential managers who will be enthusiastic about working with your community, just like you are.

Impeccable Grammar

A management position is all about detailoriented work, and overall, restaurant manager resumes should reflect that. Is it concise and easy to read? Do they get across the important information? Is everything grammatically correct?

Among their many shift duties, restaurant managers also have to write everything from emails to vendors to presentations for marketing meetings. Seeing those strong writing skills being used on their resume is important.



Remember restaurant manager resumes are your applicants' brand message, if an applicant will be representing your brand, it's critical to be sure it is well done and speaks to the value they can bring to your business. But at the end of the day, you are not hiring a piece of paper; you are hiring a person.

Before you even meet prospective candidates, however, there's one more item to get sorted out: **the salary.**



Salary

There are few things in life that are as difficult to talk about as money. And when the money in question is in regard to someone's livelihood, the discussion can get even harder. But what makes a restaurant manager salary in particular easier to establish, present, and negotiate is getting your ducks in a row in advance. Knowing what the position is worth — and how you compare to other offers the candidate is considering — can make hiring a restaurant manager a smoother process.

It's easy to Google "restaurant manager" and find a salary number to drop into a spreadsheet. It's a lot harder to know if that one-size-fits-all dollar amount is going to work for you and your restaurant. Taking any dollar amount at face value, without factoring in variables such as

job responsibilities and your geographic location, could be a recipe for a disconnect when it comes to that crucial conversation.

Only you can know how your expectations for a restaurant manager line up to those in the marketplace, but beyond that, there are five considerable factors that will impact your decisions — and maybe your applicant's ultimate decision to work for you — when setting a restaurant manager salary.

Salaries in Your Segment

Beyond the obvious differences in compensation between a general manager, kitchen manager (which may very well be your chef), and assistant manager, your restaurant manager salary is going to depend heavily on the segment of the industry your restaurant occupies.

In the 2016 Restaurant Management Salary Survey¹ conducted by Gecko Hospitality, a recruiting firm in Fort Myers, TX, that specifically targets the hospitality industry, starting salaries for general manager positions are broken up into six distinct categories, with the following average results in 2016:

Segment	Female Average	Male Average
Quick serve	\$43,656	\$49,199
Fast casual	\$51,319	\$53,459
Family style	\$47,222	\$53,556
Casual	\$54,950	\$64,649
Upscale casual	\$63,666	\$67,556
Upscale dining	Data not Available	\$84,000

(These averages are not classified by geography, but taken as a true average of 125 female and 412 male survey respondents nationwide.)

While quick serve and fast casual (both limited service) are pretty close in line with family style (defined as full service without alcoholic beverages), we see a fairly large increase in the full service segment, including both casual and upscale casual, and yet another, predictably, in general manager positions for upscale/fine dining.

Not only do we see salaries go up with average check size, but as the expectation and requirement of service rises, so does the corresponding compensation.

Makes sense, right?



Experience vs. Salary

What's less easy to nail down is how restaurant manager salary fluctuates with experience — and with the corresponding training your restaurant is willing or able to offer a new hire.

Many corporate-owned restaurants will recruit managers with relatively little experience (but college degrees) and fast track their education through a set training program. These management trainees will learn restaurant operations, both in an actual classroom setting and on the job working with more experienced managers, until they pass a formalized set of guidelines that determine readiness to take on a unit of their own. These specific skills include

opening and closing procedures, employee training, financial reports, and general human resources and leadership tactics.

Restaurants without the structure or luxury to train new managers alongside existing ones will likely look to candidates with one to five years of experience in management. This could mean promoting someone internally or recruiting from outside, but these restaurant managers may only have a high school diploma. What they don't have in formal education, they make up for in practical, on-the-job learning that may be more difficult to get in a fast-tracked educational environment.

While these two larger scenarios may not have significant salary differences in aggregate, it seems reasonable that a candidate with ten years of restaurant manager experience is going to have a salary expectation higher than an applicant with one year. A manager with formalized training may be more understanding about how their end goal salary will look the same whether they started with a bachelor's degree or a high school diploma.

Set your own expectations for experience and level up from average range if the restaurant manager you want to bring in has more years under their belt than the minimum.

Gender Discrepancies

Something applicants distinctly recognize in the overall job market — and specifically the restaurant industry — in 2018 is the perceived gender gap in pay. And, as

we saw in the Gecko Hospitality survey results, there is a reported 5-15% gap in pay between men and women for the same general manager roles. While this discrepancy in restaurant manager salary may be difficult to discern as an independent operator with only one restaurant manager salary to compare at a time, even seasoned vets are surprised by the results.

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In reviewing the survey results, Robert Krzak, President of Gecko Hospitality, observed, "We ran the numbers four times to make sure. [Women] are widely sought after for these positions, but when you look at how they are compensated you ask 'what's going on here? Are you kidding me?' It's really jaw dropping."³

Across almost every geographic location and segment of the restaurant industry, female managers report making less than their male colleagues. And your applicants know it. It's more important than ever to take extra care to deliberately establish your restaurant manager salary agnostic of the gender of your candidates.

Federal Wage Regulations

While there aren't specific federal wage regulations for management positions in the restaurant industry or any other, there are a few considerations to keep top of mind when setting your restaurant manager salary to save you hassle and money in the long run.

The restaurant manager's job is tough, no bones about it. It often requires long hours, and most certainly more than a 40-hour work week. When setting a manager's salary, be mindful of federal rules governing overtime pay and exempt versus non-exempt employee status, as these considerations will have an impact on your overall budget.

Currently, federal law sets the annual salary level for exemption from overtime pay at \$23,660. Rules set in place in 2016 by President Obama's administration, which have not taken effect, raised that minimum annual salary for exemption to \$47,476. It is expected now that when the Department of Labor issues its new recommendations for overtime pay regulation, that number will fall somewhere in-between, likely in the low \$30,000 range.⁴

In terms of the salary averages presented above, it's very unlikely any new federal regulations will have an impact on general manager salaries in 2018, but it's worth considering, particularly if hiring for assistant manager positions at your establishment.

Benefits Beyond the Salary

Ultimately, the biggest factor beyond local competition that may determine if your restaurant manager salary is indeed attractive is all the things that come with it that aren't actually the salary itself. The benefits and considerations your restaurant offers its employees — manager included — could tip the scales for an applicant who is looking at the full picture in terms of compensation.



Health insurance is obviously a critical matter for restaurant employees going into 2018, but so is paid sick and personal time. Both of these benefits may seem like huge expenses, but their careful application can end up benefitting your bottom line just as much as your individual employee's. Having to pay overtime for hourly employees covering shifts is unavoidable no matter what benefits you provide, but the number of days a sick employee is out — not to mention the number of people they can spread their illness to when resistant to



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calling in for unpaid time — is a huge factor in driving up unnecessary overtime and emergency call-outs.

Work-life balance generally is a big consideration for many managers, particularly for Millennials having worked in the industry now for upwards of 10 to 15 years. Making sure your candidates understand the full package of compensation — and not just the one number attached to a restaurant manager salary — could make the difference between an enthusiastic yes on offer and a reluctant no.

But once you've made that offer, your work isn't done. There are lots of things you can do to make sure your restaurant manager will be **ready to go** on day one, starting with what information you have on hand for them on their computer desktop.



Getting Ready

The worst feeling in the world is getting a great opportunity to network or market your restaurant... and not being able to find any of the information you need to seal the deal. Running a business is stressful enough without making a mad dash around your office every time you need to find a specific piece of paper or number.

And it's even worse when it's your first day at work.

Getting ready for your new manager doesn't start the day they're hired — it starts much earlier, as soon as you know you need one. If your previous manager is still onsite, they're the ideal person to help get material their replacement needs in place.

Since so much communication is done over email today, the first ideal tool to prep for your new manager is their computer. So much time is wasted by searching for the right item at the very last minute every time someone else needs something. But that's where technology comes in.

Thanks to today's computers and the cloud, it's easy to organize your various important documents (PDFs, Excel, Word, etc.) and then sync those files with your other devices so they're always at your fingertips. Google Drive, Apple Cloud, and Dropbox are just three of the most popular places to synchronize the handiest of things people ask for.

But even if you can keep them all in one place on your manager's computer desktop, at least they'll know exactly where they are when they need them. The trick is to take the time to ensure all your digital documents and images are in the right place.

Here are a few of the more crucial items you should definitely have available at a moment's notice for your manager on their computer.



1. Contact Lists

Do you work directly with organizations in your community? Do you have multiple vendors you reach out to for certain ingredients? Are there other restaurants in your area you've networked with? At minimum, you should keep those organized in spreadsheets or word processing documents and in an organized folder on your computer. That way, when you need to make an important phone call, you or your manager will know exactly where to find that number.

2. PDF and Text Versions of Your Menu

Your menu will be shared in different ways both online and off. You'll want it on your website, on your profile for any

review/search site, on your Facebook page — and if you're a participating restaurant with Rewards Network, you'll want it on your merchant details page, too.

Make sure you keep a PDF version and a text version of your menu on hand. The PDF is great for printing out high-resolution copies of your menu or posting easily to social media or sites like Yelp. The text version can be easily changed if you switch out items or raise prices, and is a little more flexible for copying and pasting individual items.

Many website developers also appreciate being sent text versions so that they can use live text on the site (which can help improve your search results). If you start working with any marketing professional, they'll want multiple versions of your menu to use in their projects, so keeping both kinds of documents on hand will make those projects go more smoothly.

3. Business Profiles

If you haven't already, take some time to type out a little bio on your restaurant to send out to public relations people. It can include your business' history, your chef's menu concept, your focus when it comes to service... anything you think would be appropriate for PR. Also consider having mini-biographies of each owner and your head chef and manager ready as well. You can adapt this from similar copy you've already posted on your website, but be sure to write it in third person ("he," "she," or "they;" not "I" or "we") so whomever you're emailing it to can use the text.

4. Promotional Photos

Keeping a folder of your food/restaurant photos is always a smart idea. You might share them on social media, use them for promotional posters, or send them out as part of general PR. It's important, however, to make sure they are actually your photos, and not customer photos, stock photos, or random photos of other restaurants' food you've found online. You don't want to get into any legal hot water. If you've taken any promotional videos, it's also smart to keep those on your computer.

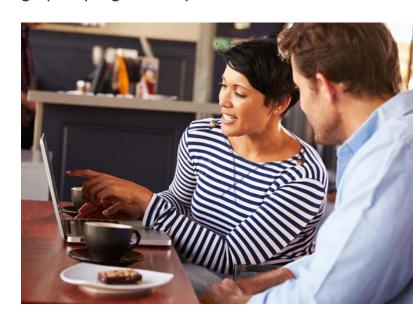
5. Good Reviews

Keep a running document of any good reviews from guests or food critics you've seen online or you've been sent for your restaurant. If the review comes from a particular website (including Rewards Network), include the URL with the review in case you ever need to point to where your good reviews are coming from. If you can't reach the guest who left the review, make sure you put down their initials instead of their full names to maintain their anonymity.

If your review comes from a written out or printed note, type the message into the document. Whether it's for your website, ad marketing, or other promotional project, you'll need actual text, not an image of text that's been scanned into your computer. Take the time to create digital text so you can highlight, copy, and paste easily so it's ready the next time you need a testimonial.

6. Logos

Like with reviews and your bio, keeping your business logo in a convenient place on your computer can do wonders when you need to send promotional items out. Every logo should be a high quality, high res image (at least 300 dpi), ideally with different formats in case the person you're sending it to needs a JPG, PNG, TIFF, or other format. If you have different variations of your logo — black and white, one color, a special one for events — it's good to keep them all in the same folder but properly named, so you can easily find the specific one you need when you need it. Also, make sure you have a logo with a transparent background as well. Many websites or graphic programs require that.



7. Employee Handbook

While having an employee handbook printed out on site can be helpful, keeping a digital copy is highly recommended. For one, you can easily email the document to potential or newly hired employees.



Crucial items you should have available for your manager:

- 1. Contact Lists
- 2. PDF & Text Versions of Your Menu
- 3. Business Profiles
- 4. Promotional Photos
- 5. Good Reviews
- 6. Logos
- 7. Employee Handbook
- 8. Emergency Lists
- 9. Social Media

A digital employee handbook is also easily searchable, both by the glossary and by the search function in your PDF reader.

8. Emergency Lists

Whether it's a bad snowstorm or a major property issue, having your emergency plan and emergency contact numbers for all staff on hand can be the difference between things going smoothly or disastrously. Being able to quickly find specific contact info using the digital copy's search function is a major timesaver, particularly if you run multiple locations or a large chain. If you keep your work computer at the restaurant, make sure to put these documents on your home computer as well. That way, if you can't make it into your office during a winter storm or other emergency, you'll still have this information on hand.

9. Social Media

Do not go through the hassle of resetting your passwords for your social media accounts every time you forget what they are. Try using a password manager like LastPass to keep those passwords where you can find them but also keep them secure. Anytime one of them slips your mind, you have the password manager there to remind you.



Are you ready to hand over the reins?

For first-timers hiring a manager, it can be difficult for longtime owners to let go of day-to-day responsibilities of managing a restaurant. After all, when you know all the ins and outs of your business, highly motivated people tend to assume it'll just be easier for you to do it all yourself.

But part of the process of business growth is learning how to delegate tasks a little at a time to other competent employees. If you've hired smart and found yourself a good manager, they can eventually fill that daily role within the front-of-the-house and the kitchen alike while you keep your fingers on the pulse on the business as a whole. You'll be able to devote more time to the larger management of the enterprise — and to your interests outside the business.

Some of the main tasks your manager should be responsible for include:

- opening and closing procedures.
- overall daily supervision.
- · inventory tracking.
- cash handling (stocking/counting out the cash register, managing which employees are on them at what time, training your staff on those procedures).
- labor and wage management.

Delegating these duties over to your new manager gradually can be helpful for both of you. If your manager is less experienced or brand new to the business, it helps them learn how your operation is run. If your manager was promoted from inside the business, it can help them get used to their new position among your other employees. If they have years of experience somewhere else, a slow transition will help identify how you work differently — and give your staff a chance to adapt to.

And ultimately, it helps you get used to the idea that someone else can handle it all.

What You Shouldn't Give Up

All that being said, you are still the owner. As such, there are always important roles for you to play within your company. Understanding what those roles are is just as crucial as knowing which tasks you're delegating to your manager.

For instance, you should never relinquish cash flow. Even as a hands-off owner, so much of your responsibility will involve P&L (profit and loss) and the larger finances of the business. Still, your manager should be aware and on the same page with you regarding cash flow, the business plan, and reconciling it all in your current system.

Another aspect of the business you should still handle is the marketing. This is your brand and you still get to choose how that brand is marketed to the community. However, your manager should be instrumental in physically fulfilling the marketing of the business, including coming up with new promotional ideas.

Keep control of your image by requiring a manager to get your sign off on important decisions like marketing or even vendor changes. Let your manager plan out the change, and then you can approve, veto, or adjust the plan. That's a good way to think of your relationship as manager and owner: they're the planner and you become the approver.

Above all, make sure your expectations for any new manager are clear. Easing them into tasks is great as long as everyone is on the same page regarding responsibilities. Allow your manager to fulfill the role you've assigned to them and set goals for when more responsibilities will be added (provided they're doing their current work well).

Make sure to schedule check-ins for the two of you to assess progress, as you would any employee. What are the expectations for what they bring to those meetings to show that everything is running smoothly on their watch? The hope is, as you progress, you can step away for more than just a day or a week and truly get to enjoy the fruits of your lifelong labor.

Endnotes

¹ "Gecko Hospitality Salary Survey Report 2017" – geckohospitality.com

² ibid.

³ "Restaurant Manager Salaries: How Does Yours Stack Up?" – Restaurant-hospitality.com

⁴"DOL Confirms New Overtime Rule Coming" – National Law Review; natlawreview.com

⁵ "Gallup News: Millennials Want Jobs That Promote Their Well-Being" – Gallup.com



Want to learn more about how Rewards Network can help your restaurant grow?

Contact us today:

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