

In the restaurant business, employee turnover can come at you like a tidal wave in the darkness. Sometimes you are blessed with calm waters and then before you know it, your life is being turned upside down by change as you find yourself struggling to find good help to keep your doors open. It is in the midst of these turnover crises that a restaurant owner can find himself taking steps that might lead to huge costs down the road.

There are more and more sophisticated loafers out there. In my last blog I even outlined a scam where new employees who plan to lay out of work, report you to the health department as soon as you give them a warning for being late or not showing up to work. Later, when you fire this person, he or she will contact an attorney and claim the firing was in retaliation for their report to the health department. This is just one of many scams out there that can prey on your pocketbook. Other tactics include seeking job protection under the Family Medical Leave Act, and the Americans with Disabilities Act. Any conflict that you get drawn into with one of these scammers could cost you thousands of dollars of retention fees and attorney fees, assuming you have adequate EPL Insurance and a good workers compensation policy. Without them, you could face hundreds of thousands of dollars in costs.

But there is a better way. You have the one chance before you hire a person to find the good eggs and screen out the undesirables. But you must have a plan designed to do so. You must have a plan with specific steps and triggers that will keep you from making an emotional or a rushed decision. Here are some ideas that may help you put into place a plan that will better protect you from the employment scams out there that so many restaurant owners fall prey to.

Start by creating a meaningful job description. There are many places on the web that can help you do this in a step by step fashion at no charge. Be sure that your job description not only describes the type of work that you expect your new employee to perform, but be specific about rules describing behavior, tardiness and other areas where a new employee might fail to perform and need to be let go.

Conduct a thorough interview. You want to be sure that you don't base your hiring decision on personal feelings or the initial impression that you have with your candidate. Ask them if they ever felt that they were mistreated in a job situation. If they answer in the affirmative, keep asking why until you have a clear understanding of how your job prospect feels about this issue. Ask this same question to any references that you speak with. This can be the leading indicator for revealing a scammer type personality.

Create some skills tests that will tell you if this person can do the work that he or she says she can. If you are hiring a person with no experience, then develop a skills test for that scenario that will help you understand if this person is a quick learner or a slow learner.

Make a character assessment. You will need to develop some open ended questions that will give you insight into each candidate's basic character traits. In addition, you should find some services that will help you conduct a background check on anyone who gets far enough in the interview process that you are considering hiring them.

If you require a pre-hire physical examination that includes a drug test, then you may be able to avoid costly future claims that you would miss without this type of screening. Don't try to do this yourself, hire medical professionals so that you don't become involved in any actions regarding the physical and the drug testing.

It's clear that hiring employees is an area where many restaurant owners get into trouble. Taking the time to understand the risks and make a definitive plan that you follow without exception should help to mitigate the risks associated with a new hire.

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