

Executive Summary

The restaurant sector, as part of the hospitality industry, is an important part of the economy and society in Spain. Its tightly knit relationship with leisure and tourism, its impact on the labor market – due to the sheer number of jobs that it generates – and its role in the real sector of the economy of Spain – due to the volume of business and the number of companies in it – are all factors which make this sector deserving of more attention than it has garnered up to now.

Along these lines, the aim of the sponsors and researchers of this study was to shed light on one matter that has characterized labor relations in this sector: the high voluntary turnover rate. To do so, they carried out a very thorough review of literature and available sources of data, scarce though they may be. They also conducted a series of in-depth interviews and focus groups with managers of top industry companies. Several conclusions were drawn from the study:

1. The voluntary turnover rate forms such a part of the industry that many consider it to be unavoidable.
2. There are several causes for this turnover rate; the most important are as follows:
 - a) Lack of social prestige for work in the restaurant industry.
 - b) Relatively harsh working conditions with regard to shifts and remuneration.
 - c) Lack of appropriate use of professional human resource management tools by proprietors as well as top and middle management.
 - d) Explosive initial growth in the sector leading to indiscriminate hiring.
 - e) The perception, especially by employees in the sector, that employment in the restaurant industry opens door to jobs in other sectors, especially construction.
 - f) The gap between the official training plans offered and actual employer needs.
3. All of this has led to a situation which could be called circular: the lack of prestige in the industry causes workers to take jobs thinking that of them as temporary positions requiring little training, which in turn further contributes to the negative image of the industry.

Additionally, employers value almost exclusively experience as a criterion for hiring and promotion while very little value is placed on training, even for intermediate posts or management positions on the restaurant premises. The same low value is placed on their own training as business owners.

4. How can this cycle of job dissatisfaction and lack of prestige be broken?

The experts agree that training is key and that it should concentrate on attitudes, not only on skills.

5. The word “trade” was mentioned in practically all the interviews and focus groups.

Recovering the idea of a trade in the industry was given as a concept that not only brings together the fulfillment of a set of tasks associated with the restaurant industry but also accompanies those tasks with an appropriate attitude of service, customer care, attention to detail, etc.

6. Training, and a lot of it, is also necessary for top and middle managers in the industry. The use of tools that allow human resources to be professionalized is vital in bringing about definitive change in the sector, changes which will allow a greater possibility for success in new competitive environments.