Case Study

Reducing Turnover and Food Costs at a Chicago Polished Casual Restaurant

Location: Chicago, IL

Industry: Polished Casual

Focus Areas: Employee Turnover, Food Cost Management

P4 Focus: People • Process • Planning • Profit

Background

A trendy polished casual restaurant in Chicago's Loop, was known for its vibrant ambiance and globally inspired seasonal menus. Despite its popularity, the restaurant struggled with two chronic challenges:

- **High employee turnover, especially among kitchen staff and mid-level managers.**

- **Excessive food costs, with inconsistent portioning, supplier pricing issues, and minimal tracking tools.**

These issues were eroding profit margins, creating stress among team members and leadership, preventing them from stabilizing their operations and scaling their business.

Challenges Identified

Turnover & Team Instability

- **68%** annual turnover especially among BOH team.

- Limited onboarding or training structure.

- Morale issues stemming from unclear roles and reactive leadership.

Food Cost Escalation

- Food costs averaged **38%**, well above the industry ideal.

- Lack of portion control protocols.

- Inconsistent ordering and overproduction during prep.

Solution: **The P4 Framework**

P4 Advisory Group conducted a full Restaurant Performance Audit and implemented a 90-day strategy focused on the four core pillars:

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1. People:
Restructuring Team Culture & Reducing Turnover

Actions Taken:

- Introduced an **Employee GPS system** with role clarity, growth paths, and leadership coaching.
- Designed a **30-60-90 day onboarding** plan with skill tracking and mentorship pairings.
- Hosted a **2-day Hospitality Intelligence workshop** for all staff to reset culture expectations.

Results:

- Turnover dropped by **41%** within 90 days.
- 2 line cooks promoted internally to supervisors with defined KPIs.
- Morale improved, reflected in internal feedback and team engagement scores.

2. Process:
Operational Efficiencies for Consistency and Control

Actions Taken:

- Developed and implemented **SOPs for prep, inventory, and service cadence.**
- Created a **daily BOH/FOH stand-up structure** and shift retrospectives.
- Installed a prep and portion control system tied to POS data.

Results:

- Prep waste reduced by **27%.**
- Ticket times stabilized across shifts, improving guest experience.
- FOH and BOH alignment reduced friction and improved communication.

3. Planning:

Strategic Menu Engineering and Vendor Alignment

Actions Taken:

- Conducted a **menu profitability analysis** using contribution margins and velocity.
- Re-negotiated vendor contracts and implemented par-level ordering.
- Introduced a quarterly business review cadence with leadership and managers.

Results:

- 4 underperforming items were replaced with high-margin seasonal dishes.
- Ingredient overlap increased by 35% across the menu, improving efficiency.
- Ordering errors were reduced, and vendors aligned with forecasted needs.

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4. Profit:
Financial Literacy and Systems Thinking

Actions Taken:

- Installed a **simple financial dashboard** for daily cost tracking
- Trained managers on prime cost management and weekly. flash reporting.
- Implemented a **"Cost of a Plate" playbook** for all kitchen leads.

Results:

- Food cost dropped from **38% to 30.5%** within 60 days.
- Labor hours aligned with volume trends, reducing excess cost during low shifts.
- Weekly flash reporting improved forecasting accuracy and proactive decision-making.

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Key Outcomes

Metric	Before P4	After P4
BOH Turnover Rate	68%	↓40%
Food Cost	38%	↓30.5%
Prep Waste	High	↓27%
Employee Morale	Low	↑Significantly Improved
Profit Margin	Eroding	↑7% increase

Client Feedback

"We were reacting to problems instead of preventing them. The P4 process and framework provided us with structure, accountability, and a new approach to leadership. Our kitchen isn't just more efficient, it's a better place to work."

— *Owner & Executive Chef*

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Conclusion

This story is proof that independent restaurants don't need to sacrifice creativity to improve operations. With the **P4 Framework,** they aligned their people, process, planning, and profit systems to build a stronger, more sustainable, and even scalable business.

Next Steps

If your restaurant is experiencing similar challenges, schedule a Hospitality Performance Audit or roundtable strategy session.

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The businesses that win in hospitality aren't just great at food, they're great at systems. The P4+ Framework helps you achieve both.

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