

Marché® Restaurant

Happy Employees, Happy Customers

Introduction

With restaurants located in VivoCity, 313@somerset and Raffles City Shopping Centre, the Marché® restaurants in Singapore offer distinctive European cuisines in authentic Swiss backdrop. Well-known for their fresh ingredients and front cooking, the Marché® restaurants in Singapore are popular amongst families because of its family-oriented menu. Its authentic and cosy Swiss atmosphere is a draw for large group gatherings, as is its wide selection of food, where guests can feel, hear, see, smell and taste food cooked with high quality seasonal produce, prepared right before them.

The Marché® restaurants are part of the Marché® International group, a subsidiary of the Mövenpick Group. The three Marché® restaurants in Singapore employ a total of 160 employees, with 140 of them at the front-line in restaurants and the remaining 20 employees providing corporate support. 40% of its employees are locals, and their ages range from the late teens to mature employees in their 60s.

Working Environment and Culture

The Marché® restaurants offer a strong dining concept. Guests have a wide-range of fresh offerings to choose from while dining in a relaxed and easy market setting, which have been done up to replicate the authentic warm and cosy setting of the Swiss alps. Original decorative articles adorn the restaurants, including true to original Swiss chalets from the 16th century which were flown in to decorate the VivoCity & 313@somerset restaurants. Beyond the physical ambience, Marché® recognises that it needs to build a team of highly trained and motivated employees to deliver the Marché® concept. Hence, its policies and practices are geared towards building a fun working environment for its employees, where the sense of togetherness and positive energy can translate into a great dining experience for its guests.

“As my children grow up and become less dependent on me, I am now able to take on a part-time job that provides me with an income while passing time. I have the flexibility to choose a work schedule that allows me to work and still spend time with my family.”

**Mdm. Nancy Ang, 58, housewife
on permanent part-time work scheme**

Marché® Part-Time Work Policy

Marché® operates on a 5-day work week. Full-timers make up 70% of its workforce. Employees who are not able to commit to a full 5-day work week are placed on the part-time work schemes – on either the permanent part-time work scheme or the short-term part-time work scheme. The permanent part-time work scheme is popular with its mature employees, usually retirees or housewives who are not able to commit to a regular part-time work arrangement. Marché® reaches out to them through job fairs conducted by the various Community Development Councils (CDCs) and other recruitment channels. To offer flexibility, Marché® does not place any restriction

on the number of days they have to work in a week, nor the number of hours they need to clock in.

Its other part-time work scheme is designed for job seekers who are not able to commit to a regular work arrangement with Marché®. They may however be available to work while on term breaks or waiting for National Service enlistment.

“Working part-time during the holidays is my way of having fun while spending time productively. I also gain real-life experience that may be useful to me if I decide to venture into F&B industry after I graduate.”

Ms. Janet Djohan, 21, NUS undergraduate, on short-term

Attracting and Retaining Part-Timers

To balance between meeting operational needs and the desire to offer flexibility to part-timers, Marché® has a structured scheduling system in place. Where possible, restaurant managers try to accommodate part-timers’ request without compromising on staffing requirements.

Permanent part-timers who have been with Marché® for over a year are entitled to an appreciation bonus at the end of the year. They are similarly entitled to the company’s in-house incentive programs such as the “Mystery Shopper” and “Best Employee of the Month” monetary rewards. Longer-serving part-timers who have been with the company for more than three years are also given a higher hourly rate of pay, in recognition of their experience and dedication to the company.

Overcoming Operational Challenges with Winning People Practices



From its experience hiring mature employees, Marché® found that once mature employees are well-settled and integrated into the company, they bring stability to the team and are excellent team players. New mature employees with service industry experience typically have little problems adjusting to the Marché® environment while more training has to be provided to those with no prior experience in the service industry. To increase the probability of successful job-fit, Marché® creatively devised a trial scheme. Local job seekers keen to join Marché® are invited to work in the restaurants for up to 4 hours on selected day, serving customers during the restaurants’ peak period. This hands-on trial gives job-seekers a first-hand experience of what their job will be like, allowing them to better decide if this is a job they want to take on. This has resulted in a lower drop-out rate from new hires.

Once the job-seekers join the Marché® family, nothing is left to chance in ensuring that new employees are well integrated. The HR team takes a proactive approach, introducing the new employee to his or her colleagues at the restaurant and at the Marché® corporate office. Every employee is assigned a buddy, who is responsible for training and bringing him/her up to speed. HR follows up closely with the restaurants’ managers to ensure that the new employees, including part-timers, integrate well with the team and are competent in their jobs. Further, full-time mature

workers who are not conversant in English may be selected to attend English speaking classes sponsored by the company.

Other Work-Life Schemes

To encourage work-life balance, Marché® employees are encouraged to consume their annual leave entitlement each year. To encourage a healthy lifestyle, subsidies for gym membership are also offered as part of the benefits' package for management employees.

Role of Middle Managers

Effective people management plays a key role in Marché® success in attracting and retaining good service employees. Its restaurant managers and team leaders are constantly updated on the company's people policies and schemes. They are trained to be effective in engaging both their full-time and part-time employees who span across all age groups. Restaurant managers are accountable for their restaurant's bottomline and they see the importance of keeping their employees engaged and happy. As having a regular pool of part-timers allows the restaurant to effectively flex their manpower needs according to operational demands, restaurant managers place equal emphasis in engaging this pool of part-timers.

Designated HR staff as Relationship Managers for various groups of employees is another strategy accounting for Marché® success. Employees do not have to go through cumbersome bureaucratic processes to have their queries answered. Through its weekly restaurant visits, the HR team is intimately plugged in to the needs of its employees and is able to act on employees' needs in a timely manner.

Conclusion

Happy employees create happy dining experiences for guests. Marché® recognises that having a cohesive and happy team of employees is key to the successful execution of its dining concept. In a sector characterised by high employee turnover and manpower shortage, Marché® has found the keys to keeping its recruitment and training costs low – hire good people, meet their needs and keep them happy. Across the value chain, from its recruitment practices, to flexible working schedules, employing effective people management practices and dedicating HR resources to maintain employer-employee relationships, other food and beverage establishments can learn a lot from Marché® exemplary people practices.