Training Your Commercial Kitchen Staff to Go Green

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Going green in the commercial kitchen involves several transitions, from installing energy-efficient equipment to using green cleaning agents. The transition is much easier if the effort is backed by the whole staff. Training your employees is essential for new behaviors to be adopted effectively. Implementing a training system in your commercial kitchen or establishment will make going green second nature.

Set Up a Staff Meeting

Having a meeting with your staff communicates the importance of the information and makes it easier to pass the education to every member of the team.

- **Make training mandatory.** If it is optional, people will more than likely opt out. If you want to implement change, having everyone present is essential.
- **Compensate staff.** Make sure to pay staff for the time they spend at the meeting. A work meeting is still work.
- **Make it interactive.** Engage and involve staff as much as possible while you facilitate the meeting. If employees are bored, they will not retain information as well. Make it fun.

Educate Your Staff

Take the time to explain why you are going green in your establishment. Especially in the commercial kitchen, behavior changes are a big part of being green.

- **Explain reasons for the changes.** Give employees concrete reasons why the new information is important to learn. This especially applies to tasks that require behavior changes such as using green cleaners and sorting recyclable waste.
- **Incorporate various training techniques.** Use varied teaching methods as you educate. Visuals, hands-on learning, group activities and games can all help make learning more engaging.
- **Make safety a priority.** With any new equipment, supplies or responsibilities, make sure safety issues are properly covered.

Assign Responsibilities

In a fast-moving commercial kitchen environment, it is essential that all staff members be aware of their responsibilities in order to keep smooth, problem-free shifts. Make expectations clear from the start that being eco-friendly will become part of any ordinary shift.
- **Create your own “Green Team.”** Organize an internal “green team” to educate employees, monitor behaviors and reduce environmental impact in any way possible. These should be volunteers who are excited about your initiatives.

- **Make expectations clear.** Successful programs usually have several people monitoring and encouraging new behaviors. This is especially true with recycling programs, green cleaning practices, which can be more difficult to adapt to. Find responsible staff members to help.

- **Dole out responsibilities.** If your staff knows exactly what is expected of them, the job will be easier for everyone. To start, it may help to assign different tasks to different people. For example, put one person in charge of reusing water from the steamer to clean at the shift’s end, another person in charge of monitoring and disposing of recycling waste, and so on.

**Allow Time for Transition**

- **Set the example.** As a manager or owner, one of the best things you can do is take up the green practices yourself. This usually involves making changes to your own behavior. Let your staff catch you recycling a soda can, and they will know you mean business.

- **Allow time for repetition.** Studies show that it takes several times for new information or behaviors to make an impact. Be patient and encouraging.

- **Set up new charts or reminders.** Set up reminder signs, educational posters, brightly colored stickers or anything that will help your staff remember their green training. Clearly marked recycling bins in the break room and reusable water cups for employee meals can both serve as simple reminders.

**Support Positive Behaviors**

- **Create rewards.** Make sure that rewards are fun and meaningful. If an employee knows his or her efforts are not going unnoticed, he or she will be more likely to keep doing it the right way.

- **Even the little things are worth noting.** Let a staff member know right away when you see his or her positive behavior, even if it is something as simple as not letting a freezer door hang open. All the little things add up over time to make your establishment greener.

In general, going green should be a team effort, whether in the commercial kitchen or other work environment. A little goes a long way. The more people realizing the benefits of going green, the more impactful the changes will be.

Information obtained from FSW (Food Service Warehouse) website
[www.foodservicewarehouse.com](http://www.foodservicewarehouse.com)