

On the Job

Training at Pal's Sudden Service

Applied Case Study

Headquartered in Kingsport, Tennessee, Pal's Sudden Service is a quick-service restaurant chain with over 20 locations. Pal's first franchise opened in 1956 with four items: Sauceburgers, Frenchie Fries, milk shakes, and coke. Customers walked up to the outside counter to place

and receive their orders. Pal's first drive-through opened in 1985. Although certainly not as large as the McDonald's or Burger King chains, Pal's has a record of excellence including being the first restaurant to receive the prestigious Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award and the first

organization to win the Tennessee Excellence Award more than once. Pal's obsession with high quality might best be demonstrated by their use of the Hoshizaki ice cube shape that causes ice to melt more slowly so that their iced tea will stay cool all day. Pal's takes great pride in quickly getting

orders to customers without mistakes. This is a difficult task given the fast pace of the business. Pal's created a unique training program that reduced employee errors from one error every 450 transactions to one mistake for every 3,360 transactions. Furthermore, service time was reduced from 23 seconds to 18 seconds. How did Pal's make such progress? Primarily through training, assessment, and feedback. Each hourly employee goes through 120 hours of training. This extensive training allows employees to be assigned to any of three positions so that

they can easily fill-in where most needed. The training program includes individual face-to-face training as well as e-learning. Trainees are assessed on their progress and go through additional training if they do not score high enough on the training tests. Training does not stop after the initial training period. Store managers constantly coach employees and every employee gets two or three pop quizzes at the beginning of their shift. The quizzes must be turned in by the end of the shift, and employees are allowed to look up information or ask other

employees for answers. If they get less than a perfect score, they go through additional training.

- If you were in charge of training, how would you develop a training program that would reduce the number of transaction errors?
- How would you evaluate the success of your training program?

To see how Pal's handled this case, use the link on your text website. To read more about Pal's unique organizational climate, visit their website at www.palsweb.com.