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Ingredients for Employee Retention



16 JAN,
2018



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([HTTP://WWW.LABOURBEAT.ORG/2018/01/16/RIGHT-INGREDIENTS-EMPLOYEE-RETENTION/](http://www.labourbeat.org/2018/01/16/right-ingredients-employee-retention/))

Manpower is hard to come by these days, especially for small and medium enterprises (SMEs) like [Elsie's Kitchen](http://www.elsiekitchen.com.sg/) Catering Services Pte Ltd.

In a less glamorous, saturated and competitive industry, it is even harder to retain workers, said Elsie's Kitchen Chairman and CEO Daniel Ang.

But according to Mr Ang, the story is slightly better at Elsie's Kitchen with turnover rates around one to two per cent. His longest-serving staff has been working for him for 32 years.

How did he achieve that? The answer can be found from a quote by Virgin Group Founder Sir Richard Branson, who said: "Train people well enough so they can leave, treat them well enough so they don't want to. If you look after your staff, they'll look after your customers. It's that simple."

That is how 62-year-old Mr Ang operates his family business – he treats his staff like family too.

One Happy Family

"I believe all human beings have a feeling of attachment. Starting out as a family business, we like to treat them as a family, no matter the position they hold in the company," explained Mr Ang.

He treats all his staff equally. For example, everybody works for eight hours, whether they are local or foreign workers. Beyond that, they will be paid overtime.

Mr Ang said: "Everybody has the same benefits. Everybody must be treated with respect. Their welfare and wellbeing must be looked after."

The company provides bursaries and scholarships to its staff. From time to time, the company also provides loans such as for housing or medical payments.

The company provides a gym for its staff to remain fit. A masseur even comes in five days a week so that his staff can get that much-needed boost. Furthermore, Mr Ang organises staff bonding sessions such as barbeques and durian parties all the time.

"We have built this family culture so that everybody knows that we are not only the boss, but we are one family," Mr Ang explained.

Love, Mercy, Kindness and Truth

Mr Ang also helms Hesed & Emet (H&E), the parent company of Elsie's Kitchen. In Hebrew, Hesed means love, mercy and kindness, while Emet means truth.

Besides Elsie's Kitchen, H&E runs another catering company called Continental Delights and the Flavours chain of food courts.

H&E also operates a social arm known as The Hesed Table, which distributes food to migrant workers.

In 2016, The Hesed Table worked with the Migrant Workers' Centre to provide meals to 3,000 migrant workers. Elsie's Kitchen is also an [NTUC U SME](https://ntucusme.weebly.com/) (https://ntucusme.weebly.com/) partner.

Tapping on Technology

Elsie's Kitchen now employs some 110 staff and is worth millions of dollars. But it did not become a powerhouse overnight.

Mr Ang's foray into the industry started when he assisted his father in the canteens of the British Royal Air Force in the 1950s. He subsequently became a cook when he was 18 years old.

He oversaw Elsie's Kitchen expansion from operating canteens into catering in 1990, the acquisition of Continental Delights in 2013, and the establishment of Flavours food courts.

Now, with a central kitchen facility spanning 57,000 square feet, H&E caters more than 10,000 meals every day.

To achieve this, Mr Ang capitalises on technology to increase productivity. For example, it used to take three workers nine hours to cook 3,600 portions of rice. Now, with the highly automated rice cooker area in its central kitchen, it takes only one worker an hour to cook the same amount of rice.

Mr Ang said: "I would say productivity has seen an improvement of at least 12 per cent since we embarked on technology three years ago. At the same time, we have improved our production quantity by at least 35 per cent."

Giving Appreciation



(<http://www.labourbeat.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/Photo-31-12-17-10-09-02-AM-1.jpg>)

Alvin Toh/NTUC

And while you were digging into that scrumptious dish during the recent New Year's Eve, it was still business as usual for Elsie's Kitchen.

To show appreciation to workers who keep the economy going during the holidays, NTUC Secretary-General Chan Chun Sing visited Elsie's Kitchen on 31 December 2017.

In a Facebook post, Mr Chan said: "Elsie's, a third-generation catering company, has been serving the community for over 50 years and this morning, I witnessed their hard work as they whipped up huge volumes of food so their customers can usher in 2018 with good food, love and laughter around."

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