

BeeBlock: Applebee's use of Gamification to engage employees

RMH Franchise, the owner of 173 of the 2,200 Applebee's restaurant locations, was having a problem with staff turnover. The company was experiencing an average turnover rate of 120 percent. The turnover was proving to be costly, with a replacement expense of between \$400 to \$10,000 depending on the seniority of the employees.

To counteract against the staff turnover, the organization decided to implement a gamification program called BeeBlock. Powered by Bunchball's Nitro gamification platform, the program motivates its staff through a system of competition and rewards. According to CIO, the way the system works is that an employee would log into the game using a smart phone or a tablet. The game involves fulfilling certain tasks in exchange for points and badges. Employees who rack up enough points can win prizes, ranging from Applebee gear to products such as Xboxes and iPads.

Tasks might include selling certain special menu items that Applebees introduces from time to time. Employees can also earn points by successfully completing quizzes on company rules and best practices. For example, kitchen staff might be asked to determine when is an appropriate time to wash hands during a shift.

Customer service ratings went up at the top 50 percent of RMH's locations. The company is planning to roll the gamification system out at 33 newly acquired Applebee's restaurants.

As a way to refine the gamification system, Andy Petroski, corporate faculty member of learning technology at Harrisburg University of Science and Technology, suggests that it be tweaked to encourage long-term improvement. The game could be used to identify potential managers and to encourage servers to improve their customer service ratings, for example.

By tapping into the motivations of its hourly workforce, Applebee's has improved employee engagement, and is starting to show a significant reduction in turnover.