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Hospitality Leadership Through Learning



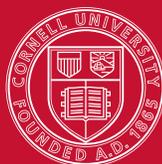
The Eight-Step Approach to Controlling Food Costs

Participant Self-Assessment Workbook

Cornell Hospitality Tools

Tool No. 15, December 2009

by J. Bruce Tracey, Ph.D.



Cornell University
School of Hotel Administration

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Rohit Verma, *Executive Director*
Jennifer Macera, *Associate Director*
Glenn Withiam, *Director of Publications*

Center for Hospitality Research
Cornell University
School of Hotel Administration
537 Statler Hall
Ithaca, NY 14853

Phone: 607-255-9780
Fax: 607-254-2292
www.chr.cornell.edu

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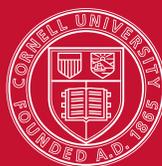
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School of Hotel Administration

The Eight-Step Approach to Controlling Food Costs

Participant Self-Assessment Workbook

by J. Bruce Tracey

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Because food-service profit margins are so thin, restaurant managers must carefully control every cost and eliminate all possibility of waste. Chief among the sources of cost and waste is food, which can represent up to 40 percent of food-service costs. This detailed training program is designed to show managers how to control their costs, but it goes beyond that to create a focus on cost control and waste prevention throughout the food-service operation. The eight steps are ordering, pricing, receiving, storage, issuing, production, portioning, and cash collection. Building on these eight steps, managers learn how to engage their employees in controlling costs, with a goal of improving revenues and, ultimately, customer service. The eight steps apply to any type of restaurant, although specific techniques may apply only in certain types of food service.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

J. Bruce Tracey, Ph.D., associate professor of management, has taught courses in human resources management for undergraduate, graduate, and professional audiences throughout North America, Europe, and Asia, winning several awards for his efforts. He has conducted research on a wide range of strategic and operational-level HR topics, including the impact of training initiatives on firm performance, employee turnover, employment law and leadership. He has presented his work at numerous regional, national and international conferences, and his research has been published in diverse outlets such as the *Journal of Applied Psychology*, the *Cornell Hospitality Quarterly*, and the *University of Pennsylvania Journal of Labor and Employment Law*. Recent sponsors for his research and consulting include Four Seasons, Hilton, ClubCorp and Uno Chicago Grill. He has also been cited in *USA Today*, the *Orlando Sentinel*, and other popular press outlets.



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Program Overview

One of the most important challenges for food service managers is controlling food costs, which can represent up to 40 percent of the total operating budget. By managing these costs effectively, your operations will become more efficient and achieve higher levels of production and service quality, which will result in higher customer satisfaction and profitability. This training program is designed to help participants learn about the most effective ways to control food costs in several types of food service operations, whether quick-service restaurants, contract food service facilities, or fine-dining restaurants. The program will address the major factors that affect food costs, and provide opportunities to develop skills that can be put to use immediately.

In addition to this trainer's guide, the materials comprise a participant's guide and a self-coaching workbook, which participants can use to facilitate further development and promote the transfer of training to the workplace.

Objectives

The primary objective of this program is to help food-service managers at all levels to understand the factors that affect food costs, and show them how to use ongoing, effective cost-control practices. Participants will learn an eight-step model for controlling food costs—ordering, pricing, receiving, storage, issuing, production, portioning, and cash collection—as well as methods for getting staff involved in the process.

Design

This program involves two phases. The first phase involves four formal sessions that cover the objectives noted above, two steps at a time. Each of these sessions take about 90 minutes each to facilitate (not including prep and break down time), depending on the participants' previous knowledge and experience. The sessions, which can be completed on the job or in a classroom setting, incorporate a variety of learning methods, including hands-on experiential activities.

The second phase consists of four weekly feedback and coaching sessions that should be conducted immediately after phase one has been completed. These post-training sessions provide an opportunity for trainees to discuss their efforts to apply what they have learned, obtain feedback from their supervisor, and set goals that motivate ongoing performance improvements.

Important Considerations

As with any program, it is critical to complete a comprehensive needs assessment to determine who will benefit most from participating in this program. In addition, it is important to keep in mind that not all topics may be relevant for your operation. Thus, the program can be modified to address your specific needs. It is also important to conduct a formal evaluation of this program, beyond a review of the self-coaching workbooks, to identify the extent to which participants have gained the necessary knowledge and behaviors that are instrumental for controlling food costs. And finally, be mindful of your unit's climate for learning and development. A strong value for training will help motivate participants to learn as much as they can and utilize their newly acquired knowledge and skills on the job.

Welcome

Now that you have completed the formal part of the *Best Practices for Controlling Food Costs* training program, it's time to put your learning to work. You've seen how every last penny counts in the food-service industry. By effectively implementing the food cost control techniques that were addressed in this program, you will see better efficiency and higher profits.

Program Content

Through the next four weeks, you will use this guide to record and reflect on your progress in each of the areas we covered in previous sessions:

- Ordering
- Pricing
- Receiving
- Storage
- Issuing
- Production
- Portioning
- Cash collection
- Getting your staff involved

Specifically, each week you will:

Assess and reflect on your own performance; and

Develop an action plan with specific development goals for the upcoming week.

Instructions

Prior to completing your first assessment, review this workbook to familiarize yourself with its content.

Complete your first assessment approximately one week after receiving this workbook.

Establish a set day and time each week to complete your workbook. This program will work best if you make it a part of your weekly routine. Identify a day and time that will work best for you and your supervisor to discuss your progress and any additional development needs you might have.

Day

Time

Plan to spend approximately 60 minutes each week on this part of your training. The first 30 minutes should be spent completing your workbook at a place and during a time when you can work free from distractions. The second 30 minutes should be spent speaking with your supervisor to discuss your progress and your plans for the following week.

Before each week, review the food-cost control suggestions listed in the next section of this guide. Incorporate at least one new suggestion into your operation each week, and see what kind of effect it has on your food costs.

Keep your workbook in a private and secure place. You will be documenting your performance progress over time, and you will be recording specific situations that may be sensitive.

Be open and honest about your performance and development needs during this post-training, skill-building process. By doing so, you will see significant improvements in unit performance.

Supervisor Sign-Off

As noted above, upon completion of your workbook, briefly discuss your work with your supervisor and have him or her sign the *Supervisor Sign-Off Sheet* found at the end of each week's materials. While this step is optional, it helps legitimize the process and provide opportunities for further clarification and reinforcement of the program content.

Final Submission

After you have completed the final assessment, you should submit your workbook to your supervisor, general manager, or a designated person in your company. Your responses will be completely confidential. The information will not be incorporated into your performance review, nor will your workbook become a part of your personnel file. It is simply used to verify you have put forth a good faith effort in applying what you have learned about controlling food costs. As such, provide candid insights and identify thoughtful efforts to improve your performance.

Suggested Activities and Actions

The activities and actions in this section are based on the material covered in training that you may apply in your operations to more effectively control food costs. Review this section at the beginning of each week throughout the self-coaching portion of your training and select two activities or actions to incorporate at some point throughout the week. Record each activity or action's effectiveness in your weekly reports.

Ordering

- Audit any customized ordering guides that haven't been updated recently. Make sure guides are organized into appropriate sections (e.g., meats, dairy, grocery). Incorporate any new items, and update par requirements. Review Handout 3 in your training manual for a refresher.
- Choose an entrée ingredient, such as chicken breast, and develop a new cycle menu for that item (e.g., Parmesan, spicy fried, *cordon bleu*, Buffalo).
- Select a trusted kitchen member to be your backup for ordering. Relieve this employee from line duties when you are ordering, and involve her or him in the process.
- Find replacement ingredients at a lower cost when possible (e.g., canned tomatoes instead of fresh tomatoes when appropriate). Review past orders for any dramatic changes in ingredient costs. Find ways to alter recipes to account for these changes and decrease food costs.

Pricing

- During a slow period, challenge your staff to see if they can determine the selling price for a simple menu item (e.g., hamburger with cheese). Use the materials in your trainee guide to facilitate this assessment. If they struggle, conduct a short meeting to show them how menu items are priced.
- Complete a comprehensive pricing audit to ensure that all items on your menu are accounting for the proper, updated ingredient costs, prescribed Q-Factor (1.10, in this example), and target food cost percentage. Consult other managers and amend prices as necessary, and involve one of your staff members in updating menu boards.

Receiving

- If you have not done so already, begin checking items on a line-by-line basis for each and every incoming order. Check for correct counts, correct pounds, and correct items ordered. Only accept what you have ordered, so make sure you have the original purchase order when checking invoices. Make sure that the quality is acceptable for all items you sign for.
- Involve one of your staff members in the receiving process. Make sure they understand how to read a purchase order and an invoice, and inspect the received goods to ensure quality standards have been met.

Storage

- Perform an audit of all of the storage areas. Ensure that all stock is well organized. Enlist the help of employees to reorganize if necessary. Check each item for proper FIFO dating and order. Check temperatures, and make sure all storage areas are clean and free of pests.
- Evaluate the inventory control systems you have in place. Try to determine ways in which people could steal from storage, and create a solution to prevent theft from occurring. For example, do you know where all keys are located for the walk-in? If not, have the locks changed and keep new keys under tight control.

Issuing

- Review your food production order records for the past month. Look for any gaps in the amount issued and the amount sold. Determine the causes for the gaps, and institute changes for addressing the gaps. Monitor the amount of food you issue to each station based on your business cycle to reduce food waste.

Production

- Obtain a list of standardized recipes. Look to replace any of your current recipes with items from this list. Make the necessary changes in all other areas of food cost control after selecting new recipes (e.g., cycle menus).
- Find any items on your menu that currently are not made from scratch (e.g., cookies) and perform a cost analysis to determine whether you might be able to produce them at a lower cost.
- Determine common leftovers by observing your operation and speaking to your staff. Revise forecasting to reduce extra food as much as possible. When you do have a leftover, be creative. Be sure, though, that you are not just adding leftovers to current recipes unless they increase yield, and make sure you account for the associated costs.
- Enforce the use of spoilage reports with your employees. Monitor this report and create a corrective action plan for items that commonly show up.
- Develop a plan to create a waste-averse work environment and implement it at your operation. Speak to your employees about the problems of waste and involve them directly in the plan.

Portioning

- Audit your recipes and develop new plans for portioning whenever possible.
- Develop and execute a portioning audit plan. Conduct random checks of each station to make sure that the proper portioning utensils are being used, and items from the fry station are being weighed before being put out for customers.

Cash Collection

- Reconcile, reconcile, reconcile! Review food production records and make sure you are getting paid for what is being produced. Never overlook a lost or missing item. Make sure every employee knows what you are doing, and why.
- Look for “black holes” at stations where you are losing potential revenue, such as charging for extras. Develop and implement a plan to make sure you are being paid for each extra slice of cheese, bacon, or other add-ons.
- Enforce the cashier audit policy. Conduct cashier line-ups to reinforce effective and positive performance, as well as address areas of concern. Make sure your cashiers are aware that you care about their performance.

Getting Your Staff Involved

- Clearly explain the importance of reducing costs with your staff, and encourage them to generate new ideas for improvement.
- Set goals with your employees to reduce costs. Publicize your objectives, and let everyone know how you are doing.
- Celebrate your successes providing recognition and incentives to everyone who was involved in the process.

Week One Review (continued)

Action Plan for Week Two

Based on your personal performance assessment and responses to the open-ended questions above, establish three **specific** and **challenging** goals for the upcoming week. In addition, identify corresponding strategies to help you achieve these goals. Specify

1. Continuance Goal

Establish one goal to **continue or improve** upon a specific behavior or activity that you feel is one of your strengths in food cost control.

Goal

Strategies

2. Stop Goal

Establish one goal to **minimize or stop** engaging in a specific behavior or activity that you feel impedes your success in managing the day-to-day performance of others.

Goal

Strategies

3. Start Goal

Establish one goal to **engage in** a specific behavior or activity that you believe will improve your success in managing the day-to-day performance of others.

Goal

Strategies

Supervisor and Employee Signoff

Supervisor: By my signature, I acknowledge that I have reviewed this week's assessments with the manager completing this workbook.

Signature

Date

Employee: By my signature, I acknowledge that I have reviewed this week's assessments with my Supervisor.

Signature

Date

Week Two

Date:

Action plan follow-up for Week Two

Review your action plan and goals from last week. Describe how successful you were in achieving your three goals.

1. Continuance Goal

- Not at all successful
- Somewhat successful
- Highly successful
- Comments

2. Stop Goal

- Not at all successful
- Somewhat successful
- Highly successful
- Comments

3. Start Goal

- Not at all successful
- Somewhat successful
- Highly successful
- Comments

Reflection on Week Two

1. Describe the **most challenging** food cost control situation you encountered this week. In what ways did you manage the situation well, and how would you handle a similar situation differently in the future?

2. Describe your **most successful** area of food cost control this week. What made this area particularly effective?

3. Consider a food cost control situation that you executed “almost right.” What worked well, and how could your performance be improved in the future?

4. Which areas (e.g., ordering, pricing, receiving) do you feel you emphasized **too little** or **too much** this past week? Please explain **why** you feel you emphasized these behaviors or practices too much or too little.

Too Little **Why**

Too Much **Why**

continued on next page

Week Two Review (continued)

Action Plan for Week Three

Based on your personal performance assessment and responses to the open-ended questions above, establish three **specific** and **challenging** goals for the upcoming week. In addition, identify corresponding strategies to help you achieve these goals. Specify

1. Continuance Goal

Establish one goal to **continue or improve** upon a specific behavior or activity that you feel is one of your strengths food cost control.

Goal

Strategies

2. Stop Goal

Establish one goal to **minimize or stop** engaging in a specific behavior or activity that you feel impedes your success in managing the day-to-day performance of others.

Goal

Strategies

3. Start Goal

Establish one goal to **engage in** a specific behavior or activity that you believe will improve your success in managing the day-to-day performance of others.

Goal

Strategies

Supervisor and Employee Signoff

Supervisor: By my signature, I acknowledge that I have reviewed this week's assessments with the manager completing this workbook.

Signature

Date

Employee: By my signature, I acknowledge that I have reviewed this week's assessments with my Supervisor.

Signature

Date

Week Three

Date:

Action plan follow-up for Week Three

Review your action plan and goals from last week. Describe how successful you were in achieving your three goals.

1. Continuance Goal

- Not at all successful
- Somewhat successful
- Highly successful
- Comments

2. Stop Goal

- Not at all successful
- Somewhat successful
- Highly successful
- Comments

3. Start Goal

- Not at all successful
- Somewhat successful
- Highly successful
- Comments

Reflection on Week Three

1. Describe the **most challenging** food cost control situation you encountered this week. In what ways did you manage the situation well, and how would you handle a similar situation differently in the future?

2. Describe your **most successful** area of food cost control this week. What made this area particularly effective?

3. Consider a food cost control situation that you executed “almost right.” What worked well, and how could your performance be improved in the future?

4. Which areas (e.g., ordering, pricing, receiving) do you feel you emphasized **too little** or **too much** this past week? Please explain **why** you feel you emphasized these behaviors or practices too much or too little.

Too Little **Why**

Too Much **Why**

continued on next page

Week Three Review (continued)

Action Plan for Week Four

Based on your personal performance assessment and responses to the open-ended questions above, establish three **specific** and **challenging** goals for the upcoming week. In addition, identify corresponding strategies to help you achieve these goals. Specify

1. Continuance Goal

Establish one goal to **continue or improve** upon a specific behavior or activity that you feel is one of your strengths food cost control.

Goal

Strategies

2. Stop Goal

Establish one goal to **minimize or stop** engaging in a specific behavior or activity that you feel impedes your success in managing the day-to-day performance of others.

Goal

Strategies

3. Start Goal

Establish one goal to **engage in** a specific behavior or activity that you believe will improve your success in managing the day-to-day performance of others.

Goal
Goal Strategies

Strategies

Supervisor and Employee Signoff

Supervisor: By my signature, I acknowledge that I have reviewed this week's assessments with the manager completing this workbook.

Signature

Date

Employee: By my signature, I acknowledge that I have reviewed this week's assessments with my Supervisor.

Signature

Date

Week Four

Date:

Action plan follow-up for Week Four

Review your action plan and goals from last week. Describe how successful you were in achieving your three goals.

1. Continuance Goal

- Not at all successful
- Somewhat successful
- Highly successful
- Comments

2. Stop Goal

- Not at all successful
- Somewhat successful
- Highly successful
- Comments

3. Start Goal

- Not at all successful
- Somewhat successful
- Highly successful
- Comments

Reflection on Week Four

1. Describe the **most challenging** food cost control situation you encountered this week. In what ways did you manage the situation well, and how would you handle a similar situation differently in the future?

2. Describe your **most successful** area of food cost control this week. What made this area particularly effective?

3. Consider a food cost control situation that you executed “almost right.” What worked well, and how could your performance be improved in the future?

4. Which areas (e.g., ordering, pricing, receiving) do you feel you emphasized **too little** or **too much** this past week? Please explain **why** you feel you emphasized these behaviors or practices too much or too little.

Too Little **Why**

Too Much **Why**

continued on next page

FINAL ASSESSMENT

Rate the effectiveness of your efforts in the following cost-control practices.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Ordering					
Consistently and accurately calculated par stock	①	②	③	④	⑤
Always ordered products per company standards	①	②	③	④	⑤
Pricing					
Set prices per company standards	①	②	③	④	⑤
Updated prices as necessary	①	②	③	④	⑤
Developed strategies for keeping prices competitive	①	②	③	④	⑤
Receiving					
Verified accuracy of all orders received	①	②	③	④	⑤
Ensured that any substitutions that were received met quality standards	①	②	③	④	⑤
Storage					
Maintained well organized and clean storage areas	①	②	③	④	⑤
Conducted weekly inventories per company standards	①	②	③	④	⑤
Ensured the security of all storage areas	①	②	③	④	⑤
Issuing					
Ensured that shift managers and chefs adhered to proper issuing guidelines	①	②	③	④	⑤
Made sure that employees stocked only the items that were needed	①	②	③	④	⑤
Production					
Adhered to standardized recipes	①	②	③	④	⑤
Used economical food production techniques	①	②	③	④	⑤
Followed food production record policy at all times	①	②	③	④	⑤
Used leftovers appropriately	①	②	③	④	⑤

Monitored spoilage and waste accurately	①	②	③	④	⑤
Portioning					
Pre-portioned items when possible	①	②	③	④	⑤
Ensured that proper service was and utensils were utilized	①	②	③	④	⑤
Cash control					
Ensured that registers were programmed correctly	①	②	③	④	⑤
Monitored employees to ensure accurate cash collection	①	②	③	④	⑤
Checked cash report daily	①	②	③	④	⑤
Involving staff					
Clearly explained the importance of reducing costs with staff	①	②	③	④	⑤
Involved employees in generating new ideas for reducing food costs	①	②	③	④	⑤
Recognized and provided incentives to employees who helped in reducing food costs	①	②	③	④	⑤

FINAL SIGN-OFF

Supervisor and Employee Signoff

Supervisor: By my signature, I acknowledge that I have reviewed this week's assessments with the manager completing this workbook.

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