



nWkqbowr

Washington University in Saint Louis

Entry details

Entry Name:	WashU Sodexo Employee Development Program
Institution Name:	Washington University in Saint Louis
Entry Completed By (<i>name and position</i>):	Tiffany De La Roche', Director for Dining Services

Every day Sodexo’s diverse team members combine their individual skills and contributions to achieve collective success. Team spirit is based on a sense of shared purpose, communication, and mutual respect. Sodexo believes that wherever their employees work, their ambition to be always chosen and rewarded for making every day a better day for individuals comes from one goal – to positively improve quality of life. Sodexo CARES (Compassion, Accountability, Respect, Enthusiasm, Service) provides campus units with a rewards and recognition toolkit to build their own program based on team goals. At WashU, employee recruitment, retention and satisfaction were all struggling.

Essay:

The management team came together to tackle these issues head on with a customized employee development program to improve employee recruitment, retention and satisfaction. Management began with informal surveys of front-line employees, and the consensus was a lack of feeling day-to-day appreciation. The Sodexo WashU Employee Development program was created as three parts: Recognition, Training and Camaraderie, and launched at the fall 2025 orientation with an entertaining video presentation.

- Recognition: The Sodexo CARES cash program was launched but customized for WashU, where managers could engage with front-line staff and reward them on the spot for their good work. The Sodexo WashU “store” was

created, and pricing for items was posted at time clocks so employees could save up and buy their favorite items. A new and improved Employee of the Month program was launched, awarding employees with cash prizes.

- Training: New hire and welcome back orientations were implemented for every employee, and managers received ongoing training with a focus on strong communication.
- Camaraderie: The program created a fellowship, achieved through huddles before each shift allowing employees to be recognized and to recognize others on the team, plus employees were treated to a holiday party at the end of the year.

Introduction:

Total employee retention was up 8% during the fourth quarter 2025, as compared to third quarter 2025, following the launch and implementation of the new employee development program in September. Overall, the goal of improving retention was achieved through increased morale, positive reinforcement, and improved communication between employees and managers. The new opportunity for managers to recognize employees for their good work on the spot was key, rewarding them in real time for going above and beyond the core values of service spirit, team spirit and spirit of progress.

Essay:

The key program that supported the goal of positively impacting employee retention was the implementation of the Sodexo CARES cash program. Reward dollars were available to managers for distribution in denominations of \$5, \$10 and \$20, based on the level of recognition commensurate with the dollar amount. Employees were able to buy items in price points from \$5 to \$200. A stylus pen and carabiner were each offered for \$5, with other items in \$5 increments up to \$50 for a travel pillow or blanket, coolers for \$100 and backpack for \$200. The program was a significant drive to improved morale, as team members felt that being recognized for even small things, more people will stay when they feel appreciated. The program added another improvement, offering new employee onboarding every Friday instead of monthly. This reduced the time from initial interview for new employees to start date, which also improved the new hire retention rate. Lastly, hire hires received 5-day, 30-day and 60-day retention interviews which allowed them to provide unbiased insight into their experience on the team, and also allowed managers the opportunity to discuss their performance.

Introduction:

The Sodexo WashU employee development program had a positive impact on recruitment. As overall employee morale improved due to the implementation of the program beginning in September, there was a significant increase of employee referrals by the end of the year. Total employee referrals during the first three quarters of 2025 was 17: 7 in first quarter, 6 referrals in the second quarter, and 4 referrals during third quarter. During fourth quarter 2025, employee referrals was 18 – one more than the total referrals during the first three quarters of the year.

Essay:

Current and new employees took part in full-day orientations at the start of each semester. New employees also received onboarding in a smaller group. During each orientation and onboarding session, employees were encouraged to refer their friends and family to apply with Sodexo at WashU. Additionally, the onboarding session included these key points to instill a sense of commitment in each new hire.

- o WashU Mission: WashU is committed to learning, teaching, research and service to improve lives in our community, our country and our world.
- o Sodexo Mission: Improve the quality of life of all those we serve.
- o Sodexo Ethical Principles: Loyalty, Respect for People, Transparency, Business Integrity

- o Sodexo supports and encourages employees to shape their own future and grow with the company. Sodexo strives to provide employees with a wide range of professional and personal opportunities to improve quality of life. Employees can develop their career both locally and globally across all areas of the company's service, and they have the flexibility to align the pace of their career with their goals.
- o Sodexo believes in a customer-centric culture and experiences matter. Employees are trained to give customers more than they expect.

Introduction:

The Sodexo WashU employee development program positively affected the new hire retention, improving 112% to 53% in 2025 up from 25% in 2024. The Sodexo CARES program helps assist employees achieve success in the workplace, so it includes comprehensive training to support their journey. Another factor in the satisfaction and success of employees is ensuring that managers have the training they need to support their teams, especially with communication techniques including building rapport, achieving desired change effectively with all personality types, bridging gaps with focus on understanding and collaboration, tasking and delegating, and counseling and coaching focused on improving/increasing performance/behavior.

Essay:

Another key tool utilized during the manager training was the book "Carrots And Sticks Don't Work" by Paul Marciano, PhD. and his RESPECT model, specifically the R - "Recognition" and acknowledgment of employees' contributions. Employees don't want to just be "recognized" - they want to hear specific examples of why they are being recognized, which became the heart of this program. Managers were empowered to engage and reward employees on the spot. Sodexo employees responded positively:

- o "The program makes us feel like we're being noticed, appreciated and being seen. And they have a lot of items in the store, things we actually need like umbrellas, hats, bookbags." Tiara H.
- o "I like the program, and I feel appreciated. I have a lot of bucks to use but with so many choices I haven't decided what to buy yet." Jackie B.
- o "Sodexo bucks are cool They can see me doing something outside of my job description and be recognized." Keith
- o "Overall, the program is good. I like that you get a light shined on you." Christen B.
- o "I think it's a good program for employees because we're going above and beyond then being recognized." Janitha

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Sodexo Bucks p... 1.5 MiB



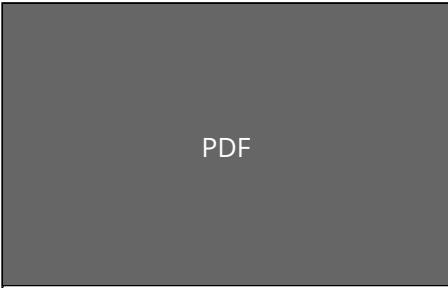
Sodexo Bucks 3... 256 KiB



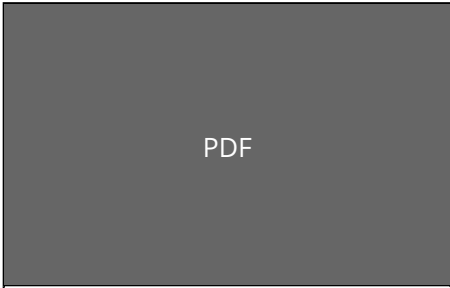
HR Sodexo buc... 96 KiB



HR Sodexo buc... 79 KiB



WashU Sodexo ... 123 KiB



WashU Sodexo ... 114 KiB



Sodexo Team H... 83 KiB



Sodexo Team H... 631 KiB



Sodexo Team H... 411 KiB



Sodexo Holiday ...541 KiB



Sodexo Holiday ...614 KiB



Holiday Party w... 192 KiB



Employee Awar... 605 KiB



Employee Hudd... 713 KiB



Dec DUC Marsh... 363 KiB



Sodexo Employ... 510 KiB



Sodexo Employ... 626 KiB



Sodexo Leader ... 511 KiB



WashU Louis A ... 452 KiB



WashU Muson ... 530 KiB