

Expediting Success at Claim Jumper

By Donna Hood Crecca

Promising hourly employees at Claim Jumper Restaurants are invited to “bridge” into management positions via the Expeditor Program. It allows the company to evaluate a candidate’s management potential, while enabling the employee to “understand what they’re getting into and whether it’s for them,” says Bill Story, vice president, training and development for the Irvine, Calif.-based casual-dining chain.



Formalized in 2001, the Expeditor Program prepares employees for Claim Jumper’s manager-in-training program. After posting management opportunities internally, training personnel evaluate and interview interested employees. Candidates either proceed to the Expeditor Program orientation or work with trainers to identify ways to prepare them for the next opening in the Expeditor Program.

Following orientation, each Expeditor works closely with restaurant managers, covering full shifts in various locations for four months in either restaurant operations or guest service and staffing. So far, 110 employees have completed the program.

A final evaluation determines if the individual will move into Claim Jumper’s manager-in-training program. “The Expeditors actually get more scrutiny, more support and more interaction than someone coming into the MIT program from the outside,” Story says. “We have very strong indicators as to their potential as MITs and managers.”

Fifty-three percent of new managers came from hourly ranks in 2004, and Story reports the Expeditor Program helps in recruiting and retention of hourlies. “We have more interest from existing and new employees because they see there is a next step,” he says. Hourly turnover declined from 70 percent in 2001 to 55 percent in 2004.

Managers culled from Claim Jumper’s hourly ranks average tenure of four-and-a-half to five years; management turnover is consistent at 14.5 percent. “Bottom line is that these Expeditor candidates are much better developed, ready to take on the role of manager and stay longer,” Story says.