



McDonald's: Much More Than Bacon and Big Macs

We teach our employees concepts that go way beyond making hamburgers

Background

McDonald's in Brazil wants to do much more than just make delicious hamburgers; they want to create a culture in the company such that employees love their work and find satisfaction in service to the customers. The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People provided the necessary motivation for this change.

There is no doubt that the invention of the fast-food meal is one of the major phenomena of gastronomic history, allowing service to people who are looking more for speed rather than customer service. But agility does not always mean quality in customer service and products. For this reason, McDonald's cares about investing, through the Hamburger University, not only to build technical skills, but also to develop other kinds of training.

"The nature of the business of McDonald's is fast-food handling, but obviously, so that I have good quality, fast, hygienic service—an environment such that the customer will return—I need people well-trained," says Iris P. B. Barreira, 39, Brazil training and Development Manager.

The company established an internal curriculum that requires employees to acquire technical knowledge, behavioural skills, and management skills, and uses the Hamburger University to train the practitioner in these three areas. "First we define the type of professionals we need, and then the competence they need. Then we check where there are failures and do training based on the experience of employees," explains manager Barreira, who has been with McDonalds for 22 years.

The Solution

The concepts of the 7 Habits of Highly Effective People were implemented in McDonald's, for the first time, in Chicago, U.S.A. By means of a license obtained from FranklinCovey, the company now uses FranklinCovey teachings in its domestic programs. But the first network to apply the skills in their entirety was Argentina, which aroused the interest of Brazil, the next country to adopt the programme.

In Brazil, the skills were initially applied to nearly 60 middle management employees and will be expanded in the future to a department that has more than 100 employees. "From the moment we understood the issues to be the need to develop teamwork and to improve the relationship with customers, we knew it was necessary to implement the 7 Habits. We earnestly tried the program and have continued for more than 15 years, which shows its strength. We want employees to be good at what they do, but also we want them to be committed to principles, ethics, and to having good relationships with each other," explained manager Barreira.

The Impact

The change was significant. According to Barreira, employees understood that McDonald's was seeing them more as people and not just as leaders to produce business results. "We perceived a big impact among the employees who noticed that McDonald's was taking concepts to them that went beyond making hamburgers. Not that the burgers are not important; that is our business. But now there is a greater concern with relationships, ethics, principles, and character. We know that we need to have good results, and these will be produced by the people, and they will be satisfied. But we will produce more—quietly and efficiently."

In My Opinion:

Iris P. B. Barreira, 39, General Manager for Development and Training, McDonald's Brazil

Are you now reading a FranklinCovey book?

I have read the *7 Habits of Highly Effective People*, but I haven't finished reading the *8th Habit*.

What do you think of Stephen Covey?

Once I went to a conference where Covey spoke about planning. I admire the discipline that has enabled him to establish habits for life and apply them. Human beings often know that something is correct to do but are unable to do so.

What is the biggest challenge faced by corporations today?

Managing the ethics of character and personality. Today there exists a great game of power; people are very interested in that and don't think about being ethical. Today, we see companies concerned with defending the environment or certain principles in society. But the great challenge is to get everyone to understand that the most important thing for a good professional is to be seen as a good human being, to be seen as a person of integrity, fairness, and honesty. It is important to see that such things have a direct impact on the company.

Do you have a thought or phrase that guides you?

Since I'm in the area of learning, a phrase that I like is: "You never know so much that you cannot learn more, or so little that you cannot teach." This means that you should be always open to learn and be prepared to teach. Another that I love and complements this is: "No matter your age, you are never too old to stop and learn." And finally, "Live as if you were going to die tomorrow—live intensely—but learn as if you were going to live forever."