

## Top Stories in This Newsletter



**District of the Month:**  
Rochelle ISD



**Process Improvement:**  
Data Protection &  
Privacy



**Thinking Skills:**  
Engage Evolve Energize



**Training:**  
Custom Per Site



Greetings All!

The seeds planted during the first half of the school year will have fruits in this New Year. It's a great privilege to thank all of you for being a strong source of strength. I feel honored to have great clients and team to work with. I wish for you that this year is blessed with flavors of success and happiness. Your dedicated work has brought us some good projects this year. Let's continue to work hard to have a successful new year. Continue to have faith in yourselves and keep working hard and safely. Together we will take our food service programs to new heights.... A year of great results of efficiency and fruitfulness.

*Let's continue to grow and shine,  
**Alfred Walker**  
President*

## Rochelle ISD District of the Month



**District of the month is Rochelle ISD**, home of the Hornets. Ms. Tommi Medrano, Food Service Director for Rochelle ISD, and her team are feeding students at a high level with great options and variety as well as selling ala carte items. Rochelle ISD Food Service takes creativity and puts it into action.



**Carpe diem**, a Latin phrase that loosely means "seize the day." Carpe diem means to live life to the fullest, in the most self-reliant, creative way possible. Use this mindset to overcome procrastination, team with others, and make the best decisions while at work, at home, and at play.

## PROCESS IMPROVEMENT: Data Protection & Privacy

We often think a data breach, or a cybersecurity threat, will not happen to food service. After all, IT has it handled. We focus on high quality foods and services for our students and the thought of us being the cause of a data breach does not cross our minds...but should it?



Of course, the answer is yes. We should be aware of the need for protecting the privacy of our online operations. The good news is that protecting data is affordable and relatively easy. Discuss with your manager, IT, and your staff the following best practices for protecting your data and lowering the risk of cybersecurity threats:

1. Have a privacy policy.
2. Train and educate your staff.
3. Invest in security software.
4. Implement multi-factor authentication.
5. Use a secure Wi-Fi network.
6. Backup data regularly.

These practices are great for work and personal devices – mobile phones, personal computers, tablets, etc. Let's chat about each of the practices we just listed.

**1. Have a privacy policy.** One of the best practices to protect the privacy of your operations, staff and customer data is to follow the school's privacy policy. This policy explains how everyone should keep personal information safe. Contact your IT department to understand your school's privacy policy.



So why food service? You use your students' data, such as names, student ID numbers, payment records, to track who has or has not paid, and who is covered by various programs. You also purchase items that require approvals as routed internally and externally. The privacy policy details the kinds of data you are collecting, what the school plans to do with it, and outlines the security measures that will help protect this data. Avoid collecting and storing sensitive data, like social security numbers (SSNs) or other confidential information.

**2. Train and educate staff.** Human error is the causes 90% of data breaches. We all should train and educate ourselves and staff on how to protect this information. This training will help you to better understand the important role everyone plays in helping to protect customer data and other valuable school information. Employee training should prioritize:



- a. Strong passwords and resetting them every 60 to 90 days.
- b. Latest news and trends in fraud schemes.
- c. Security best practices.
- d. Advice on safeguarding sensitive data.
- e. Handling email attachments and links.

Once training is complete, the school can have employees sign documents or print off paperwork stating they have been properly trained on the school's security policies.

**3. Invest in security software.** Schools usually run "clean machines." This means downloading up-to-date software, web browsers, and operating systems to keep viruses and malware from

internally impacting the privacy of the school. Visit with your IT department to learn about the software you should use including *anti-malware software* (help combat phishing attacks), *antivirus software* (scans for viruses and malware), and *computer security software* (real-time protection against any incoming threats, scans computers for existing threats, and identifies/blocks/deletes suspicious codes and software).



**4. Implement multi-factor authentication.** Part of employee security training includes learning how to create strong passwords and regularly changing these passwords every 60 to 90 days. Another best practice for protecting passwords and ensuring safe logins is implementing multi-factor authentication. Multi-factor authentication helps verify the identity of the person logging in and adds an extra layer of security protection by asking for additional information along with their username and password.



How does it work? Let's say you are logging into your school's portal. You type in your username and password. If using multi-factor authentication, you must also provide additional information before you complete the login process. Examples of multi-factor authentication include receiving a call to your phone accepting the login or a text to a cell phone with a passcode.



**5. Use a secure Wi-Fi network.** Most schools have a Wi-Fi network in place for employees and staff members. This network should be secure, encrypted and hidden. Employees working from home or working remotely should use a virtual private network (VPN) to protect school data and other confidential information.

**6. Backup data regularly.** Remember to backup essential data regularly that is on your computers, laptops, tablets. Back up on spaces approved by the school, like an authenticated school cloud service. Turn on automatic settings to backup these files. Also back up the data stored in the cloud regularly. Consider the a backup service for your personal cell phone and computers.



Do you have print copies of important documents? Keep them stored in a safe, secure and dry location. Work with your IT department to review what data and systems are mission critical to your operations and needed in the event of a disaster or other issues that can impair food service operations.

### Summary

Privacy is an important asset for schools and will continue to be important in the future. Hopefully, these guidelines on how to protect the privacy of your schools and customer data can help move your operation in a more secure direction.

### Resources:

- Sweeney, Deborah. *How to protect the privacy of your small business*. 12/03/2021. <https://www.godaddy.com/garage/protect-privacy-small-business/>  
Chatam, Denise. *Cybercrime: Secure IT or Lose IT* (2008).

## THINKING SKILL: Engage | Evolve | Energize

Is your staff distracted, diverted, and deflected when working with constantly changing and complex processes and regulations? These challenges can leave us feeling lost, frustrated, or disengaged. These challenges can also lead staff to simply abandon the job or just show up like robots to the workplace lacking energy or engagement beyond the usual activities, and just stuck resisting change. This attitude leads to a decline in morale and outcomes in your operations. So how do we move towards success? We need to work towards engaging, evolving, and energizing our teams.

**A. Engage.** To improve outcomes and morale, we must all care about each other, especially managers care for your staff and position employee engagement as the catalyst for improving outcomes. Begin by creating an employee engagement strategy using the elements – measuring, growth-oriented conversations, clear and ongoing communications, a focus on wellbeing, and strength-based conversations.



1. **Measure.** Survey your staff measuring the elements of engagement that are most critical to your operational success. Do it in a manner that encourages communication of their needs.
2. **Have growth-oriented conversations.** Bring life to your survey findings through conversations with a goal of addressing the needs raised in the survey.
3. **Provide clear, ongoing communication.** Manager should implement leadership decisions that motivate their team to get work done. It is important to consider the high quit rates, your employees mental and physical health, and the impact any change will have on them. Your organizational priorities should be clear and well-communicated in a timely manner. Ensure leadership is speaking with one voice (the same message), communicating clear expectations, and providing the right resources and opportunities to help each employee do their best. Know what areas of your operations needs clearer communications and then act.
4. **Focus on wellbeing.** We all need to continuously develop at work and our overall lives. Manage employee wellbeing -- career, social, financial, physical and community -- through employee engagement. This helps to reduce burnout, stress, worry, anxiety, and depression. Work with Human Resources and discuss with your employees how you can work together to help improve the overall lives of your staff using coaching conversations about individual strengths, work, and wellbeing.
5. **Have strengths-based conversations.** Every employee has different strengths and work/life situations. Adjust employees' workflows, motivate high performance, and direct them to the right wellbeing resources to meet their individual needs. Ask what does the employee do best every day, where do you see the employee succeeding, and how can you ensure they do more of that? Use this as a part of your strengths-based conversations. Identify ways that you can incorporate these conversations in the workplace (coaching conversations, meetings, process changes).

**B. Evolve.** New generations are entering the workplace while others are leaving. New rules and expectations come with these changes. The modern workforce demands the ability to be flexible, work anytime, anywhere and on any device type the employee possesses. Well. Stop! This is school food service. We



cannot work anywhere, anytime, on any device in food service. Despite these restrictions, we still need to shift if we want to attract top talent. All must advocate for continued learning and development, managers must create real opportunities for growth and apply training in new and unique ways.

1. **Foster Innovation.** It is important you value the passion of staff who want to help move food service forward. High performers want to know how their position fits into the operation and how their contributions impact results. A culture that values fresh thinking gives organizations the opportunity to innovate instead of stuck with the status quo. You need to hire people with the right skills (critical thinking, communications, initiative) and the ability to thrive in a collaborative environment. You can teach new employees job content. The desired skills of critical thinking and initiative are not taught yet required for innovation. Inspire your team to think big and long-term about what can be done tomorrow versus today. Help your staff to learn and adapt by asking the right questions and taking initiative.
2. **Value Output Over Process.** Bottom line, you value employees who produce results that move the needle without having to manage every detail. Processes and discipline are important yet should balance with employees' sense of curiosity, desire for flexibility and expectation that their output is the measure of success. Keep processes and restrictions to a minimum to foster innovation. For example, some organizations have a range of flexible start and stop times rather than everyone starting at the same time. Try to streamline processes to help unlock potential.
- C. Energize.** Energize employees by refreshing their mindset and attitude. Provide employees with the tools and techniques to have greater self-awareness and help to create an organizational culture that encourages innovation, improvement, leadership collaboration and greater productivity.

When you put in place strategies to energize employees, you move towards sustainable engagement that soon becomes an integral part of your organizational culture - a challenges facing leaders today.

1. **Don't confuse energy for energizing.** Many good managers are energetic. They work hard, contribute more hours than others, and become involved with committee after committee. Don't confuse this with energizing leaders who are different. Energizing leaders delegate responsibility to their employees. They let people know their contribution makes a difference. It is how a leader interacts with their team that creates energy.
2. **What energizing leaders do.** There are five traits of energizing leaders that directly impacts sustainable engagement. They are:
  - a. Focus on opportunities rather than problems/constraints
  - b. Discuss/consider suggestions, even if they disagree with them
  - c. Create a flow of information and experience
  - d. Are flexible about the road taken to achieve goals, and
  - e. Remain true to their values and beliefs.
3. **Create energizing leaders.** Leaders that are able to engage and energize their people will create a new environment that evolves with their organization, team, and customer's needs. This will promote a culture that will produce a forward-looking strategy that embraces sustainable engagement.



It is important to analyze the effects of current leadership styles. Are the findings what you want? Most leaders are surprised when these results reveal the techniques, they are using are micromanaging rather than leading. To become an energizing leader ask yourself:

- a. Are your solution-finding strategies destroying the energy of others?
- b. Do you listen to others' points-of-view, or do you impose your will?
- c. When there is conflict, do you focus on the person or the issue?
- d. When was the last time you chose to share your experience to help others find their own solutions?

Create an engaging employee strategy that helps the team to evolve with the workforce of today. Next, energize your team by

surveying them and your environment, create sustaining strategies that foster innovation and quality output, while energizing your team. As you engage, evolve, and energize your team, watch your operations thrive.

**Resources:**

Gallup. 2022 Guide to Employee Engagement: 5 Elements of Success.

<https://www.gallup.com>

Northridge Group. Evolution of the Employee: How Can Companies Evolve With Them? <https://www.northridgegroup.com/blog/evolution-of-the-employee-how-can-companies-can-evolve-with-them/>

## FOOD SERVICE...HARD AT WORK!



Figure 1. Rochelle ISD Taco Bowl



Figure 2. Taco Bowl



Figure 3. Nursery ISD Food Line



Figure 4. Nursery ISD Lunch

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