



CASE STUDY:
Red Robin Gourmet Burgers

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Vice President of Human Resources
Red Robin



Red Robin Gourmet Burgers Leverages Assessments for Dramatic Improvements in Selection, Development, Succession and More

A highly acclaimed casual-dining restaurant chain, Red Robin® Gourmet Burgers prides itself on being the gourmet burger expert. Red Robin also makes it a top priority to meet the needs of its guests and go the extra mile for them. The Zagat® Fast Food Survey has awarded the company Best Burger in the full-service category four years running.

With 474 locations spanning the United States and Canada, Red Robin follows strict quality standards, both for its food and its people. The company values each individual team member and fosters employee growth and development within a fun but challenging atmosphere.

Critical Need to Expand Employee Selection Capabilities

Red Robin had been using a selection vendor that provided basic services. Retention issues with hourly and managerial positions, combined with increasing competitiveness in the labor market due to the war for talent, prompted Red Robin to closely examine the vendor’s capabilities.

“We were seeing high turnover, and some of it was from competition,” said Bill Streitberger, vice president of Human Resources at Red Robin. “There’s competition with selection as well as retention, and we didn’t feel our current vendor was able to meet our needs. These selection firms can provide so many capabilities, not only for selection but also for development, 360s and succession planning. We were getting none of that support.”

Red Robin began an intensive search for a partner with an experienced industrial psychologist team that had the background, expertise and tools to help drive continued growth.

Solution ► Professional Assessments Plus Expert Support

An excellent reputation for problem-solving, restaurant industry successes and a highly educated assessment services staff made **Assess Systems™** Red Robin’s partner of choice.

Assess Systems began by developing and validating the manager-level assessment using its flagship product **Assess™**. Next, the company customized **Select™** for the hourly-level assessment. Taken online, the assessments provide a selection model that benchmarks top performers, screens out those unlikely to succeed, identifies ideal person-job fits and predicts performance at all levels. **Assess Systems** encouraged Red Robin to go paperless by using electronic processes.



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Red Robin now has technology at each restaurant so candidates can apply and take an assessment on the spot. “We’re completely paperless, which makes us more competitive. We’re able to turn things around much quicker,” Bill said. “We’re making better hiring decisions because we have more information. It’s a competitive edge.”

Selection Feeding Into Development

Red Robin uses the manager-level assessment for interviews and hiring decisions as well as development. Feedback from the assessment goes into a development report, identifying opportunities and directly supporting continuous growth. The recruiters and hiring managers are pleased with the volume of information they receive, as well as the way individuals are measured against the company’s success model and the suggestions provided for improvement.

“The assessment provides great follow-up questions and also developmental information for when applicants come on board. There’s very clear-cut direction and feedback for our managers that we weren’t providing before. This helps them continue their growth and their careers,” said Bill. “We’re seeing better performance out of our managers and in our restaurants.”

Succession Planning and Effective Performance Reviews

Using the manager-level assessment, Red Robin holds Talent Assessment Center Development Days as part of succession planning. Top-performing managers meet for in-depth evaluations, interviews and planning sessions.

“Everybody comes away with an action plan for getting to the next step. The process was a little scary for our managers at first, but now they’re saying to their supervisors, ‘What do I need to do to get there?’” Bill stated. “It’s pushed performance and expectations in the right direction. Managers want feedback and development, not only to get better at their day-to-day job but also to get to the next level.”

Red Robin can now forecast when a manager will be ready to move up. Bench strength and succession planning information is available across all locations, so the company can be proactive instead of reactive.

In addition to initiating effective succession planning, **Assess Systems** also revitalized Red Robin’s performance management system. **Assess Systems** reduced 14 evaluation categories to five core competencies and helped create a succinct performance review.

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Red Robin has leveraged **Assess Systems**’ services for 360s as well as Team Plots. Used for team-building, Team Plots involve the assessment of team strengths and weaknesses to foster ongoing growth and development for a group. Red Robin has also used leadership capabilities revealed by assessment results to re-evaluate and improve its Certified Learning Coach program, where hourly team members train other hourly team members.

Rapid, Measurable Results

Red Robin has achieved dramatic results that include tangible savings just one year after deploying the assessments.

“We’re on a great trend. We’ve seen pretty sharp increases in our competitors’ turnover but not in ours. It’s only been a year since we started this process, and our hourly turnover has dropped about nine percentage points and is still heading south. We’re very excited about it,” said Bill. “Looking at hiring costs and training costs, which are hard dollars, that’s an annual savings of about \$800,000 to \$900,000 for the company — and we’re starting to see a slight reduction in turnover for managers as well.”

Red Robin conducts company-wide engagement studies. Recent scores have revealed that the staff is happier and more productive, and employees enjoy staying at work to serve customers. “Since we started this, our overall engagement scores are up 6.6 percent. In a company this big, that’s what we call moving a needle!” Bill said. “We’ve seen improvements in guest satisfaction. We’ve also seen productivity increase through better selection.”

Broad Impact and a Bright Future

Red Robin knows the value of **Assess Systems**’ solutions and the breadth of the talent management projects they can impact. The company wants to remain consistent, continually tapping into the assessments’ potential. Having benefited from Team Plots, Red Robin intends to complete the program. Bill also plans to leverage **Assess Focus360**, a follow-up 360 that targets specific growth areas.

“**Assess Systems** has an extremely bright group of people. They are professional, very thorough, methodical, detail-oriented and service-oriented. They understand our industry and seek to continually learn about us. They stay on top of the current science, the current technology and the current systems,” said Bill, who has been very pleased with the partnership.

He considers Red Robin’s effort to find the right assessment vendor well worth it. “They’ve surpassed our expectations. They’re available all the time. If we send something out, we get a response and a solution. You just can’t ask for more,” he said. “We’ve been extremely happy with them. They’re a great business partner, and we feel very fortunate that they’re a huge part of our success. There’s always that continuous improvement, that continuous challenge — and that’s what makes it fun, too.”



Assess Systems is an innovative SaaS and consulting company providing talent selection and people development solutions to organizations worldwide. Focusing on person-job-organization fit, our assessment-based solutions help our clients attract, select, develop and promote talent resulting in improved business outcomes. For more than 25 years, **Assess Systems** has assessed millions of people in a broad spectrum of industries and positions spanning 42 countries and supporting 16 languages. Our solutions include: selection process design; competency modeling; entry-level assessments; competency-based professional, management and sales assessments; hiring manager interview guides and e-learning; leadership development programs; 360° feedback; succession planning; executive assessment and executive coaching.



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