

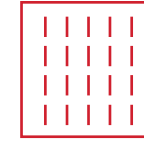
How To

A large corporate expense can be attributed to lack of employee retention and loss of corporate knowledge. By building a wealth of documents that clearly explain How To do a task, run a party, or manage a project, employee turnover can be somewhat mediated. Keeping instructions, along with lessons learned, help immensely when tasks are only performed once a year and memories are short. If an entire process is not written down in a How To, it should be taught from start to finish for every new employee by the original creator or manager. I have a great story to emphasize how things can go wrong otherwise.

One day I was looking through my office window into my commercial kitchen when I saw a new cook hold up an aluminum pan and slash it repeatedly with a knife. I promptly got off the phone and went to ask her why she put holes in a brand new pan. “Well,” she said, “I saw the holes in the older pans and figured it was the secret to your Killer Brownies.” I was known for my brownies. I made thousands of them. New pans didn’t need holes and it wasn’t the secret. There was no secret. I just used real ingredients and people loved them. (And I never shared that recipe until now...)

I quickly understood what had happened. She had surmised the reason behind the holes in the pans, or she may have seen another cook put holes in the pans. Either way, I hadn’t taught her to make the brownies. She had not been properly shown the entire process, including the reason why some pans had holes. When the brownies came out of the oven, they sit and cool. Then someone cuts the brownies in the pan. The knife often goes through the brownie and makes tiny holes in the pan. Because the brownie dough is thick, the pans can be reused with holes if they are placed on parchment paper on top of a sheet pan (cookie sheets). Somewhere along the line, cooks began to purposefully put holes in the pans. This was when I began my How Tos. If tasks and procedures are clearly written down (with explanations), anyone can learn how to replicate the action or procedure. Now, I tell this brownie story to help people understand why How Tos are important to create.

That doesn’t mean that all employees appreciate being told to create How Tos. After I tell someone how to do a task more than twice, I have them write a How To. A few think this is insulting or a waste of their precious time. That can be my first inkling that this person may not last working for me. If you tell an employee the brownie story, and she rolls her eyes and looks exasperated, then ask her to explain the problem. Remember, by this time she has repeated the same mistake twice, or she didn’t understand how to solve a problem more than once. Be sure to write down her answer. If a pattern develops, it will be due to two reasons: One, she has an attitude problem, or two: She really needs a different job.



Killer Brownies

Ingredients

3 cups of butter
6 cups of white sugar
12 large eggs, any color
2 tablespoons real vanilla extract
3 cups Nestlé Chocolate Chips
3 cups flour
1½ cups Hershey’s Cocoa
½ teaspoon salt

Supplies

20” x 13”x 3” tray (*I always use those deep lasagna aluminum foil pans*)

Preheat oven to 350°.

Melt the butter. Add the sugar and stir with baking wooden spoon (*that’s one that you didn’t stir the garlic shrimp scampi with the night before*) until the sugar melts—about 45 minutes. Be sure to use a very heavy pan and low heat so the mixture doesn’t burn. Whisk eggs and add the vanilla and salt to them.

When the butter and sugar mixture cools down, add the eggs (*so the eggs don’t turn into scrambled eggs*). Add the chocolate chips last, but still while the mixture is hot enough to melt the chips. Then, add the rest of the dry ingredients and stir.

Grease the pans. Put a cookie sheet or tray under the pan to bake. Add a layer of parchment between them in case any oozes out. Put in the oven. Cook 50-60 minutes, rotating half-way through.

When cool, cut with a butter knife so as to not cut the pan. They freeze beautifully. Enjoy.

Makes one 20”x 13”x 3” tray of brownies.