

## Facilitator — December/January 2012



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### CRFP Spotlight

*Edmond Bordelon*

What other restaurant companies have you worked for prior to your current position? I've been very fortunate to work with some of the highest-profile restaurant companies in the world. I made the jump from retail to restaurant after 17 years with The Container Store, based in Dallas. My first stop was with Dave & Buster's, back when Dave and Buster were both very much involved. I quickly learned the faster pace and higher level of customer service that is required for the restaurant world. I also learned about the additional systems knowledge required for hoods, grease traps, Ansul and fire suppression systems. My next stop was with Hard Rock Café International, one of the top 10 most-recognized brands on the planet, which meant that I got to travel the world. Traveling from Europe to the Caribbean to Hawaii in one week puts your sleep patterns into a tail spin. My next stop was with RARE Hospitality in Atlanta, which operated LongHorn Steakhouse, Bugaboo Creek Steakhouse and The Capital Grille. Darden picked up RARE Hospitality three years ago, and I relocated back to Orlando. I still work with LongHorn Steakhouse and The Capital Grille, but I also work with Seasons 52, Bahama Breeze and the newly acquired Eddie V's and Wildfish restaurants.

After spending so much time in restaurants, do you cook? If so, what is your best dish? Cooking is one of my passions! Being able to plan and stage a meal to the last detail is a great ability, but being able to whip out something unique based upon what you find in the refrigerator or cupboard is an art.

Since I was born and raised in Texas, there is always a craving for Tex-Mex! So, my most requested dish is fajitas. But my best dish is God's Chosen Chili, a recipe and spiritual journey passed down from father to son. It takes a whole weekend, so much to my family's dismay, it is only prepared once or twice a year. This recipe has won several chili cook-off awards in Texas and once at Darden.

What was your first car? My first car was a hand-me-down 1970 AMC Hornet from my older brother. The car didn't have a reverse gear. I had to strategically park it so that I didn't have to back out of a parking space. Needless to say, there were a lot of detours through lawns and over curbs. This is where I learned the art of making quick friends. Their job was to be the reverse gear, and push us out of parking spaces.

What is your all-time favorite movie? I am a certified movie junkie. I am your typical male movie viewer, in that I prefer science-fiction/action flicks with lots of visual eye-candy and very little plot and even less romantic interest.

My all-time favorite movie is probably Lawrence of Arabia because it has action, a beautiful backdrop and cinematography, but underneath it is the story of Lawrence's struggle to understand and work with a completely different culture. That hit home as I had the same struggle over and over again, traveling with Hard Rock.

What is the most challenging situation you've ever faced in a facility or on the job? How did you handle it? Fires are always the biggest challenge in a restaurant. With the amount of "fuel" available, they can get out of control very quickly. And that is just what happened to the Hard Rock Café in Old San Juan, Puerto Rico. The spider's nest of electrical wires on the roof, the grease in the kitchen exhaust system, the giant 500-gallon tank of diesel fuel for the generator, the lack of fire sprinklers and the fact that Old San Juan does not have good water supply, pressure or fire hydrants was just a cocktail for disaster one morning, as the crew was preparing to open. The fire started on the roof, and worked its way down through the hood system to the kitchen. It was already too late by the time the cooks noticed the flames dripping down onto the grill from above. They evacuated the building and made the calls.

This is where relationships with vendors and other facility professionals came in handy. Within 24 hours, we had a plan, three construction crews of varying talents, two facility professionals and about 30 insurance guys (who jumped at the opportunity to go to Puerto Rico) making things happen.

The other lucky thing was that the fire was finally controlled enough that the 500-gallon diesel tank never blew. The outside was charred and blistered, but it never reached critical temperature. If it would have blown, we would have surely been on CNN.

If you weren't a restaurant facility professional, what you would be? An out-of-work stand-up comic in Las Vegas or a NASCAR driver.

What was your very first job? My high school friend and I mowed lawns for some very high-end homes in Dallas. Their lawns were enormous, and the owners were ecstatic to pay us half what the big lawn companies were charging them.

What is the best advice you ever received? I listen to a lot of respected people's advice, but the best advice I have received is from my father. He taught me that any job worth doing should be done to the best of your abilities. It didn't matter if it was mowing lawns, teaching quantitative physics or making Tex-Mex cuisine. Give it your best!

In the professional arena, the best advice I received and can pass on is get a mentor, and be a mentor to others. Another peer's perspective can help you prioritize and direct your career.

To what would you attribute your success in achieving your CRFP? It goes back to the advice from my father: Be the best you can be. I am not sure many of us chose facilities as a career path in college. The position has finally been elevated to a professional level over the past 15 years. PRSM started that ball rolling and RFMA and PRSM both continue to take it to higher levels. By taking as many classes at the conferences as possible, continuing to read articles in professional magazines, meeting with new vendors, and continued hands-on traveling and experiences with my incredible facilities team, I was able to acquire the knowledge necessary to take the test and receive the honorable CRFP status.

Would you recommend attaining a CRFP to other colleagues? Why? Absolutely. This is the path to elevating our industry as a whole. This is one big way to show your value to your colleagues, your boss and your company. Facilities used to be looked at as a necessary evil or a required expenditure that is always the first to be sacrificed on the budgetary altar. But we provide a valuable service that can actually pay the company back many times over.

What has been the most significant change in the restaurant industry, and how has it affected your job? The higher up you go in the company, the less that you actually get to touch the buildings. You spend a larger majority of your time on your personnel and their development, departmental and company initiatives...and of course budgets. The economic downturn over the past several years has meant higher scrutiny on budgets and getting a great value from limited funds. Finances were already tough with the introduction of Sarbanes-Oxley, but now they have to be more fluid to be able to change with the opportunities available to the brands. In other words, financial flexibility, while still following the rules and keeping the restaurants looking their best. The economy has meant a shift in the way we look at business, and it is probably for the better. If times get back to the level that they were before, I am not sure we would go back to the old ways. The financial nimbleness we have had to adapt to is a viable model moving forward.

What do you do for fun in your spare time? Work hard/play hard. Even though I travel and eat out quite a bit, I still enjoy traveling and experiencing new places and restaurants with my beautiful wife, Katherine, and two wonderful daughters, Lauren and Annaleah. I also love every aspect of wine, playing golf and spending time outside on beautiful golf courses.

What's the one thing most people would be surprised to learn about you? I lived outside of Paris in Versailles, France, for a few years. These were impressionable years when my ability to learn and experience was wide open. This is where I got my interests in architecture, music, art, travel, culture and fine chocolate (an addiction I carry today). Since we were all from Texas and had the craving, this was also my first adventure trying Tex-Mex cuisine outside of the USA. Let's just say that the experience was costly and not repeated.

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