

core values – always learning, always teaching. In fact, the management path at Darden begins with a 12-week Manager-In-Training (MIT) program that focuses heavily on leadership skills, such as coaching and motivating.

"We consider the restaurant general manager to be the most important position in the Company," says Al Frost, Darden's Senior Director of Leadership Development. "Behind every profit-and-loss statement is a general manager. It is imperative to have the right person with the right training in order to get the right results."

Red Lobster's commitment to training and professional development at every level has helped the company grow into a market leader in the casual dining industry, with over \$2.4 billion in sales in fiscal 2004.

The coming year will be a significant one for Red Lobster. With a new senior management team at the helm, the company has undertaken a variety of initiatives to strengthen its competitive edge. These include continuing work on a simpler menu, a new LightHouse™ menu showcasing the natural nutritional benefits of seafood, an improved and highly acclaimed kid's menu, new advertising, and a revamped promotional strategy.

Red Lobster's industry leadership truly begins at the local restaurant level with managers like Edward Bermudez. "One of the most rewarding aspects of my job as a manager is to develop new leaders," he notes. "I love going to training sessions and seeing old friends growing in new roles." That kind of passion will certainly help lead the casual dining seafood leader into a new era of growth.

