

Restaurant Business

Training gets improvisational

Andaz hotels, Hyatt's boutique brand, tries to differentiate itself from its parent company on many levels. Instead of traditional front desk employees and bellmen, for example, they hire hosts to greet guests, check them in and show them to their rooms. So when two new properties, Andaz 5th Avenue and Andaz Wall Street, opened in New York City last year, they turned to the legendary improv comedy troupe **Chicago City Limits** to do the training. "It's imperative for our hosts to think on their feet and interact smoothly with guests," says Rachel Harrison, public relations director of the two hotels. "The improv training teaches them to converse easily and get over any stage fright." **Chicago City Limits** came in for one full-day training workshop—a service the troupe extends to corporations, business meetings and other groups looking for coaching and team building exercises in addition to training. Participants learn through role playing, creating comedy sketches and other unconventional techniques. "Andaz employees loved the improv training," reports Harrison. "They enjoyed learning new skills and being part of the creative process."