

training

Here's how to do it: well-trained staff will help generate customer loyalty



Management and staff buy-in is key to a positive training regime and leads to motivated workers

perceptions of the level of training that staff receive, 73% said that they believed restaurant staff received more rigorous training than pub staff, with only 3% saying the opposite. It would seem that diners perceive staff turnover to be part of the problem, with 50% saying that they believed staff turnover in pubs to be higher than in restaurants. Just 12% believed the opposite to be the case and 81% went on to say that higher staff turnover has a detrimental effect on staff training and service.

Happy staff make happy customers

Training and knowledge aside, what diners really appreciate is motivated staff, and as long as staff appear happy and motivated, they don't mind if they make errors. Of those asked, 69% said that well-drilled, knowledgeable staff who made no mistakes but appeared harassed and unhappy would be more likely to have a negative effect on their dining experience than staff who were happy and motivated but made errors.

Getting the balance right

TMDC's research stresses the importance of staff being well trained and knowledgeable, but emphasises above all the importance of staff being motivated. Pub operators who really want to compete with restaurants and win repeat custom and glowing recommendations really need to incorporate customer feedback into a rigorous training regime. In so doing, however, care needs to be taken to use the feedback positively to motivate staff through training, not make it the arduous, confidence-sapping experience that it can sometimes be. Management and staff buy-in is the key to a positive training regime, and leads to motivated, knowledgeable staff.

How they see it

TMDC's survey of perceptions of pub v restaurant staff

- Pub staff less knowledgeable about menus
- Restaurant staff know more about drinks and wine list
- Staff turnover in pubs is higher than in restaurants



Transforming staff into service gurus

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Customers aren't generally looking to find fault – they just want a pleasant, hassle-free experience, with courteous and effective service as a minimum. However, receiving an engaging, personalised service that exceeds expectations can turn a run-of-the-mill experience into a memorable one.

Delivering excellent customer service requires management and waiting staff to have a clear understanding of the types of customer that a venue attracts. Some customers will define excellent customer service by friendly, engaging staff members who are happy to make recommendations and contribute to a good time. Others will be looking for seamless efficiency, with faultless order taking, meal delivery and billing.

It's critical to help staff to understand how they can take the initiative in good and bad situations. Regular front-of-house staff training should be a given, but all too often it slips by the wayside due to budget and time constraints. Investing in staff

training can have very real benefits, both for your customers and for a business's bottom line. For large businesses, a good learning management system can provide real benefits in terms of tracking performance at unit level.

Tasting sessions for waiting staff can be a great way to improve menu knowledge and encourage staff to talk passionately about the dishes that you offer. The personal experience will help them feel empowered in giving recommendations and also help them answer any questions quickly, rather than having to refer to the kitchen and leave the customer waiting.

Consistency and how welcome a customer is made to feel are the most common reasons that customers give for recommending a venue or for returning time and time again to a particular establishment.

It's always worthwhile talking to some of your regulars to get their perspective on why they keep coming back.

The Mystery Dining Company provides customer-experience analysis for a range of hospitality businesses, from single-site operations through to multi-national chains, enabling them to use customer feedback to help improve profitability and build brand reputation. www.mysterydining.com

