

Service That Sells! E-Newsletter Volume 10, No. 3 • January 19, 2009



Make a Point with Effective POS Materials

When you look around your restaurant, how many different point-of-sale materials do you see? The next question is, do your employees know how to utilize those materials as props to increase sales? The following are some common POS materials and the best ways to use them as selling tools:

- **Coasters.** When a guest walks up to the bar, the first thing the bartender does is set out a coaster. Enhance the promotion by pointing out what the coaster is advertising. For example, the bartender can say, *"We have ice cold Budweiser on tap."*
- **Table tents.** The positioning of the table tent can make a huge difference. If it's located by a wall or in a corner, the guest may never see it. By placing it in the middle of the table, diners can't miss it and may even move it. Another tip is to have the host point to the table tent while repeating any specials featuring that very item. For example, *"We are featuring our Homemade Quesadillas for only \$5.99."*
- **Menus.** Menus provide a great way for a server to take a guest on a delectable tour, pointing out favorite and popular items. For a first-time guest, it's nice to get an idea of where things are located. For example, *"It looks like you're having a family night out. We have some great kids' meals located right here."*
- **Menu inserts.** Do you have a specials or wine list insert? Sales will increase when suggestions are made and pointed out on these inserts.

Keep in mind that any point-of-sale item should be neat, professionally designed and clean. Those Homemade Quesadillas won't look too tasty if the table tent is spattered with ketchup.

Menu Mojo: Does Yours Have It?

Restaurant consultant firms urge operations to analyze their menus every six to 12 months. When was the last time you really looked at yours? During this traditionally slow time of year, take a good look at what many of your guests are seeing for the first time. Ask yourself these questions—and if you can't be objective about it, find a group of people who will give you feedback in exchange for gift certificates or free appetizers:

- **Does your menu fit the theme of your operation?** Often our concept evolves, but our menu remains static.
- **Do the food and beverage descriptions accurately portray the items?** Sometimes preparation techniques and ingredients change and may be more appealing than outdated descriptions.
- **Do the descriptions and photos (or illustrations) stimulate sales?** It's difficult to photograph food in a way that makes it appear appetizing. If your items don't make you hungry, hire a food stylist and food photographer.
- **Is every item earning its space?** Think of each item as a tenant leasing space. If it doesn't earn its right to the space, then replace it with something else that will.
- **Are your most profitable—and popular—items strategically placed?** According to *Restaurants USA*, a menu can boost sales from 2 to 10 percent... in a restaurant that brings in \$1 million a year, that's an extra \$20,000 to \$100,000 annually. A menu item's position is a huge determination of what a customer will choose (there's a reason why those sandwiches and soups are stuck on the back of a dinner menu). As a general rule, customers tend to remember the top two items on a list and the bottom item. Don't waste those spaces on items that don't have a high appeal... and a high profit margin.

Create Effective Operating Systems By TJ Schier

As the old saying goes, *systems will get you 100 percent of the results they are designed to provide*. Great systems produce great results. Sloppy (or lack of) systems will design those results as well. Therefore, ensure you have effective systems in place. Some unique systems to enhance performance, sales and service levels include:

- **Guarantee message** – Place a table tent or button/sticker on the server with a message such as, “If we don’t suggest an appetizer, you get one free!” Guests will ensure the employee does what your system is designed to do: in this case, suggestively sell. These messages can also be used for cook times and service drivers such as using guests’ names, saying please and thank you and so on.
- **Beverage coaster** – Many restaurants don’t fill guests’ refillable beverages enough, while others do it too often. Enlist the help of the guest by giving them a fun, branded coaster. One side means “bring me more” and the other means “no more.” It does not have to be a coaster, but perhaps some sort of “raise the flag” device on the table. Either way, you are creating a visual signal for servers.
- **Service signal** – Bubba Gump’s has a red license plate that says “Stop Forrest Stop” that the guests can use whenever they need something. Employ a similar tactic at your operation and teach ALL employees to scan the room looking for these signals so EVERYONE is helping the guest when the guest needs it!

Finally, once you have the system designed, practice and fine tune it. Football teams huddle between every play. They practice over and over again in between games. Do you?

Role-Play: “Are You A Member of the Club?”

Here’s how to coach your team member—whether she’s behind the counter or at a table—to sign up customers:

- **Cashier:** Thanks for your order! While we prepare your meal, would you like to join our Customer Club? There’s no charge and you can earn free meals, desserts, drinks and discounts.
- **Customer:** Nah, I always forget those things.
- **Cashier:** Well, we have one for your key chain, but if you do, you can give us your phone number and you’ll still earn points to all sorts of free items. It’s one of the ways that we thank you for being our customer.
- **Customer:** Well, how big is the form?
- **Cashier:** All the information we really need is your name, address and phone number. If you would like to give us your e-mail address, we’ll only use it to inform you of special events and discounts and, of course, we’d never sell it.
- **Customer:** All right. Let’s do it.