

Service That Sells! E-Newsletter Volume 10, No. 9 • March 2, 2009



Spring Training: How Small Changes Can Add Up to Big Sales

You want more sales. Your wait team wants bigger tips. And your customer wants better service... without being “nickel-and-dimed” to death. Small changes in your operation can help everyone get what they want. Get your team on board with a little spring training. Here’s how to get started:

- **Tell the truth.** If you ask team members how much profit a restaurant makes from \$1 in sales, many would say around 75 cents. (Don’t believe it? Try it at your next staff meeting.) Here in the real world, we know that a dime is closer to the truth. Your team members should also know what’s at stake to make their operation successful. No profits, no pay raises. No customers, no restaurant. Sometimes the bottom line is the best motivator.
- **Encourage solutions.** If you ask team members how to raise check averages, chances are you’ll get regurgitated responses from your own training materials. But if you ask for innovative solutions, you’ll get those, too. Ask servers to share success stories at pre-shift meetings and set-up a revolving contest that awards sales ideas and strategies.
- **Bring in a rookie.** Sure, we all want the professional to motivate us—or the consultant that can pinpoint areas of weakness—but an enthusiastic, inexperienced new employee can often recharge our own batteries. When you pair a new server with an experienced one, both of them will benefit. The new employee will be trained, of course, but the experienced server will be forced to remember the “why” behind small details... why we really offer premiums (for a better experience), why we suggest certain items (for the best possible meal)... and, yes, why we got into the business to begin with (we like people, remember?).
- **Reward successes.** It sounds basic, but too often we forget to monitor—and report—the successes of our team. Wait staff may be easier to monitor (sales receipts, etc.), but everyone on the team should be responsible for service and sales... and rewarded for it as well.

Who Are You? Connect with Team Members

Team members who know each other—and have even discovered some common ground—work better together, helping each other with tasks and creating a more enjoyable environment for everyone, especially guests. Here’s how to connect with your team members and encourage them to do the same:

- **Start an autograph book.** When employees start, have them fill out a “Who Am I?” page. Include a place for a photo and ask for information like the employee’s hometown, favorite activities, interests or subjects, etc. Then include a few whimsical questions such as “If you won the lottery, what would you do with it?”, “Where would you like to travel?” and “What’s your biggest dream?” Keep the book in the break area and bring it out during special occasions (holiday parties, group training days, etc.).
 - **Target two employees before each pre-shift meeting.** Every time the team is together, pick two people to reveal one thing about themselves that no one on the team knows. You’ll generate some fun comments and set the tone for a team meeting.
 - **Be flexible.** Ask employees to generate individual lists of rewards and incentives. Encourage them to be creative (specific days off unpaid, cash, shift switch, etc.) and promise to consider all suggestions. Incorporate what you can.
 - **Ask.** It sounds basic, but most managers make statements instead of ask questions. Be sincere when you ask how an employee is doing. Press for an answer (“Are you sure you’re OK?”) when employees seem upset. Hold team meetings that focus on finding out what employees are interested in. Use that time to ask, what holidays do you celebrate? What charities do you support? Which causes do you believe in? Then, use that information to create your own community-service efforts (you’ll know firsthand who to ask to volunteer) and customize employee promotions and special events.
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Training Tip

Implementing training programs on sexual harassment can protect you legally if you can prove your employees participated in the training and understood your policies. To protect yourself, get it in writing. After each staff member participates in a program...

- Document the date and time the program was reviewed.
- Have the employee sign a form indicating that he or she viewed the program and understood its content as well as your operation's policy.
- For best results, have the employee also sign a statement that he or she will abide by the guidelines outlined in the policy and will immediately report any transgressions.
- If your training program includes an assessment, take it seriously. Create a follow-up plan for employees who score less than 80 percent, and stick with it.

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