



Working from the Same Page

By Ron Yudd


Have you ever dined in a restaurant that's operating at full capacity and things are running like clock work? The staff is having fun, guests are happy and the place is packed! The service staff and kitchen are hitting on all cylinders, food is popping out of the kitchen, servers are helping each other and the guests are immersed in enjoying themselves. For a restaurant person, this is like being in heaven!

How do successful restaurant managers make this happen? How do successful restaurant operators make this look effortless? The short answer is that everyone is working from the same page! Everyone is working toward the common goal of delivering excellence to their guests and at the same time they're having a blast doing it!

Working from the same page builds teamwork, eliminates any confusion on the mission and also helps your team focus their full attention on delivering excellence! Getting everyone on the same page is not that difficult if you actually have a page to get on. The real work is in creating the page. Keep it short and simple, use non-employee manual language and make

sure it's easy for all to repeat! Here are several elements to help you write the first draft of the "Same Page" for your operation. Include your:

- Service vision — what does the picture of service excellence look like for each employee?
- Short list of actual service standards — a list of your service expectations.
- Shared understanding that everyone is accountable for delivering on the "service picture."
- Commitment as the leader to treat everyone fairly (the same way) — fairness is the key!
- Commitment that everyone shares in the reward. Everyone has a seat at the celebration table!

Getting Started: The first step is to sit down with key managers and staff to list the top five bullet points of your service vision. List what you value the most or the reputation you seek from your guests or even better — what does it actually look like in your restaurant when the things described in the opening paragraph are actually happening? 

Service the Engine! Incentives for Back-of-House

By TJ Schier


The back-of-house staff (i.e. the engine) plays a critical role in guest service. Inferior product or long cook times lead to unhappy guests and poor tips. Too often, contests and incentives are focused on the servers and bartenders, while the kitchen crew is left out. Here are a few ideas to motivate the kitchen team to help focus on service:

▪ **Right, On-Time** – Every hour there are no mistakes, cook times over the standard or a sloppy plate presentation (the expeditor can be the 'judge'), put \$1 (or equivalent prize) into a jar. At the end of the week, the kitchen team divides up the dough based on the percentage of hours worked.

▪ **Food Cost Bonus** – Reward the team with a bonus of 10, 20 or 30 cents per hour based on how much they lower food cost.

▪ **Serve Me** – One week have the wait staff serve the kitchen crew a free meal. Next week, reverse the roles. Getting each side to understand the other goes a long way in improving service.

▪ **Walk a Mile in My Shoes** – Team a server with a member of the kitchen crew and have the pair work for awhile in the front and then in the back. Once each person understands the other's challenges, teamwork and morale are improved.

Using this type of approach creates a self-policing system. The good employees manage the bad ones. If someone is working slow or being sloppy, the other employees step in, instead of the manager. The good employees do not want to lose their chance at a prize or money so they step up their performance and keep an eye on others. Now That's Service! 

Marketing Tip: Connect with Diverse Groups

We've talked before about ways to attract diverse groups and improve their service and sales. Here are a few tips on how you can get "minority" groups in the door.

- **Research nonprofit groups near your operation.** Many nonprofit groups have objectives that meet the needs of specific groups. By pinpointing local groups — and marketing directly to them — you can send materials that promote your ability to cater upcoming events, offer coupons or discounts to members and/or employees and provide meeting spaces.
- **Join causes you believe in.** Many opportunities to join community service benefits or other events are linked with other diverse groups. By partnering with various community service efforts, you'll increase awareness of your operation to others involved in the same issues or events.
- **Advertise outside your normal box.** Research the demographics of various media outlets — radio stations, small newspapers, trade publications, entertainment supplements, theatres, universities, etc. — and develop specialized discounts for their audiences. 

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