



THE 6 HURDLES

Hospitality
Managers
Commonly Face

And How To Overcome Them

goRoster

• eBook •

An Introduction

I've recently come to notice that unlike the hospitality sector, never has another industry had to gratify such a tremendous variety of people. They're the ones we rely on for a place to eat, somewhere to catch up with a friend or a place for us to pop down to for our Friday after work drinks.

Whilst to industry outsiders it may seem that hospitality workers merely put together dishes, pour wine, and provide a nice setting, they actually do much more than just serve us 8 – 5 workers that 5 o'clock beer or wine we have been longing for all day!

Throughout this blog I will be breaking down for you six hurdles commonly faced by managers within the hospitality industry, and why we ought to appreciate them for it.

For you hospitality managers out there, I have also provided some suggestions on how you may be able to overcome these onerous hurdles.



Hurdle #1 Hiring The Right People

Employee turnover is notoriously high in hospitality. It's often said that it's because of the seasonal nature of the industry, or the poor compensation packages employees' receive comparative to other industries. Because of hospitality's appeal to potential employees of all ages, this presents managers with a very broad pool of individuals to choose from.

I think it's safe to say that everyone has thought at least once in their lives how "cool" or "fun" it would be to work in a bar. Whilst some employees have a strong desire to make it their long term career and dream of working their way up to a managerial role of some sort - some simply use hospitality as a way to pay the bills, usually whilst they are studying or at university.

It's a constant battle for managers to get a solid number of employees to commit long term. Finding the right balance between the career-focused ones, and those who can only commit part time is hard. It takes a lot of active, top-down encouragement from managers towards their staff in order to promote and nurture employee retention.



The Solution?

When hiring new staff, place an emphasis on opportunities for internal promotion within the business. Employee's appreciate knowing that their hard work will pay off and that there are incentives in place where they can be rewarded in the future.

Quite often you will find people aren't just after "the big bucks". They want to know that there's room to move up occupational ladder. If you make the concept of internal promotion central to your hiring and management processes whilst encouraging on the job training, this encourages employees to want to take part in the success of your business. As a result, this gives them something to aspire to.

Hurdle #2 Customer Loyalty

Hiring the right employees is crucial in terms of customer loyalty. I'm sure all of us have had at least one memorable experience where a waiter/waitress has given us outstanding service and/or we have been delighted with the food and beverage put in front of us.

Today we live in a world where people always want something for free, and this is the case for most industries, not just hospitality. Whether you offer something for free, advertise a buy one get one free special, nothing beats the old line, "Well the bar down the road serves the same for a lot cheaper!"

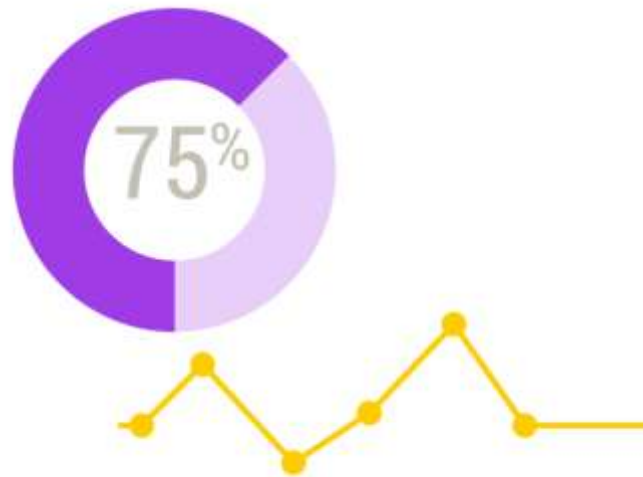
Without loyalty, and without the money of patrons, the hospitality industry would cease to exist. It's all well and good to get in a big crowd on a Friday night, but what plans do you have in place to make them come back? You can't guarantee that the same exact crowd will be back next Friday. What is it that you are doing that really hooks them in?

It could be a number of elements: the music, the mood, the quality of your food, how your staff strike up their opening conversation, the décor of the venue, or it could be a combination of these things. The creativity it requires whilst trying to maintain optimal cost prices is a constant battle for managers. A point of difference that can give you the advantage over your competitors is essential to build and sustain customer loyalty.

The Solution?

There is a common saying "treat your oldest customers like royalty." This statement pertains to the fact that this group that contributes to a significant proportion of your turnover.

Customers appreciate it when you take the time to talk to them and how you make that customer feel at the time, has a much higher return than any other tactic. Too often I see staff that would prefer to converse about the latest gossip rather than take an interest in their customers. If you can get employees to take an interest in the people they are serving, you may just hit the jackpot.



Hurdle #3 Role Of Team Motivator

The daily to-do list of a hospitality manager is impressively long. They meet with suppliers, put together new menus, order stock and monitor wage costs amongst a number of other things. More importantly, they also have to be the face of the business.



The person in charge sets the tone for establishment and customers can pick up on this instantly. When you are in a restaurant and you get efficient, happy service by an employee it's usually because they are being led by someone who takes charge and because the manager takes it upon themselves to make sure all areas of the business know exactly what they are doing for the entirety of the shift.

Alternatively, when you have a bad experience or staff seem flustered and rushed off their feet, it's usually a sign of a lack in leadership. It definitely takes a certain personality to play the role of a hospitality manager. They must be calm, quick on their feet, and as impossible as it often seems – be in several places at once. All with a big smile on their face!

These people are incredibly passionate about what they do; they live and breathe every aspect of hospitality. That's what makes them so wonderful. We have all had instances where we doubt our own professions, and we wonder if we are in fact doing what we really love. A hospitality manager must be multi-faceted, and able to wear all hats within their industry.

The Solution?

As a hospitality manager, make sure you know your employees. What motivates them? What keeps them happy? What makes them work hard? Use these different ways to bring out the best in each of your employees. Appeal to their potential. Do be careful however, not to fall into the common trap and distort the line between being a leader and being a friend. When this happens, it makes it very hard to come back from especially with respect to discipline and setting ground rules. Try and remain a managerial figure that you would want to work for. People work hard for those they admire.

Hurdle #4 Responding To A Crisis

Imagine you are sitting at a leaner in a busy bar, the line to get a drink is about four people deep and the queue to pay at the Maitre' D station is growing. Suddenly, the Eftpos terminals crash.

You can see everyone starting to get annoyed, patience is faltering and frustrated customers are about to leave. It's not an easy task to deal with these sorts of situations as a manager, especially when you have angry patrons wanting another drink and you run the risk of diners walking out without paying. It takes an experienced person with a calm and efficient attitude to fix situations such as this one, where a large amount of money and customer satisfaction is on the line. It's a make or break moment.

I've seen instances such as this dealt with in a multitude of ways. Some great, and some not so great. Often I've seen customers' being told to wait a significantly long period of time until the situation is remedied. Other times those with credit cards kindly offered their card details over to the manager, took a receipt with them and they were on their way; and the charge would be put through later when things were up and running again. I've also witnessed patrons who have used this sort of crisis as a way to get out of paying and have gotten up and left.

Situations like these are important in reminding us how crucial it is to know the systems you use - how to fix them, and what to do if the situation can't be fixed immediately.

The Solution?

Be prepared. Make sure you have plans in place for any sort of crisis that may happen. Most people don't mind waiting if the incident is dealt with professionally and dealt with as best as possible. Mistakes do happen. The contingency plans you put in place must be tested, and recorded for future incidents to ensure staff are up to date with these plans.

This goes for all sorts of crises' too, whether its electrical faults, or natural disasters - make plans!



Hurdle #5 Prioritising

Haven't we all been in that situation where we are required to be in several places at once, we're complete a daunting amount of tasks all by the end of the day and somehow perform a number of different roles at once; the mentor, the teacher, the parent, the friend, the colleague, the boss!

What dictates one's ability to fulfil all of these disconcerting tasks is the ability to prioritise. Prioritising is paramount if you are serious about getting the most out of your business in a realistic and time-bound way.

***Realistic** is defined as having an awareness and acceptance of reality.*

***Time-bound** is defined as an activity or event that is supposed to happen within a given period of time, with some sense of urgency.*



There will always be factors that will affect your business goals that often cannot be helped. People generally let these factors get the better of them therefore; as a result their original plan gets kicked to the curb. Meticulous planning and goal setting is essential in the hospitality industry.

Often people fear delegating tasks despite their tremendous workload. How do you get a new menu ready to go public when you've just had an influx of new staff that aren't trained on your way of doing things? Where do you find the time to sit down and work on your financial costs when you're so understaffed that you have to work one of the junior shifts that night?

When your vision is blurred – you start to forget what was originally most important. This is where those two little words come into play. Be realistic, and make sure your goals and objectives are time bound. Despite there being so much to be done, the business carries on – and the customers don't wait. Hospitality managers daily, have a number of different problems and obstacles thrown at them. It's how these things are prioritized and dealt with, that will define the final outcome for the business.

The Solution?

Never assume “Oh, it’ll be fine. I’ll manage”. That is when your business starts to suffer. Systematic thinking plays a major part in making sure the jobs get done. Never compromise the integrity of your business by not making proper plans. Delegate tasks you know you can’t get done on time.

An effective way of doing this is by investing time into training your staff on these tasks – so when it comes down to it, they can help you. Try to get out of that mind set of “I’m the only one who knows how – and if it’s not me who does it, something might go wrong.” What’s the better option? Not training them and then as a result you continue to tirelessly chip away at that little growing mountain of work on your desk? Sound inviting? I thought not.

The long term benefits of investing more time into training your staff in certain areas means that in the future, it’s much easier for you to step back and do what is most necessary for you and your business.

Remember: be realistic and make sure your goals are time-bound.



Hurdle #6 Communication

Developments in technology are occurring so rapidly now that it's hard to put a communication plan in place that will be around for long enough. With the development of websites such as Trip Advisor, Dine Out and Facebook, reviews and comments are put out into a world-wide forum every day. Consequently, a lot of power has been placed into the hands of the customer, leaving an almost non-existent gap for error for hospitality businesses.



Your customers are both your greatest and worst critics. In order to survive, hospitality managers must embrace these technological platforms in order to keep up with the competition. In this day and age it's not uncommon for all generations to be clued in on how to use the internet, and declaring one's feelings and thoughts online is certainly a growing trend.

As I mentioned earlier, review websites are a tangled web of positive and negative reviews of bars and restaurants, and it takes a very trained and unbiased eye to filter through those comments that you know "may be a little over the top", or "slightly inaccurate." How hospitality managers deal with these is pivotal in how they are perceived by the general public. No one likes a business that cannot accept its flaws, and businesses must remain mature when they know the patron or diner is embellishing the truth, even if the situation was out of the business's control.

It's also important to mention the relevance of social media channels and how they provide a quick and effective way for bars and restaurants to communicate with their customers. Just think back to the days where most businesses had to rely on word of mouth to get themselves known, because who really wanted to pay an exorbitant amount of money on paper advertising just to promote a new Wednesday night dinner special, when you knew the special would probably change in four weeks' time?

Whilst I'm not saying that paper and magazine advertising is not longer relevant – in such a competitive market today it stills holds a great importance, especially when used in conjunction with online media. As a hospitality business, there's often an overload of information you need to communicate to the public; whether it's about your new drink specials, menu changes, hiring opportunities or just advertising certain events you may be hosting. These social media channels are turned to almost daily for what was primarily personal and recreational use, but now due to the growing online presence of businesses means that online communication must be executed both timely and accurately.

The Solution?

Make sure it's someone's job to monitor all online channels for reviews. Thank those who give you good reviews, and to those who choose to get colourful with their negative comments, try to remain diplomatic. All feedback is good feedback at the end of the day. How you deal with it is what will define the way the public perceive you.

Use social media to put your establishment on the radar and engage and connect with potential customers on an emotional level. These social media sites for the most part are completely free of charge, so make sure you utilize them. I suggest dedicating time to making your pages 'user-friendly', be informative, be engaging and be emotive. There are a significant number of benefits that come with this, and online marketing is quickly becoming the focal point for most businesses in their communication strategy. So get amongst it, and be heard!



So there you have it. Next time you are at a bar, and they go out of their way to give you great service or you order a meal that you really enjoy – let someone know. People generally are very quick to complain, and gratuity these days is often a forgotten thing.

Finally, to all you managers, give these solutions a go! You may just be surprised how easy it can be to overcome these hurdles.



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