



Cost Control Systems: Time for a 3,000-mile Check-Up?

By **Ron Yudd**

Have you performed a diagnostic check on your cost-control systems lately? Periodically, it's important to spend time checking the systems that you have in place to control cost and enhance profitability. Often the pressure of day-to-day operations causes us to fail to stop, step back and analyze the effectiveness of our systems.

Here's a quick list to look into over the next month:

- **Checking Parts** for all food, liquor and non-food items. Keep in mind items that are sitting on the shelf are costing you money! Less is always best!


- **The Daily Cycle.** Walk the process from buying to receiving. Break the routine and really watch what's happening as products flow through the house. It is often very interesting to see some of the stops they make along the way.

- **Tracking Variance/Reconciliation.** How are you tracking and following up on center-of-the-plate items? Are you matching

quantities sold versus quantities consumed? Who does the counting? What kind of follow-up have you built-in as part of the process of tracking your most expensive food items?

- **POS Information.** Are we fully using all its capabilities and information to schedule, prep the right number of products and control other costs? Cover counts and check averages are wonderful bits of data, but what else can you learn from the information your POS provides?

- **Clock-In-Clock-Out.** Check the codes and match things up. Start off by comparing hours paid vs. hours scheduled.

Tip to Get Started: Ask the key players who work in each of these areas to do a little self-evaluation on how they think the system is working and then do a little "systems" check-up of your own. One thing to always ask: are we getting accurate and complete information from our systems so we can make the right decisions? 

Repeat After Me: Repetition Works! By **TJ Schier**

Repeating a grade in school is a bad thing. Unfortunately, school simply crams information into kids' heads until the test and then it's long forgotten. Then, those kids come and work for us. We train them and have to re-hardware their brain. How?

Repetition! Learning the wine list, drink menus, well and call brands, flavor profiles, food pairings, etc. can only become ingrained through practice... day after day, shift after shift, little by little. Ensure you review the following each shift during the pre-shift meeting:

- **Sales** – What item are we focusing on selling? How do you describe it? How many are you committing to sell on your shift?


- **Specials** – Any LTOs (limited time offers) or new items on the menu? Chef/bar-tender specials? Review it

with the team so everyone is ready to inform our guests.

- **Safety** – Pick an item a day to review with the team: knife safety, sanitation, fire extinguisher location, evacuation procedures, etc. as a constant reminder of our number-one goal: food, guest and employee safety!

- **Alcohol** – Pick a wine and liquor category and quickly review with the team so they can help the guest enhance their meal.

- **Service** – What key service behavior is the focus of the shift? Role-play and ensure everyone is wearing their smile as part of the uniform today!


Practicing these five items each shift and having the team be constantly reminded of them will help ensure service continues to move forward...and additional sales with it! 

Training Tip

The reason foodservice training is so tough to implement is the very reason it is so vital to your operation: People never think they need what they really need. The secret to maximizing as little as 30 minutes of training time lies in your ability to be prepared and stay focused.

Don't wing it. Make a list of the issues you'd like to discuss. People are more likely to tune in if they know you've taken the time to organize the session. Truly good "seat-of-your-pants" facilitators are few and far between. If you're not prepared, don't have a training session.

Make a plan and stick to it. Outline your thoughts on paper at least one day prior to the training session. Post this outline to let everyone know where you are in the grand scheme of things. Keep your training sessions limited to the agenda for that day.

Don't wander off. When large groups get together, it's tempting to sit around and catch up about everything under the sun other than training. Be social, but don't let social tangents snowball into a waste of time. 

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