



Make Teams Work... Motivating Everyone this Holiday Season


There's no time for errors during the holiday season (although that doesn't stop us from making them). But with our customers' frustration level already operating at a high (before they even get in the door), it's more important than ever that we anticipate our customers' needs, deliver better service and menu items than they'd dare to hope for, and make it all look as easy as possible.

The only way we can pull this off is to make sure that *everyone* is bringing their "A" game and playing together as a team. When that happens, service excels, sales soar, customer satisfaction happens and repeat business builds. Here are some last-minute coaching tips to create team incentives that bring out the best performance in everyone on your team:

- **Work together to set sales goals.** Don't set quotas. You'll never get the buy-in if your team members aren't involved in setting goals. Instead, hold team meetings and ask for ideas from the front and the back of the house. What do customers seem to enjoy the most? Which menu item is most overlooked (and should it be)? What types of specialty drinks do you order elsewhere? Then, determine realistic goals together...

four more orders a shift? Twenty more a week? Then, do the math to help servers understand how much additional income they'll earn with those added-on sales.

- **Create buddy teams.** Evaluate sales averages for all your servers and pair high achievers with struggling servers (don't reveal how teams were decided). Then, give each team a sales goal... use the data from your team members to determine if it's additional appetizers, drinks, add-ons or over-all check averages. Give the "buddies" time to talk and share sales strategies. At the end of the contest, reward the winning pair.

- **Involve everyone in incentive programs.** Yes, it's important to focus on your sales staff, but everyone is impacted by additional sales. Let's face it: more sales equals more work. Why should only your sales team benefit from that additional work? Set goals that directly impact performance. For example, if your shift's goal is to sell more desserts, then prep cooks can be rewarded for zero mistakes in desserts. The kitchen crew can be rewarded for consistently getting those desserts out in less than five minutes. 


Marketing Tip: Last-Minute Holiday Hits

Yes, most of your holiday marketing has been planned months before—and is already implemented (and, hopefully, generating responses)—but here are a few marketing ideas to squeeze out a little extra business this season:

- **Holiday fun.** Focus on slow nights and create a gift-wrap night, holiday specialty drinks half-off happy hour, etc. and use on-site signage, e-mail marketing and server dialogue to promote.

- **Holiday handouts.** Drop off small dessert or appetizer trays to human resource direc-

tors of local businesses. Include offers for larger trays that can be delivered to other departments. Include coupons with short expiration dates.

- **Holiday helpers.** Instead of competing with holiday mail, approach Santa at the mall, local specialty shops, school pageants, etc. and ask for your coupons to be included in bags. Often, managers will agree if your coupon is good enough (offer something free) and if you provide an incentive for them (free dessert tray, gift card, etc.). 

Role-Play:

Hello? Is Anybody There?

It's 9 a.m. and the restaurant doesn't open until 4 p.m. Make sure your off-hours phone people don't sound like this...

Employee: Joe's Steakhouse.

Guest: Hello. I was wondering, do you have a reservation open for 7 tonight?


Employee: I'm not in charge of that. Can you call back later?

INSTEAD...

Employee: Good morning, Joe's Steakhouse, can I help you?

Guest: Hello. I was wondering, do you have a reservation open for 7 tonight?

Employee: Our night manager will be in at 2 today. I can leave a message for him to call you or would you like to call back then?

Better yet: Train everyone who answers the phone how to take reservations and answer catering questions... or hire a phone service! 

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