




Diverse Customers: Attract Them, Serve Them, Keep Them

You don't need to look at statistics to learn that the United States is becoming more and more diverse. A quick look through your operation ought to tell you that customers don't fit into one category. Smart operators are continually and actively seeking additional customers... and they're getting creative in how they approach different markets. Diverse markets – those traditionally labeled as “minorities” – are ripe for targeting through marketing, sales and service efforts.

Here are a few tips to increase service – and sales – to your diverse customers:

- **Invite them.** It sounds simple, but your catering or large group marketing efforts should seek out various minority groups for meetings or gatherings. By marketing directly to these diverse groups, you'll communicate your support and open the door to new customers. (See Marketing Tip on page 6 for more ideas.)
- **Speak to them.** McDonald's was one of the first companies to advertise in Spanish, but even if your marketing dollars don't stretch to niche marketing, every operation can still include a few translated menus and a server or host who speaks Spanish or other languages

prevalent in your community. These services will make customers feel welcome... and keep them coming back.


- **Welcome them.** According to the U.S. Department of Labor, people with disabilities have \$175 billion annually in discretionary spending power. Then why is it that many of these customers can't even comfortably enter an operation or get a seat without feeling as if their presence is an inconvenience? Ensure that all guests are welcomed and accommodated legally – and politely – in your operation.
- **Train your team.** The key to service – and sales – is to see each guest as an individual person. Use role-play techniques to determine the specific need of each customer, regardless of the “group” he or she may belong to. Remind servers to ask leading questions before making recommendations and encourage targeted suggestive selling based on customers' responses. It's a way of communicating that the server – and everyone in your operation – sees each customer as a valued, welcome guest... and that's the best way to attract, serve and keep all of your customers. 

One Size Fits All?

By **Bill Marvin**

It occurred to me that there is a general feeling “out there” that a good server is a good server. So you hire people based on prior experience and a good work ethic... but does that really work in the best interests of your business? If you were truly passionate about presenting a consistent image to your market – think of it as the story you want the public to believe about you – you have to acknowledge that not every server, no matter how skilled, has a style that is consistent with that image.

Does this make staffing more difficult? In the short run, perhaps... but in the long run, if every element of your operation is compatible with your story, the word gets around. It becomes very clear to everyone – guests and staff alike – what you are and what you aren't. When that happens, you attract more of the right sort of guests and potential workers. At the same time, you subtly discourage those who are not a good fit with what you are doing which saves everyone a lot of time and grief.

What is the story you are trying to tell? What sort of people will be attracted to that story? Is everything you do consistent with the way you want people to think of you? DO THE WORK! 


Give Yourself the Gift of Time – Delegate

During the holiday season you have a million things to do – order more gift cards, get out holiday marketing and promotions, decorate the restaurant, and juggle employee schedules – not to mention the increased traffic of holiday shoppers and parties. You don't have to take it all on alone. Give yourself a gift this holiday season and learn to delegate.

A great manager is a great delegator and while that may sound like a copy-out for not pulling your own weight, it is actually a sign of trust in your team. And that trust is created and earned by your commitment to training, empowering and leading your team.

Delegating to managers and

employees as they are ready does not lessen your authority – it actually frees up your time to work ON your business in addition to developing bench strength so your restaurant runs smoothly no matter who is managing.

What can you delegate? Be creative. Your server may be a marketing major. Your dishwasher may have developed his own web site. Look around for those who are willing to perform new challenges and ask for volunteers during team meetings. Employees love to work for managers who allow them to provide input and be a part of the solution. By uncovering the hidden talents of your team, you'll not only ensure they enjoy their job more, but it will free up your time as well. 

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