

BE THERE

WHEN I AM WEARING MY "LENDERS" CAP, I LISTEN TO ALL KINDS OF STORIES FROM MANY 'WANNA BE' OWNER/OPERATORS IN OUR INDUSTRY. ALTHOUGH WE TREAT ALL APPLICANTS EQUALLY THROUGHOUT THE APPLICATION PROCESS AND TRY TO TURN DOWN AS FEW APPLICANTS AS POSSIBLE, I HAVE LEARNED OVER THE YEARS WHAT A "RED FLAG" SOUNDS LIKE. WHAT IS A "RED FLAG" YOU ASK? IT'S A COMMENT WHICH LETS ME KNOW THAT THERE IS SOMETHING ABOUT THEIR DEAL THAT MAKES IT, LET'S SAY, RISKIER THAN OTHERS. SEVERAL "RED FLAG" COMMENTS COME TO MIND AND THIS IS WHAT SOME OF THEM SOUND LIKE. "I AM BUYING THIS RESTAURANT AS AN "INVESTMENT" OR "I INTEND TO BE AN ABSENTEE OWNER , OR I INTEND TO KEEP MY FULL TIME JOB UNTIL THE PLACE STARTS MAKING MONEY". ALL OF THESE STATEMENTS TELL ME THAT THE NEW OPERATOR WILL EITHER *NOT* BE THERE ALL OF THE TIME, HARDLY AT ALL, OR POSSIBLY NEVER! ALL OF YOU EXPERIENCED OPERATORS OUT THERE READING THIS KNOW THAT YOU *MUST* BE THERE IF YOU ARE GOING TO PROTECT YOUR INVESTMENT.

I BELIEVE IT IS ABSOLUTELY NECESSARY TO BE AT YOUR BUSINESS ALL OF THE TIME. NOW, I UNDERSTAND THAT BEING THERE ALL OF THE TIME IS SIMPLY NOT POSSIBLE, BUT WHEN YOU ARE NOT THERE, AS I AM SURE YOU ARE AWARE, THE LIQUOR CONTROL BOARD REQUIRES THAT A LICENSED MANAGER OF RECORD, A RESPONSIBLE, TRUSTWORTHY PERSON BE THERE. SOMEONE TO WATCH YOUR BUSINESS AND YOUR MONEY WHEN YOU ARE NOT AROUND.

TO TAKE THE POINT A STEP FURTHER, *YOU NOT ONLY MUST BE THERE, BUT YOU MUST BE WORKING THERE* AS WELL. YOU SEE, THERE ARE DIFFERENT WAYS TO "BE THERE", DEPENDING ON THE TYPE OF PLACE YOU OPERATE. A COUPLE OF NIGHTS AGO, MY WIFE AND I WENT TO EAT AT A VERY NICE, FAMILY OWNED, WHITE TABLE CLOTH RESTAURANT. WE NOTICED THAT ONE OF THE OWNERS WAS THERE THE ENTIRE TIME. SHE WAS THERE TO GREET US WHEN WE ARRIVED, CHECKED WITH US DURING THE MEAL AND SAID THANK YOU AND GOODBYE WHEN WE LEFT. DURING THE MEAL, WE COULDN'T HELP BUT NOTICE HER AS SHE "WORKED" THE TABLES, INSURING THAT ALL CUSTOMERS WERE HAPPY AND WEREN'T IN NEED OF ANYTHING.

THAT "ALWAYS ON" TYPE OF FRONT OF THE HOUSE PRESENCE IS NECESSARY IN SOME PLACES, BUT IN THE SMALLER BARS WITH A HIGHER PERCENTAGE OF LIQUOR SALES, THE PRESENCE OF THE OWNER (OR RESPONSIBLE OTHER) IS ABSOLUTELY REQUIRED.

YOU KNOW THE OLD ADDAGE, WHEN THE CATS AWAY.....

OVER THE YEARS I HAVE NOTICED HOW THE CONCEPT OF "BEING THERE" HAS DISSOLVED INTO A GREY AREA OF RESPONSIBILITY. THE OWNER, WHO JUST DOESN'T WANT TO GET UP A 5:30 A.M. TO OPEN FOR HIS 7 O' CLOCK CROWD, SO, HE HIRES SOMEONE TO DO IT FOR HIM. THE OPERATOR WHO BELIEVES HE CAN "AFFORD" TO SIT AT THE BAR ON BUSY NIGHTS *WITH* HIS CUSTOMERS AND HIRES SOMEONE TO BARTEND WHILE HE "RELAXES." IT GETS TO THE POINT WHERE THE OPERATOR IS PAYING OUT ALL OF HIS MONEY TO OTHERS TO RUN *HIS* BUSINESS, THAT THE "SLOW BLEED" TO EXTINCTION BEGINS AND THE MILD HEADACHE BECOMES A TERMINAL ILLNESS

TO ME IT'S OBVIOUS. IF YOU ARE GOING TO PUT YOUR MONEY, YOUR LIFE AND YOUR RELATIONSHIPS ON THE LINE, YOU OR SOMEONE YOU TRUST AND BELIEVE IN BETTER BE AT YOUR BUSINESS *ALL* OF THE TIME. IF YOU CAN'T BE THERE OR WORSE, DON'T WANT TO BE THERE, IT'S TIME TO START THINKING ABOUT ALTERNATE LIFE OPTIONS!