

INITIAL RESPONSES

It really doesn't matter what your percentage of alcohol to food is, customers are coming to your business because they want to spend their hard earned money on your liquor, your beer, your wine and your food. You know there are literally thousands of other licensed businesses that serve food but yours is the one that they chose.

So how do you make those who enter your business feel? What system do you have in place to make them feel welcome? How do you keep them happy while they are waiting to be seated? How do you satisfy them when they are on time for their reservation and their table is not available? How do you make that "first impression" a positive one?

I know when the phone rings at my office, my staff and I are always grateful for the call and try to acknowledge each and every customer as someone special, someone without whom, my business would be out of business. We try to make every caller feel important and at home.

Most national chains have extensive rules in place. Rules that govern how a customer should be treated the second they come through the door. How long it should take to acknowledge a customer. How long it should be before a customer is acknowledged by the wait staff after being seated. How long before the drink order is taken. How long they should have to look over the menu, and how long they should have to wait for their food. All of these are important initial responses.

I have previously written about the "entire" experience one has when dining out and how every part of that experience is important, from start to finish, but I believe, that how a customer is treated initially, regardless of how busy your business might be, is the "key" to repeat business. That of all of the things your customer expects, it is your initial responses that will be remembered first and foremost.

Whether it is the bartender or a hostess who does the greeting, the training of those people in that aspect of your business is absolutely imperative. Those who "greet" your customers are the first contact and it is they who set the mood and tone for the balance of your customers stay.

So pay more attention to your customers. They are not just a statistic. They can go elsewhere. They are not to be taken for granted. Take the time to appreciate the fact they came to **your** business and let them know that you truly appreciate them.

PS..... All of you reading this column are very much aware that every bar in this Commonwealth, is technically a Restaurant. I sometimes write articles that seem to relate more to the food side of our industry, however, most of what I write very much applies to all licensed establishments, of every type. I sometimes take some heat for not being more "bar" oriented, but I write it as I see it and hope you enjoy the reading. Feel free to email me at Ned@SpecialtyGroup.com, if you have an comment or post to our Facebook | Specialty Group. Happy Holiday's from all of us at Specialty Group.