

# Customer Service Excellence – It's Our Business

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## *A Guide to Service 2.0 and How To Implement in Your Business*



*The Hospitality NT Workforce Project is supported by the Northern Territory Government*

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## I. Introduction

Customer service has always been at the core of what we in the Hospitality industry do. It is our driving passion that has often led us into the industry in the first place.

- Be it the pride a cook or chef has in preparing a meal that a customer thoroughly enjoys, thanks the kitchen and tells their friends about;
- or the front of house staff who when farewelling guests get told what a great time they have had;
- or the room attendants who get satisfaction from turndown service as they close the door leaving an immaculate room ready for the customer to relax and feel at home in.

Customer service is the very nature of our businesses. But as technology develops the pressure and scrutiny on businesses to meet ever increasing customer expectations is mounting.

***This Manual aims to be an Industry Guide to the changing customer service environment and suggests some practical measures that local hospitality businesses could consider implementing to ensure they keep abreast of changing customer service expectations.***



## 2. What is Service 2.0 and What does it mean for Hospitality?

**Service 2.0** is a new way of placing the customers and their customer experience on top, this way the customer service is the most important value, and the use of technology and new communication channels is an essential element, in order to provide the best possible service and avoid unnecessary and unwarranted reputational damage.

Although it has never been in a company's best interest to have an unhappy customer, the arrival of social media websites like Facebook and Twitter and user review sites like Tripadvisor, Hotels.com, Expedia Australia, WikiCamps, Eatability, Urban Spoon and Australian Good Food Guide have made it much harder for businesses to ignore any weaknesses in customer service.

***The cost of poor service – once measured in the loss of single consumers – can now have an immediate and far-reaching impact.***

For example, millions of people around the world are now familiar with the story of Canadian singer Dave Carroll, who composed 'United Breaks Guitars' after his Taylor acoustic guitar was damaged at Chicago's O'Hare airport.

Normally, when airlines damage or lose their passenger's luggage, they might end up paying out compensation in the region of a few hundred dollars. However, in the social media firestorm that followed this incident (Carroll's song became an instant hit on YouTube, with nearly four million views in its first 10 days online), United Airlines lost 10 per cent of its share value, a massive \$180 million.

The problem here is that United Airlines didn't just make a mistake with Carroll, but with millions of other people at the same time. Ordinary, mild-mannered citizens who may have been quietly dissatisfied with United Airlines suddenly had a public forum to vent their frustrations. In this way, social media websites allow consumers to speak publicly about something that is very important to them, and the effect can be wildly empowering.

For any company that is unlucky enough to find themselves in this particular line of fire, the effect can be similar to a class-action law suit, where the voices of many provide much more power than the voice of one person alone.

## 2.1 “One to One” service becomes “One to Many”

Before the widespread popularity of social media and user review websites, dissatisfied customers might have contacted consumer rights-focused television shows for help, but they now have easy access to a wide variety of options for airing their grievances publicly, all of which give them a loud voice on a global scale. In fact, to say that the social media revolution has given customers a louder voice is an understatement: it's more like word-of-mouth on steroids.

The traditional "one-to-one" model of customer service – whereby one Customer Service Representative works with one customer – has protected companies to a certain extent until now, since any damage caused by poor service was relatively limited. In this new world of social media, however, the days of sweeping an unhappy customer under the rug are over.

***Instead of "one-to-one" customer service, social media web sites have produced a "one-to-many" model, since a company that uses Facebook or Twitter to address a customer service issue may be interacting with tens of thousands of customers at the same time.***

In this scenario, there is no limit to the damage that can be caused by one unhappy customer, since a single incident can very quickly spiral into an international PR disaster.

On a more positive note. The solutions for local hospitality businesses are relatively simple. Apart from dealing with complaints, including negative online reviews, in a timely and professional manner, the number one thing businesses can offset this increased reputational risk and in fact turn **Service 2.0** into a positive is through an adoption of service excellence throughout their organisation.

## 2.2 What is the purpose of Service Excellence?

“To get the guest to come back, so they will spend more money and increase the business’ profits.”

- Incomplete

It’s incomplete because service excellence isn’t just about getting the guest to come back. A business can get them back by competing on price even if their service is sub-par.

No, service excellence is about making the guest **look forward** to coming back.

This distinction is everything.

- When they **look forward** to coming back, price loses relevance and margin improves.
- When they **look forward** to coming back, they visit more frequently.
- When they **look forward** to coming back, they tell their friends.
- When they **look forward** to coming back, they are engaging with the experience.

*A mission statement for a hospitality business should be: “**To give each guest such a great experience that they look forward to returning.**”*

*Managers and Operators should regularly ask their team, “**What are you doing today to make customers look forward to coming back?**”*

*That should be the focus of service excellence.*

Service excellence cannot be achieved in the short-term, nor can you ever truly say that you have ‘achieved’ excellence because it’s a journey not a destination; the quest for excellence will mean that you are constantly pushing the bar to get even better at what you do.

## 2.3 Tough questions Operators need to honestly ask themselves

To find a solution we must first understand that there is a problem. To do this we either are already aware or we must be able to answer some serious questions about our business and services.

- Would your customers miss your business if it were no longer around?
- What would they miss about you?
- Would they easily find a replacement offering?

- Does interacting with your business make a real (and noticeable) difference to their lives?
- Why do they choose you over others or others over you?
- When it comes to service delivery; do you strive to truly be proactive and anticipate customer needs, or do you simply react to customer's requests?

## **2.4 Service Excellence Pledge**

Each business should have a Service Excellence Pledge that is visible by both customer and staff alike. This allows customers to know what they should expect at your venue and ensures committed staff know what the customers' expectations are.

## **2.5 Case Study – The Ritz Carlton**

### **The Credo**

The Ritz-Carlton Hotel is a place where the genuine care and comfort of our guests is our highest mission.

We pledge to provide the finest personal service and facilities for our guests who will always enjoy a warm, relaxed, yet refined ambience.

The Ritz-Carlton experience enlivens the senses, instils well-being, and fulfils even the unexpressed wishes and needs of our guests.

### **Motto**

At The Ritz-Carlton Hotel Company, L.L.C., "We are Ladies and Gentlemen serving Ladies and Gentlemen." This motto exemplifies the anticipatory service provided by all staff members.

### **Three Steps Of Service**

1. A warm and sincere greeting.
2. Use the guest's name. Anticipation and fulfillment of each guest's needs.
3. Fond farewell. Give a warm good-bye and use the guest's name.

### **Service Values: I Am Proud To Be Ritz-Carlton**

1. I build strong relationships and create Ritz-Carlton guests for life.
2. I am always responsive to the expressed and unexpressed wishes and needs of our guests.

3. I am empowered to create unique, memorable and personal experiences for our guests.
4. I understand my role in achieving the Key Success Factors, embracing Community Footprints and creating The Ritz-Carlton Mystique.
5. I continuously seek opportunities to innovate and improve The Ritz-Carlton experience.
6. I own and immediately resolve guest problems.
7. I create a work environment of teamwork and lateral service so that the needs of our guests and each other are met.
8. I have the opportunity to continuously learn and grow.
9. I am involved in the planning of the work that affects me.
10. I am proud of my professional appearance, language and behavior.
11. I protect the privacy and security of our guests, my fellow employees and the company's confidential information and assets.
12. I am responsible for uncompromising levels of cleanliness and creating a safe and accident-free environment.

### **The Employee Promise**

At The Ritz-Carlton, our Ladies and Gentlemen are the most important resource in our service commitment to our guests.

By applying the principles of trust, honesty, respect, integrity and commitment, we nurture and maximize talent to the benefit of each individual and the company.

The Ritz-Carlton fosters a work environment where diversity is valued, quality of life is enhanced, individual aspirations are fulfilled, and The Ritz-Carlton Mystique is strengthened.

**But more than just words on a board, or on a website are required:**

It's 9 am local time in Istanbul, and at the Ritz-Carlton Hotel the troops are smiling and dressed to serve. But before they face a single guest, they make time for their 10-minute "lineup" meeting, a chance to align themselves for the task at hand by discussing one of their 12 central service principles, the core standards of the organization's customer service culture.

All over the world, Ritz-Carlton employees (Ladies and Gentlemen, as they refer to themselves) are lining up this morning to go over this very same principle of customer service (today it is #8, which concerns every employee being able to grow and contribute in their job).

Whether at the Ritz-Carlton Resort in Dove Mountain Arizona, at the "world's highest hotel" in Hong Kong, at the Ritz's suburban business hotel in Tysons Corner, Virginia, this same scene is occurring.

The daily lineup is an approach that can power the service culture and growth of a company in a variety of industries and is especially useful in hospitality.

The lineup is a daily, extremely brief, huddle that your employees hold in small groups throughout your company at the same time each day, or same times, if you have more than one shift.

At the lineup, you discuss a single aspect of service—for example, one of your guiding service principles, as exemplified by an encounter with a particular customer. It doesn't, by the way, fall upon management or a trainer to lead the lineup. On the contrary: a different employee can lead the lineup each day, thereby learning and teaching at the same time.

Lineup is a practice that was pioneered at and has been most famously practiced by the Ritz-Carlton Hotel Company for three decades. Diana Oreck, from Ritz-Carlton's Leadership Center, what strikes her about the practice.

"The daily lineup is the most important vehicle we have at Ritz-Carlton to keep the culture alive. Every single day, 365 days a year, three times a day (because there are three different shifts) we have our lineup and we cover the 16 principles [that are central to our service culture] in rotation.

If today we're talking about Service Value No. 1, 'I create Ritz-Carlton guests for life' and you're the GM in Tokyo and I am the GM in New York, we can't go out of rotation. What's fascinating is that within twelve hours, first our Asian colleagues, then the Europeans, and then the Americans will be hearing the same message.

One thing I want to stress is to always keep the lineup short. It shouldn't be longer than fifteen minutes because if it is, it's a meeting and nobody needs another meeting in their day!"

The lineup procedure gets inspiration from, yet is 180 degrees removed from, the old hospitality tradition of a check-in with staff where daily specials and other mundane updates are shared, fingernails are checked for cleanliness, and waiters have a last chance to borrow a pen and pad from a co-worker before going out to face their guests.

Here's the thing: In today's world the challenge of providing great service is not in such nuts and bolts, skills-and-details-related updates. The challenge is that even if you start off strong with a great orientation, the daily grind will ensure that functional issues ultimately end up overwhelming business purpose.

A daily standup meeting is a chance to keep your business focused on your overriding purpose and to ensure that all staff are aligned to fulfill it. It only takes a few minutes, and the difference it makes can be crucial.

Try it on for size. There is no more powerful way to create an extraordinary experience for your customers than to maintain a fully-aligned company—and there is no better time to align a company than once a day, every single day.

## 2.6 Case Study – Japanese Customer Service Culture

Within minutes of entering **Japan**, virtually all tourists encounter the phrase "Irasshaimase!" (いらっしゃいませ!), meaning "Welcome to the store!" or "Come on in!" The phrase "Irasshaimase!" is a more polite version of irasshai, an imperative form of the honorific verb irassharu (いらっしゃる) which means "to be/come/go".

Have you ever walked into a Sushi bar and every staff member looks up and loudly greets you with "Irasshaimase" or 'Welcome'? The first time it happens it may be confronting. As visits increase, it becomes so normal that should you enter the same sushi bar and no one greets you with "Irasshaimase" you will immediately notice it and be disappointed.

There is no chance of walking into a Japanese store unnoticed. And when you are spotted, you will hear a welcoming greeting - 'Irasshaimase' - which seems to reverberate around the room, with each available staff member joining in the chorus.

A customer's felt experience, is that this greeting is a welcome and an invitation to be served.

'We are here to serve you' is echoed in body language, eye contact and a graceful smile. It acts like a reminder to service staff that whatever they were just doing, that didn't involve a customer, is not as important as serving the customer.

***Japanese customer service is mindful customer service. Time stands still and the most important thing in the world is the present moment. It is unhurried and very aware.***

### 3. The Local Experience and Service 2.0

Have you ever walked up to a bar and the bartender is head down, cutting lemons. You slowly approach the bar, they still have their head down and continue to cut lemons. You are now at the bar, you know they have seen you, yet they finish cutting that last lemon, maybe they say “I’ll be with you in a second” mostly they don’t. They then put the knife down, wash their hands, dry them and then acknowledge/greet you with a forced smile and ask, “What can I get you?”

Clearly, we have a way to go with instilling service excellence in our staff.

The service provided in the Northern Territory receives mixed reviews from customers. Essentially all hospitality venues can increase their focus on customer service and improve their outcomes.

**Service 2.0** is designed to raise the level of expectation in the venue. In order to do this, we need to raise the service standard and maintain a level of consistency. Mechanically we are consistent, but we do not actively engage at ALL TIMES, and this needs to change immediately.

**Service 2.0** also dovetails in nicely with the Northern Territory Government’s actions to promote and enhance the tourist offering. According to the NT Government, recommendations from family, friends, and through social media are up to eight times more powerful than advertising in encouraging people to travel to a destination or try an experience.

In 2018 the NT Government launched their ‘Visitor Experience Enhancement Program’ as part of their Turbocharging Tourism initiative. The program includes grants of up to \$10,000 to businesses to improve their tourwas focused on improving the ‘on-the-ground’ visitor experience in the NT.

## 4. Understand Your Staff – Who Do You Hire?

### 4.1 The 51% Hospitality Quotient

A well-known American hospitality identity Danny Meyers has a hiring technique where he hires what he calls 51%ers. He looks for staff with 51% of their attributes are the qualities listed below and weights the other 49% by skill and experience.

Danny Meyers explains that by hiring candidates with the highest **Hospitality Quotient** ('HQ') potential - and then helping them continually hone those six key behaviours once they're onboard - your business can see significant bottom-line impacts, by way of higher employee retention, customer satisfaction and revenue-per-employee.

But since these six key HQ traits are part of someone's innate personality makeup, they can't be taught. They may be honed and refined over time, but candidates can't pick up intellectual curiosity like they would a new skill or technique.

1. **Optimistic warmth** - genuine kindness, thoughtfulness, and a sense that the glass is always at least half full:

"I want to work with people I like, and I want to work with people who bring a sense of hope to their work," Meyer explains. The positivity coming from kind and optimistic employees is an important part of a great work environment. Sceptical employees don't help a company thrive.

2. **Intellectual Curiosity and Intelligence** - not just "smarts" but rather an insatiable curiosity to learn for the sake of learning:

The intellectually curious are "constantly looking at every day as an opportunity to learn something they didn't know before." If your employees think they know it all, that leaves little room for improvement and growth.

3. **Work ethic** - a natural tendency to do something as well as it can possibly be done:

"We can all teach anybody how to do the technical parts of their job, but we cannot teach anybody how to care about doing that job as well as it can possibly be done." Having employees that are not only skilled but also eager to put time and effort into what they do can make all the difference.

4. **Empathy** - an awareness of, care for, and connection to how others feel and how your actions make others feel:

An empathetic employee cares how he or she makes others feel. Whether with a customer or with fellow employee, being able to resonate and connect with others is a powerful skill.

**5. Self-awareness (an understanding of what makes you tick)**

Self-awareness is a sort of personal weather report. Every individual has a different report each day; one day it's 30 degrees with clear blue skies and the next could be 15 degrees and stormy. Employees who are self-aware may be having a stormy day but they're able to put it behind them when they're at work and don't take it out on their co-workers or our guests.

**6. Integrity (a natural inclination to be accountable for doing the right thing with honesty and superb judgment).**

For me integrity is "the emotional skill of having the judgment to do the right thing, even when no one is looking, and even when it's not in your self-interest." **An employee with high integrity is someone an employer can trust and rely upon.**

There's two things you need to know, right off the bat, about these hiring criteria:

First and most obviously, the criteria on Danny's list are psychological traits, not technical skills. Even though it is generally easier to hire for technical skills, whether they are knife skills in the kitchen or WPM on a keyboard, great customer-centric leaders like Meyer feel confident that they can teach technical know-how to almost any newly-hired employee, but on the other hand find the idea of teaching empathy, teaching work ethic and so forth to be essentially a fool's errand, much better addressed in the selection process than in post-employment training and discipline.

The second point is this: Even though you'll be hiring for personality traits rather than technical skills, you still need to develop highly-skilled employees before they even face the first customer. Otherwise, you're doing your customers (and your company) a huge disservice.

*Danny Meyer: "I used to think that you could just hire people for their emotional skills and if they had the six essential emotional skills, that's all it took. I learned the hard way that you can't unleash somebody's hospitality unless you have first completely drilled all the systems, the technical skills and know-how that are needed, to a point of excellence."*

In other words: These wonderful, warm personality traits that you have hired your new employees for aren't going to manifest themselves in ways that are useful to your customers until the training for skills is complete and has become second nature.

## **5. What Service Excellence Behaviours do your Leaders and Team need to focus on?**

### **5.1 Acknowledgement / Engagement / Greeting is Key**

*The key is good customer engagement and not merely good customer service.*

Eyes up, genuine smile and friendly greeting followed with a question pertinent to what you think the customer is interested in.

This could include an introduction, a comment on events of the day, but it is required to be a little more than “what would you like” and a lot more than a non-verbal acknowledgment by lifting the chin or pointing a finger!

***Customer engagement wins out over service mechanics every time, the customer has a great time and experience and the server too has similar experience. This is the cornerstone of Hospitality.***

### **5.2 Service Attentiveness**

#### **1. Eyes up & follow up**

Hospitality workers must always have their eyes up. Go towards the guest. After a service such as a cocktail or meals have been presented, follow up within two minutes to see how the guests require anything else. This is also the case of any personal recommendation such as a wine with a meal or a top shelf whisky you suggested or even a tour you suggested they try. Again, we are talking about engagement past the point of sale. Remain pleasant and smiling while always keeping an eye on the guest.

#### **2. Courtesy**

Customers should be treated "like members of a private club". Remembering names and favourite drinks/meals of customers encourages them to return and possibly recommend the establishment to others.

#### **3. Happy Staff**

Keeping the staff motivated helps them perform their job well. Incentives to perform well such as gift certificates, and possibility of extra shift are in place in order to encourage optimal work.

#### **4. Be prepared, be aware is being there for your guests**

Be there for your guest from before they arrive until they leave. Paying attention to the guests helps them come back.

The bar experience can be made up of several significant points, however, the one that supersedes all, is that the service staff and management “connect with the guest.”

### **5. Readyng the bar / workstation**

Show your guests that you care about your bar or workstation. Keep your bottles well lined and orderly. Keep the bar or workstation clean and tidy. Daily cleaning. Ensure that the counter top and surrounding table are all clean. For the Bar - Coasters should always be available, and a tray is there should they require. Work at all times with a cloth, it is a bartender’s best friend.

### **6. Greet and Approach the Guests**

You should approach everyone at the bar, chat them up just a little and then move to their orders. Take orders from women first and men second unless it is obvious who was there first.

### **7. Table & Bar Maintenance**

Table maintenance is a big issue and impacts directly on the level of service offered. Guests like to sit at a clean table and one that is clutter free. Tidying up a table in between courses is a great way to engage with the customers, to recommend dessert, a different wine etc.

Same with a bar, guests want a dry and non-sticky bar. Coasters taken to a table ensure it is moisture free and importantly it is another opportunity to engage your customer and suggestive sell them on what they might be considering purchasing next whether that be food or beverages.

Offer more wine/beer/cocktail, clean up spills and show the guests that you are mindful of their experience at your bar.

## **5.3 Be Aware of Your Environment**

### **1. Music**

Is the music on? Is it too loud or too soft? Is it appropriate? If you are not sure then ask your Manager, as music is all important.

### **2. Lights**

Is there a light globe blown? Are the lights too bright or too low? Lighting like music requires attention at different times of the day and night trade. It is not a set and forget scenario. If you can notice a light bulb out when you walk in a room, then you are suitably aware of your environment and have the observations skills required for this industry.

### 3. Temperature

We rely on temperature for many things in a venue from fridges, aircon, beer glycol systems, and of course food. At any time, there can be a fault with any of these and if everyone is alert to the possibility they can assist in detecting the issue before it is too late.

Is the beer pouring heady? This is usually a temperature issue. Does it feel warmer than normal? Perhaps the aircon is not working. Notice the temperature when you enter the cool room each time, is it as it should be?

All this is utilising your observations skills, and means you are paying attention. Any concerns need to be brought to someone's attention, so they can be investigated.

### 4. End of Service

Service does not end until the guest leaves the bar or venue. Sincerity is not real unless carried through to the end. After the guest pays and is leaving, drop by the table and say: "Good-bye, thank you for coming in and I hope you enjoy the rest of your evening."

Saying good-bye is an easy one. This is the guest's second-to-last impression and you should do everything to make it as good as you can.

## 5.4 Establish a Guest Connection

### 1. Smile

Everyone should smile all the time when on the restaurant floor or reception desk. The bar is a stage and the bartender are actors.

### 2. Focus on the guest

***It is important that every staff member realise that their primary job is the "guest connect."***

They should create an environment that makes every guest feel perfectly comfortable at the venue so that the guest will want to come back to enjoy it again soon.

### 3. Eliminate Guest Complaints through Connection

Guests no longer complain if they have a relationship with you and you put yourself in a position where you can provide them with information about what is going on. If you make the "connect," then the guest can inform you of issues in a different manner - asking for help or asking what is going on.

#### **4. Saying goodbye**

Remain available and discreet until the guest is ready to leave. All team members should react when a guest is leaving, saying a word of goodbye, a warm smile or wait to acknowledge the guest. A guest must not leave the bar feeling invisible and ignored.

#### **5. Inappropriate Guest Behaviour**

Sometimes we experience inappropriate behaviour from our guest and this requires attention.

Open your eyes, ears and nose

Observe guest, guest should not disturb other patrons

If you feel the guest is disturbing others: React

Ask kindly: "Please consider our other guest"

Call the manager & log it for them to decide the next course of action.

Return to looking after our guests.

## 6. Upselling – It Is Service Excellence

If you think that it's selling something bigger, extra or more premium to a customer or guest, then you may be missing the bigger picture. Upselling is not about selling more, it is about opportunity.

***The opportunity to deliver a great service experience, to truly exceed a customer's expectations and as a result help to build your business's reputation, customer base and ultimately profits. Upselling allows the customer to try something new and broaden their knowledge and encourages the customer to return to your venue.***

### 6.1 Upselling Service Excellence – Getting Started

So, let's establish a wonderful fact about the hospitality industry. Unlike almost any other retail environment, when a customer or guest walks in to your establishment they are there to spend money. In fact, they are emotionally committed to it.

***Within this environment, upselling, when delivered as part of a tailored, personalised service experience, is considered as a higher level of service by the customer.***

It is not seen as being sold to. It's an interesting fact that the vast majority of customers don't know what they want to drink when they walk in to a venue or are looking for local recommendations when checking into a hotel.

In fact, it's not so much that they don't know what they want as much as it is about the fact that they are often bored with what they usually drink and for a short moment when asked, 'what can I get you?', there is a pause. As if for a fleeting moment they are hoping for a flash of inspiration that will lead them to something different for a change.

This customer interaction sounds a bit like this:

**Bartender:** 'Hi, what can I get you?'

Customer: 'Erm... Oh I'll just have a vodka, lime & soda.'

**Bartender:** 'OK, sure.'

***However, most great upsellers recognise the pause (the 'erm') as an invitation to step in and take control of the service experience and introduce the customer to something they would never have thought of themselves.***

For them, the customer interaction sounds something like this:

**Bartender:** 'Hi, what can I get you?'

Customer: 'Erm...'

**Bartender:** 'Well, maybe I can recommend something for you? What do you usually like to drink...'

Or alternatively, if they miss the 'erm' they take the following opportunity like this....

**Bartender:** 'Hi, what can I get you?'

Customer: 'Erm, Oh I'll just have a vodka lime & soda.'

**Bartender:** 'Sure, do you have a preferred vodka or can I recommend one?'

Of course, simply saying the right things at the right time is just the beginning. Once you are recognising and responding to the opportunities to upsell, your technique in terms of communication is key.

## 6.2 Upselling Service Excellence Opportunities

With the above in mind, make sure you look out for the obvious opportunities and then consider proactive ways of serving. Here are a few tips:

### 1. At the point of order

- a. Have they paused when asked what they want? Most people do! If so, jump in and ask whether you can recommend something.
- b. If they order something generically, i.e.: 'vodka & coke', ask whether they have a preferred vodka or whether you could recommend one. Provide a recommendation based on the category that the customer would usually prefer to drink and then proceed to propose a serve with similar flavours using the more premium brand. Always remember that if you are recommending a more expensive premium product (KETEL ONE for example) explain why. 'You must try it with KETEL ONE; it's so much smoother than our pouring brand.'

### 2. With food, give some thought to what drinks pair well with which dishes.

For example, upselling beer (if you have given it some prior thought) is so easy with food. Instead of just taking a customer's usual lager order, respond with a statement like, 'instead of

your usual, how about giving beer X a try, it goes perfectly with that pasta you just ordered.' Approaches like this have an extremely high success rate.

### **3. When asking whether a customer wants another drink.**

Instead of asking, 'same again?' how about suggesting something else. Something like, 'Instead of another GORDON'S and tonic, how about taking the G&T to another level and trying a TANQUERAY & tonic with a splash of grapefruit bitters?'

### **4. Use the menu**

A great way to upsell to more profitable serves is by using your menu. Menus help undecided customers decide what to order and can help promote the serves that you want to upsell, such as the signature serves of your outlet.

## **6.3 Upselling Service Excellence – Communication is Key**

Everything you say, the way you say it, your facial expressions and your general body language, all impact the message you are trying to communicate. Here are some tips:

### **1. Use positive eye contact**

This means regularly connecting with the person or people you are speaking with by looking into their eyes.

### **2. Don't Fake It**

A fake smile can be picked up by most people instinctively and they will experience a lack of trust in you as a result. Far more important than smiling is a need to project your passion for what you are recommending both vocally and physically.

***If a customer can feel your enthusiasm for your suggestion they are very likely to go along with you.***

### **3. Consider the language you use**

Telling a customer that the whisky you suggested is 'nice' won't have the same effect as saying that it is 'delicious' or 'gorgeous'. Using expressive, descriptive words will be more likely to draw a positive response from them.

#### **4. What do you sound like? Words alone don't tell the story**

Our voices give our words context, impact and meaning. It is important that we sound enthusiastic, passionate and believable. Remember, you can describe something in beautiful terms, but if you sound bored, fed up or disinterested then your words will have no effect whatsoever.

#### **6.4 Practice Upselling Service Excellence!**

Upselling is an art and as with any art, developing your skills and putting them into practice over time is the key to becoming better at it. If things don't go perfectly first time around, consider what didn't work and then give it another try. It is your perseverance that will lead to the transformation of your business going forward.

## **7. Support each other & respond to complaints**

***The most important thing we can do every day is take care of each other, our team members, the people who work in your business. It's about mutual caring and respect among everyone who works together, where they all take care of one another, where you've got each other's backs, there's not that jockeying for position and the negative forms of competition.***

You don't have people playing the blame game or the 'it's not my job' card. These are some of the epidemics of workplaces that make work not only unpleasant but toxic. And when people are placed into toxic work environments, no matter how lovely you are as an individual, you turn toxic—or you quit.

### **7.1 When things go wrong**

Guests return to your outlet not only for the excellent drinks that you and your team create but also because of the overall experience they had. Customer service is extremely important in a bar, from making your customer feel welcome when they first arrive, to recommending drinks (upselling) and being attentive.

***However, as with all professions working with the general public issues can arise. Knowing how to deal with customer complaints can help to defuse tricky situations and rectify problems quickly. The way you deal with a complaint can even make customers more loyal to your outlet if they feel they have been treated well and the issue has been resolved appropriately.***

In most cases when a guest complains what they are looking for is someone to listen to them and their issues. They want to be heard and they want to feel that someone is on their side, that they have been wronged and they want you to agree and support them for having the courage to complain.

The way you listen and resolve a guest complain can turn them into fans of not only you personally but the business as well. Complaints and feedback in most cases are never personal and are a valuable tool to help us find the holes in our systems or service/product and fix it before another valuable customer is affected.

So how do you deal with a guest complaint? Follow these 5 steps:

### **1. Listen carefully**

Always hear the customer out and don't get defensive. Often this can be easier said than done, but is very important that you listen and understand clearly what the customer has said.

### **2. Ask questions**

Ask the customer questions about the issue in a caring and concerned manner. Try to understand your customer's need and why they are making a complaint - think about how you can respond to that need. Let them feel like you're on their side and that you understand the issue and empathise with them.

### **3. Own the problem**

Apologise without blaming others and assure them that you will personally deal with the issue. If you can't solve the problem – quickly find someone who can.

### **4. Don't over promise**

Let your customers know there's an issue and be sure to give special attention to the customer. Ask the customer what they feel an acceptable solution would be. Never over promise, but work with them to find an acceptable solution.

### **5. Learn from it**

With the issue resolved, consider how you can learn from it and ensure it doesn't occur again.

## **7.2 Complaints online**

We all live in a digital world and many complaints don't always happen face to face. In the world of the internet anyone can make a complaint online and damage your outlet's reputation.

It is important to respond to all complaints and criticisms and offer a resolution - whether that is on your Facebook page or on a site which reviews different restaurants and bars. Good practice is also to respond to good reviews and comments. Help build those customer relationships and show your appreciation for their positive comments.

## 8. Conclusion

Service excellence is a vital part of any hospitality operation, from its owners and managers through all of its staff.

Managers, supervisors and team leaders have a key role in driving service excellence on a daily basis. Using the tips and practicing the approaches outlined in this manual can be a daily practice for managers, supervisors and team leaders. By practicing daily, you are able to be short and sharp and focus on just one or two aspects, knowing that tomorrow you will work with your team on the next component of service excellence. And depending on your approach and your business, it may be a pre-shift briefing for staff, a quiet few minutes with each of your teams, or a series of one on ones with staff whose service excellence you are developing.

**Start your revitalised customer service excellence today!**

## Acknowledgements

*AHA NT would like to acknowledge and thank Jason Hanna for his involvement in the production of this manual. As many in the industry would know Jason is amongst those in our local industry striving to improve the customer service offering in our businesses, particularly with Bartenders.*

*He has his sights set clearly on ensuring national and international best practice is on display and adopted in our businesses to ensure locals and tourists alike report positively of their experiences in our venues.*