

## Module 4, Session 2

### Slide 1 - Customer service and Communication

Staff Training and Internal Communication session 2

### Slide 2 - Session 2: Staff Training and Internal Communication

We will explore food waste reduction, organising workplace, server training, food donation programmes, interpersonal communication, team management, team communication and sustainability in food service industry.

### Slide 3 - Introduction of the session Staff Training and Internal Communication session

In this session we will learn effective communication skills explore advantages of efficient teamwork and learn to understand the principles of interpersonal communication. We will educate staff on opportunities to reduce food waste within the establishment.

### Slide 4 - Minimising Errors

Food establishments need to commit to maintaining high standards of service and organisation of the workplace from the food preparation area to the food service area (eliminating obstacles, optimal furniture and prop allocation).

Second focus is restaurant operations – they are the day-to-day activities that keep your food establishment running. They need to be well organized, comprehensive, consistent and clear.

Errors can lead to loss of revenue, more food waste and negative work environment with difficulties retaining staff. While mistakes do and will always happen, there are several ways and avenues that enable you to minimise errors occurring. Learn from your and others 'errors and establish procedures to avoid them.

### Slide 5 - Communicating in a Noisy Environment

A food establishment can be a loud place: a busy kitchen with clanking dishes, people speeding from one location to another, music to help with the serving area atmosphere... all this makes communication more difficult and can lead to increased errors.

Tips to avoid miscommunication because of the loudness of the area you are working in:

- If you need to have a longer conversation, remove yourself to a quieter area or an office
- You will need to speak louder, however try to avoid shouting – shouted words are more difficult to understand and the increased noise makes other communication even more difficult.
- Make sure the person you are conversing with is facing you, for the best quality of sound transference.
- Some communication is nonverbal: you can communicate with facial expression and gestures (for example, pointing to things); reading lips along to listening to the voice also adds to clarity of the message.

### Slide 6 – Interpersonal skills

Interpersonal skills (also called social skills) are a type of so called, soft skills '. They encompass speaking and listening skills and are a basis of understanding and interacting with other people, one-on-one or in a group. Good interpersonal skills are an important attribute of people who get along with others and function well in professional environment.

They consist of the following basic skills:

- **Communication Skills:** it is essential for a food establishment employee to have good communication skills – both for clearly communication with the customers and for communication with their co-workers. Bad communication skills can easily lead to miscommunication and mistakes.
- **Emotional Intelligence:** This is the ability to manage your own emotions in a constructive way, which among other things, enables you to work efficiently by helping you connect and empathise with your customers and co-workers.
- **Problem-Solving Skills:** in a food establishment, you are often faced with crisis situations involving misunderstandings, problems, angry customers or uncooperative co-workers. A basis for dealing with such situations is the ability to identify and solve issues as they occur.
- **Decision Making Skills:** you also need decision-making skills to be able to identify best solutions when you are put in front of a dilemma: sometimes an ideal solution doesn 't exists and you have to choose the least harmful one. Or sometimes there are seemingly more correct solutions, but some can lead to problems down the road. You need to identify the best solutions to keep business running long term.
- **Team Work Skills:** an ability to work with others is essential in all professional environment and especially important in a high-stress environment of food industry.
- **Conflict Resolution Skills:** you need to be able to resolve conflicts with customers and between workers.
- **Influencing or Negotiation Skills:** such skill can help you solve issues by being able to offer an acceptable compromise.

### Slide 7 - Social Skills in Interpersonal Communication

Interpersonal skills (also called social skills) are a type of so called „soft skills“. They encompass speaking and listening skills and many other skills. Communication skills are one aspect of social skills, but they are not the only important aspect.

They are a basis of understanding and interacting with other people, one-on-one or in a group. Good interpersonal skills are an important attribute of people who get along with others and function well in professional environment.

Some people have better social skills than others, but we must be aware that such skills can be grown and enhanced with training.

### Slide 8 - Aspects of Interpersonal Skills

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### **Slide 9 - Communication Skills**

Listening skills enable you to correctly interpret guest's wishes and further them in the form of instruction about the order to co-workers. They also help with general communication in a team: to understand the issues, you first need to listen to them. In food service industry there are often employees that don't speak the native language perfectly and might not express themselves clearly – you need to find ways to effectively communicate with all members of your team.

Verbal communication (communication between two or more persons by using voice) has to be clear, accurate and efficient. There are many opportunities for misunderstanding, especially in a noisy environment of the food establishment, so you need to be concise and keep the important instructions as clear as possible.

Non-verbal communication encompasses gestures, facial expressions, body language and behaviours. It is as important as the verbal communication and often leaves more lasting impression, especially when contradicting the verbal communication.

### **Slide 10 – Conflict resolution**

There are different kinds of conflicts: some disagreements can even be constructive and lead to finding better solutions and smoothing the future restaurant operations. Some conflict demand intervention: either clarification of policies or setting of new policies, an advice or immediate action in case of more serious issues. Be careful to stand firm on severe offenses, like harassment and breaches of safety protocols.

Don't try to resolve conflicts in customers view (or hearing range), even if they start there. Remove yourself to another location. Customers also shouldn't be affected by conflicts, so focus on good service and resolve problems in the background or outside of the operating hours.

Don't enter the conflict resolution with preconceived notions or in the shade of previous actions. Each conflict should be treated as an individual event, but that doesn't mean you should forget about possible previous issues; just make sure they don't influence your judgment of measures to resolve this individual event.

### **Slide 11 – Emotional Intelligence: Dealing with Anger**

If the people communication are angry (or if one of them is), conflict will only escalate. High emotional intelligence helps with anger management, but eventually we will need to deal with all kind of personalities and for this we need strategies to de-escalate heated situations.

Sometimes taking a few deep breaths or a moment to focus yourself can be enough to remove the emotional component from the arguments.

If that doesn't work, try to use distance: either remove yourself physically or try to resolve the issue later, when everybody has cooled down and people can think more clearly.

Explain the issue calmly and point out the main problem and how the other person can resolve it/help you deal with it.

Acknowledge other's person's feelings, but don't dismiss them. Try to focus on the issues.

Don't escalate by using insulting language or shouting. This might give you a quick rush of satisfaction, but in the long term it always sours relationships and communication.

### **Slide 12 - Teamwork**

Restaurant staff is not simply a collection of individuals but a team, and they need to function like one for your business to run effectively and efficiently. They should treat each other with consideration and attention.

Encourage cohesion of the team by rewarding teamwork and helping each other as well as individual accomplishment.

Resolve issues quickly and fairly and be careful to include all the members of staff into the team.

### **Slide 13 – Steps of Conflict Resolution**

Identify the problem:

- Let all involved parties share their view of the events that caused the issue.
- Only judge after gathering all the facts.
- Some problems are caused by systemic issues, some by interpersonal conflicts and behavioural issues of individuals and some by outside factors.

Find solution:

- After identifying problems, find solutions: some are simple, some might require broader policy and strategy changes.
- When finding solutions to reoccurring problems, consult your team.

Apply measures:

- Reoccurring issues might be best prevented by applying measures and actions to your general policy.

- Be sure to inform all staff about the new measures in advance

#### **Slide 14 – Open communication with employee**

The basis of smooth operation management in a food establishment is effective and clear communication between management, kitchen and serving staff. Open communication is also important for improving scheduling and other employee-related tasks.

If you don't already have it, you need to provide an open, unified communication channel. You can set up a group chat on a messaging app (Like Viber, What'sApp) or use discussion platforms such as Slack or Discord; if you are already using a dedicated information system for scheduling and similar tasks, you can add a chat room for employee communication there. Employees should be able to receive and send information quickly, through one dedicated channel.

On this channels/chat rooms you can now post/share updates, changes in organisational procedures and similar important news, time off notices, shift swaps ... Try to avoid keeping communication strictly verbal, since that can easily lead to miscommunication.

#### **Slide 15 – Implementing effective communication channels**

**MEETINGS:** Regular staff meetings are an effective way to share updates, gather feedback, and discuss ways to improve operations. This is a ways to share pertinent information to avoid confusion and a good venue to identify problems before they grow into major issues.

**STANDARD PROBLEMS REPORTING PROCEDURES:** Establish a procedure and hierarchy for reporting customer, staff communication and other operational issues that can't be delayed to regular meetings.

**E-COMMUNICATION:** Provide standardised means of e-communication (message group, forum or similar) to all employees.

**OPEN DOOR POLICY:** Fostering an open-door policy will provide a comfortable work environment as well as ensure management is aware of the issues occurring. It can also encourage employees to suggest improvements in procedures and prepare initiatives and promotional actions.

#### **Slide 16 – Aspects of Sustainability Strategy for a Business**

Dedicated Sustainability Team or Roles

Sustainability should be ingrained into all of your business procedures, but some initiatives require extra time and effort and as such should be treated as additional responsibilities or even roles for dedicated employees.

You can create a team or dedicate roles to employees for purpose of tackling the sustainability aspects: that is especially appropriate for involvement in anti – food waste initiatives and programs.

You can also appoint a person (or team) for implementation sustainability initiatives and / or seeking collaboration with outside initiatives and food programs.



For creating new initiatives, it is best to involve as many of the employees as possible: you can organise brainstorming meetings or provide initiatives for employees to suggest new ideas to reduce food waste or to use food waste in sustainable way by participating in donation programs or programmes to re-purpose the food waste (sales, creating new recipes from still usable half products, collecting waste for biofuel...).

### **Slide 17 – Training programme**

The most common way of training new employees in the food service business is the mentor system. A new employee is assigned a mentor, who quickly explains restaurant operations and procedures before or even concurrent to employee starting work.

This informal way might be a cheap and fast solution short term, but can cause many issues in the long term. The main problem is subjectiveness of the method: training depends on the mentor, their communication style and interpretation of the restaurant rules and the way new employee perceives them and incorporates them into their work.

Long term solution is a creation of tailor-made training programme with clear guidelines that takes into account all general guidelines but also incorporates your food establishment specifics. New employees should still be provided a mentor, but their task should be to guide the employees through the programme and provide answers and clarifications when needed.

Providing clear and unbiased training is a firm basis for efficient customer service and problem-free communication between all personnel.

### **Slide 18 - Methods for Teaching and Guidance Compliance**

- E-Learning Platforms
- Lectures
- Mentorship
- Podcasts
- Seminars
- Video tutorials

### **Slide 19 - Comprehensive Training Program**

- Begin with a robust onboarding program for new employees.
- Include operational aspects of the job, restaurant vision and strategy, food waste initiatives you are part of.
- Ensure that every team member is aligned with your goals from day one.
- Provide opportunities for employees to upgrade their skills in customer service excellence, culinary techniques, organisation and management.
- Emphasize sustainability practices and their contributions to well being and economy.
- Foster staff loyalty and motivation with incentives and investing in their professional growth.
- Plan for necessary redundancy: the employees have to be able to cover other employees tasks in emergency.
- Cross train enough employees to enable smooth working of all shifts, as well as continued operation in case of unplanned absences.

### **Slide 20 - Operations Guidelines**

Food service employees are by law obliged to follow certain standards and procedures. Added to that, every establishment has their own procedures to follow least all operations turn into chaos.

For a clear and streamlined operations all the workers need clear guidelines they can follow and check if in doubt.

This guidelines should be provided to employees in some kind of written form: you can create a handbook, informational posters, chart procedure diagrams or electronic versions of those (in which case you need to provide the employees with a means for access to them).

Remember, the guidelines should be clear, concise and always available to all employees to consult if needed.

### **Slide 21 - Technology and Automatisation**

How can modern technology advances improve your operational procedures?

### **Slide 22 - Operations Management Automation Systems**

Use of ordering, payment, inventory, scheduling and management systems can save a lot of time and eliminate human errors that lead to waste of food and other resources.

There are tasks that can be completely automated and tasks that can be aided by appropriate software.

Plan for staff training time for the use of all new technical solutions.

### **Slide 23 - Training and Support**

It is of the uttermost importance to train all the staff that will be using your IT solutions in how to use it properly to use all of the desired options optimally. The best way to prepare new employees would be to provide a short but comprehensive standardised training course for the combination of the tech tools your establishment uses, combined with the written guidelines/chart of common operational procedures. Only so you can hope to maximise the usefulness of your investment in technology solutions.

Before choosing new technological solutions always check if the software covers all your basic (and possible additions) needs – for that you need to prepare a list of your demands and expectations to be able to compare your options properly.

Only choose technological solutions that offer reliable further tech support and plan for possible outages.

### **Slide 24 - Measure Performance**

Keep track of your food establishment performance: set goals, note the issues that impend the performance and seek solutions for them. Track of your restaurant's performance.

Compare the state of operations periodically and adjust actions to improve trends. You can print out charts measuring performance, to motivate the staff and keep all eyes on common goals.

If there's an improvement, continue and seek further improvements, and if there are no (or only small) positive changes (or even negative developments), revise your strategy and try new measures. Check for best practices in your area to find inspirations for improvements.

### **Slide 25 - Empowering the Employees**

Recognising good work leads to good work culture and positive work atmosphere as it reinforces positive behaviour patterns in recognised employees and provides motivation for the rest. Recognition can take form of performance bonuses, public recognition, Employee of the Week/Month awards... It also gently reinforces guidelines.

Encourage cooperation and teamwork: to build a cohesive team, all parts of it need to cooperate; any competition should be friendly and encourage reaching common goals rather than solely individual achievements.

Encourage improvements and innovation: foster environment where everybody can share ideas for improvements and contribution to sustainability goals and other problems, covering issues such as menu items, improvement of operation procedures, special promotions and actions, cooperation with outside stakeholders or customer service.

Team Building: Organize team-building activities that are not only fun but also reinforce your restaurant's values and the importance of teamwork. A cohesive team is more effective and provides better service.

Supportive Leadership: Cultivate a leadership style that is supportive and inclusive. Leaders should serve as mentors, guiding and inspiring their team, rather than ruling with an authoritarian approach.

By focusing on comprehensive training and genuine empowerment, you can build a highly skilled, motivated, and loyal team. This approach not only enhances the dining experience for your customers but also creates a positive and fulfilling work environment for your staff. Remember, your employees are the face of your restaurant; investing in their development is investing in the success of your business.

### **Slide 26 - Thank you!**

Thank you!