Module 4, Session 6

Slide 1 - Customer service and Communication: Session 6

Introduction to Customer service and Communication

Slide 2 - Session 6: Feedback Systems and Customer Participation

This session will cover the themes of Customer Feedback, SWOT Analysis, Preparing Measures and Countermeasures, Action Plan for Food Establishments, Evaluating Measures and Indicators of Food Waste.

Slide 3 - Feedback System Development and Complaint Management

In this session we will learn how to establish a feedback system that encourages customers to comment on the restaurant's offerings, how to manage complaints proficiently, how to facilitate continuous improvement and how to enhance customer satisfaction through effective feedback management.

Slide 4 - Importance of Customer Feedback

Customer feedback is essential to create a strategy for improvement of the working of your organisation and creating a better customer experience, as well as contribute to goals of sustainability by preventing or reducing future food waste. By listening to customer opinions you can tailor the experience inside your establishment to your target customers which should increase the traffic and revenue growth while complying to sustainability efforts by reducing food waste at all points of the process.

Only way for making good decision is on the basis of extensive and accurate information – feedback represents the input data and analysis the basis for action plan with measures to lessen food waste, which not only serves as a contribution to out common environment, but at a bottom line reduces costs of materials and services.

Slide 5 - Collecting Feedback from Customers

- You get feedback from your customers directly and indirectly.
- Direct feedback can be provided at 4 specific time points – before the meal (when ordering), during the meal (comments to the server) or directly after the meal, at the food serving establishment or location (comments to the server or manager). The fourth time point is after the meal, with time distance (usually in the for of reviews, comments on webpages and recommendations/warnings).
- Indirect feedback comes in the form of non verbal communication and customer behaviour - some obvious examples can be found the amount/types of the food left on the plate.

Picture source: https://www.freepik.com/free-photo/group-friends-eating-restaurant_3537420.htm#from_view=detail_alsolike

Slide 6 – Dealing with Negative Feedback

- Always stay polite – even if the other party isn't – remember, there can be many other people watching your responses!
- When dealing with negative reviews, it's important for restaurants to respond promptly and professionally.

- Offer to resolve the issue offline, and show genuine interest in improving the customer's experience.
- This approach can turn negative experiences into positive ones and often leads to better customer loyalty.

Slide 7 - Monitoring Feedback Information

- Customer feedback is always of help to the serving establishment, but its usefulness can increase greatly with proper use and monitoring of the information. It is important to find and establish ways to gather information, process it and analyse the data and find solution to the issues or ways of improvement that can work for your organisation.
- Gathered information can serve for establishment of protocols for front and back end staff which contribute to more sustainable and economically viable ways of food production and delivery.
- Monitoring of feedback should be continuous; material monitoring should include weighting and counting of food waste, but this should also take into account what percentage the food waste represents in the amount of dishes produced and in the amount of the ingredients used and amount of the ingredients in stock.

It is important to note that there is no one correct way of doing things – each establishment has to built their own guidelines, depending on their customer base, target customers, location, type of food establishment and the size of the operation, among other contributing factors.

Slide 8 - What do we want to know?

Some feedback information is provided by customers without prompts (usually in the form of complaints or compliments during or after the meal), however, to collect relevant data from a wide range of subjects you sometimes need to be more proactive. This can range from quick targeted questions from a server after a meal to requests for filling out surveys.
When preparing a questionnaire, we need to adhere to some basic principals:
1. Questions need to be clear and as brief as possible.
2. Use as few questions as possible to gather the required information.
3. Introduction needs to explain what the purpose of the survey is.
4. Thank your survey subjects (customers) at the end for their cooperation!

Slide 9 - Process of Gathering Feedback

FIND AREAS YOU COULD IMPROVE:
- What **problems** regarding production of food waste have been noticed by the staff?
- What kind of **suggestions/ complaints** do your customers make?

GATHER KEY ISSUES
- What **changes** are you prepared and able to make or suggest*?
- List **topics** related to the changes you can potentially make.

FORM TARGET QUESTIONS
- Questions should give you **precise** answers.
- Questions should cover the topics you identified in the previous step.

Slide 10 – Sample Questions for Surveys

MEAL CONTENT QUESTIONS:
- Were you satisfied with portion size?
- Would you like portion size options?
- Was there an ingredient you didn't like?
- Do you have any special dietary needs?

SERVING ORGANIZATION AND COMMUNICATION QUESTIONS:
- Was the meal provided to your expectations?
- Were you able to communicate your wishes and requirements to the server?
- Were there any issues with the food preparation?
- Were there any issues with waiting time?

QUESTION TOPICS:
1. Meal combination
2. Dish ingredients
3. Dish composition
4. Ingredient substitution
5. Meal sizes
6. Special diets (allergies, health&lifestyle and religious requirements)
7. Communication with the server
8. Accuracy of the expectations
9. Waiting times

Slide 11 – Feedback Collection at Institutions with Food Service

Feedback regarding food waste can possibly make an even bigger difference at establishments that serve limited menus for specific predetermined customers (kindergarten/school/university and work cafeterias, hospitals, adult care institutions and similar). Here close monitoring can help with future meal planning with goal of reducing waste.

Such establishments can use periodical surveys to monitor food consumption habits regarding types and quantity of food consumed and of course also measure food waste on daily bases. Servers are again the point of first collection of feedback data.

Easiest way to reduce food waste is to not prepare and serve food that won't be consumed with can only be insured with proper monitoring of customer feedback and this practice has been proven effective in many institutions that include food service.

Slide 12 - Circle of Feedback Evaluation

Methods of collecting feedback and ways of implementing changes can be different but hey all need to follow the following steps:

Step 1: GATHER INFORMATION
Step 2: COLLECT INFORMATION IN A DATABASE
Step 3: ANALYSE THE INFORMATION
Step 4: ESTABLISH NEW PROTOCOLS/GUIDELINES FOR KITCHEN AND SERVING STAFF
Step 5: EVALUATE THE RESULTS

And repeat…

Slide 13 – Ways of Collecting Customer Feedback

- There are several ways by which you can collect customer feedback; the primary way is in-person feedback (server). The primary contact person should be well trained to collect feedback in friendly and unobstructive way while still gathering essential information.
- Older way of collecting this information are comment books / complaint books (for more personal and direct approach you can offer customers comment cards at their

tables to gather information from the customers who prefer less direct communication, but are not well versed in the use of online communication channels.

- Online you can gather information on your own website, review websites or your SNS.
- For more detailed information you can also create a survey (there are several online sites that provide this service for free as well as of course paid versions) that focuses on specific information you want to collect (in this case covering likes and dislikes of the customer base).

Picture source: https://www.freepik.com/free-photo/group-business-executives-meeting_1006162.htm#fromView=search&page=1&position=31&uuid=6d2e7797-99fa-4c0e-9b9d-4a6035634125&query=communication

Slide 14 – Feedback at the Point of Service

- **Primary feedback collector** in the first 3 time points (before, during and immediately after the meal) is the server (or all persons involved in direct contact with the customer during this critical time – this can include other servers, busser, manager or others).
- Customers will provide the **information** about their **habits, needs and wants** – this is usually easy to track, as it is expressed verbally.
- During and after the meal customers will also provide information about their **subjective evaluation of compliance between their expectations and the service and meal provided** by your establishment. Servers can at this point encourage customers to provide additional feedback (of course without pressuring the customer).
- Customers can also be encouraged to **provide feedback later** – with links/QR codes to company website, SNS or review pages. Different customers prefer different ways of communicating, so all ways should be taken into account.

Picture source: https://www.freepik.com/free-photo/group-friends-eating-restaurant_3537419.htm#fromView=search&page=1&position=26&uuid=945d995c-c2da-45ef-ba15-0c222e280d6d&query=restaurant

Slide 15 – Feedback Online

Easiest ways to get direct feedback from customers is to follow your food establishment reviews posted online on third party websites present in your area/country. You should always be aware of the most commonly used review sites – this is not a static information, new sites appear constantly and old sites can fall out of trend and out of use. In EU you can follow google review site, tripadvisor, Yelp (in some areas) and others. Find out what review sites are popular with your customers!

Slide 16 – Feedback on Your Website or SNS

- Today it is almost compulsory for a food establishment to maintain a web presence: most common way of doing this is to present yourself through your own website, where customers can find basic information about your business, such as location, opening hours, menu, pictures of premises and dishes and other detail you want to highlight.
- A good way to get feedback is to include a section that will enable your customer comments that will be sent directly to you – this can be an open forum (everybody can see the comments) or a closed form (only you get the comments, possibly you repost selected reviews on your website as a promotion).
- Reviews can be either in form of rating (less informative, since they don't give you the information about specific positives or negatives) or text messages (those usually give more details and are very specific). Ratings are usually present on outside commercial

review sites, to enable ratings of different establishments; you shold be more interested in the text content since this can give you feedback about what you are doing right/wrong.

Picture source: https://stockcake.com/i/social-media-browsing_1469136_815036

Slide 17 – How to guide customers to provide feedback

on your website?

Make your feedback form/button easily accessible and easy to use (registration forms will discourage potential providers of feedback – if you want to limit spam messages consider tools such as captcha or signing with customers existing persona (like for example google or other web addresses).
Directly address the customers in a way that lets them know you will appreciate the feedback, if possible reply to the messages, but always stay polite and don't argue, even if the customers are argumentative themselves – negative may not be what you wish, but they will provide the data for you to assess and if needed, act upon.
Keep your website up to date: if the website looks active the customers will be encouraged to interact with it.
Use positive feedback to motivate your staff and promote your establishment online to attract new customers.

Picture source: https://www.freepik.com/free-photo/group-friends-eating-restaurant_3537413.htm#fromView=search&page=3&position=2&uuid=945d995c-c2da-45ef-ba15-0c222e280d6d&query=restaurant

Slide 18 - Online ordering Feedback

Online ordering is specific in a way that excludes customer-server contact. The contact person is a delivery driver, and in cases of contactless delivery a contact person doesn't even exist. So this excludes in-person feedback gathering.
On the other hand, we already have a limited profile of customers, who order online – they are at least partially digitally literate and adept at use of online tools which means we can use several forms of online communication channels: from e-mail communication to forms placed directly on the website (when not ordering through an intermediary).

Slide 19 - Advanced methods of Feedback Gathering

- **Review monitoring tools**: such tools are a short cut for aggregating information about your establishment that is publicly available on several different sites and greatly reduce the time needed for canvasing the online landscape.
- **Social listening tools**: a more technologically advanced way to discover existing customer feedback is to use a social listening tool. This are services that collect customer feedback on personal websites, review websites and SNS. Such tools can provide valuable data about your customer base which you can use to provide feedback (in case of public and review websites) and gather information for planning improvements.
- **Integrated review forms at the point of payment**: demands advanced (paid) technical solutions and may not yet be available at all locations.
- **Tablet Feedback Systems**: for establishments that use tablets for ordering it is easy to add/integrate a dedicated feedback system.

Slide 20 - SWOT Analysis

Customer feedback provides data about your customers likes and dislikes regarding food, service and other factors. Collecting and analysing this data can help find your weak points, and prepare measures for improvement and opportunities for growth.

SWOT analysis is a commonly used tool to assess external and internal factors that contribute to the current state of your business, both the positives and the negatives. You need to collect your organisation strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats – best way to do it is in collaboration with management, kitchen and serving staff. In our case it can also be made directly on the basis of your collected data from customer feedback, combined with the general knowledge of your organisation operating procedures and circumstances. A good analysis takes into account customer pool, target customers and their habits, your capacities (space, menu, size, staff number and distribution, local particularities and habits ...)

How to make a SWOT analysis?: link: https://www.canva.com/graphs/swot-analysis/

Slide 21 - SWOT TEMPLATE WITH SAMPLE DATA – MAKE YOUR OWN FOR YOUR

ESTABLISHMENT!

Swot analysis of a food establishment: First we need to look inside of our operation and find our advantages (strengths) and weaknesses. For example:

- • STRENGHTS:
- • Local ingredients
- • Popular well known brand dishes
- • Established brand
- • Experienced management staff and kitchen staff
- • …

- • WEAKNESESS:
- • Difficult parking
- • New less experienced serving staff
- • Limited space
- • Food garnish waste
- • …

Now we need to find external factors – issues we have no way to influence, but that do influence our business. Again we look for the positives that can make os grow (opportunities) and negatives that can inhibit us (threats). For example:

- • OPPORTUNITIES:
- • Collaboration with local community
- • Promotion on SNS
- • Seasonal dishes
- • …
- • THREATS:
- • Difficulties managing supply
- • Lowering of purchasing power
- • Stagnant customer base
- • …

Slide 22 - How to Improve?

Now check all the items in your SWOT analysis and prepare a plan with protocols and measures:
1. **Build on the positives** (grow the internal ones in the strengths sections and make use of the ones in the opportunities section)
2. **Devise effective countermeasures** for the negatives (you usually have more influence on the items in the weaknesses sections, but the ones in the threats sections also need affective countermeasures – they are the problems that can't be removed, they need to be mitigated to the best of your abilities to keep them in balance and usually need greater interventions if they influence your business too much.
3. **Prepare a plan** with guidelines for your managers and food establishment staff and share it through appropriate communication channels. If for example your customer complain about slow service, consider increasing the number of servers or implementing other organisational changes that will improve the process.

Slide 23 - Monitor Progress

It is of the uttermost importance to train all the staff that will be using 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 usefullness 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 - How to Incorporate Customer feedback into your Organisation?
- Menu changes: you can change sizes of portions, add/subtract dishes from the menu and add special offers as well as substitute ingredients; all this should only be done after careful evaluation of general feedback, not only after one bad comment.
- Dish modifications: offer variants of dishes of one ingredient proves to be divisive. You can also offer different combos instead of set menus (side dishes, salads).
- Staff Training: when customers point out issues with service, train your staff accordingly. This is especially important in the aspect of providing the correct information about served dishes, to enable customers to order to their wishes and in the aspect of transferring information about needed adaptations/substitutions from customer to the kitchen and informing customer about possible substitutions/changes (essential with allergies and special diets – if the food service establishment can't provide accommodation, they should share this with the customer in advance to prevent needless food waste and in case of allergies even endangering the customer).

Slide 25 - Don't forget!

- Soliciting feedback from customers should never feel too aggressive since this can prevent repeat business and prompt bad reviews.
- It's better to use several communication channels (online, in-person, written forms) to attract different types of customer groups (younger, older, more technologically literate, contact-avoidant…).
- In-person communication feedback should be collected in a way that enables further analysis (key points written down, forms filled by servers).

- You don't need feedback from each and every customer, but should take feedback that is provided into account and if needed incorporate measures to improve customer satisfaction and your organisation operations, including food waste reduction efforts.

Picture source: https://www.freepik.com/free-photo/young-waiter-writing-order-digital-tablet-while-working-pub_25743335.htm#fromView=search&page=1&position=35&uuid=18e1c8c6-e58a-48b0-bcc6-511328086829&query=waiters

Slide 26 – Thank you!

Thank you!