

Everyone is a Restaurant Critic and Reviewer: No Education Requirements Needed

I have been in the hospitality industry for about 45 years. Yes, that's a very long time, but it also makes me able to understand — and then leverage — the changes that have come about over those 45 or so years.



important — and to treat each and every guest that came in the door as if they were that food critic. If the staff did that, I would tell them, the day the “real” critic comes in the door, thousands of people will read the review, and voila — we would get busy, and I would get rich and famous. It was not an effective strategy, but it made sense at the time.

Food and service were the backbones to great restaurants when I was making sandwiches in my parents' deli, going out only on those special occasions like senior prom or mom's birthday. There were not many restaurants to choose from, so, depending on how good the food and service were on those occasions, we would either return and become “regulars,” or move on in hopes that a great new restaurant would open in the area. When it did, you could count on the review of the restaurant by the local newspaper food critic, and you would decide to go, or not to go, depending. That critic held a lot of weight in the restaurant community. A paid, trained, and professional writer, the critic was fairly consistent with appraisals and generally well respected.

When I started to manage and then own restaurants, it was key for me to communicate to my staff that food and service are critically

As time went on, and as technology took over (and continues to take over our realities), the idea of treating everyone as if they are a critic has become a reality. What happened? Yelp, Trip Advisor, the Internet, Facebook, Instagram, and cell phones happened! Indeed, everyone who comes into your restaurant is a restaurant critic and reviewer, and no training comes with the job! In fact, the written critique may not even be relevant, as the number of stars you get will determine whether readers even read the written review at all. If you are not getting three, four, or more stars, you may be disqualified from the competition. Fair? Right? It does not matter.

Food is why they come into your restaurant. Make sure it is fabulous.

After good food, it's all about service. The following is advice on

how to make the service and experience one that each of your critics/guests will enjoy, leading them to provide the rave reviews — and stars — you need. I should not have to convince you at this point that this is not optional. Here are the steps:



mandatory must-read, and must-follow, so that all decisions are made with a single voice, and there is no question about how you treat both your employees — and your guests.

IF YOU ARE NOT GETTING THREE, FOUR, OR MORE STARS, YOU MAY BE DISQUALIFIED FROM THE COMPETITION.

3. **In the second manual, the Service Training and Reference Manual, follow the train of thought pertaining to core values, mission, and culture.** Detail every aspect of how each and every employee (they are ALL service staff), should be treating every single guest, without exception, and then with how they follow through.

1. **Define yourself.** On paper. What are your core values? What do you WANT your culture to look and feel like? What is your mission each and every day in your business? This will be the first few pages in your new manuals, and you will have two of them.
2. **Define the roles that you expect of yourself and your managers.** This will be the next few pages of what I call the Management Training and Reference Manual. BE VERY SPECIFIC. Make this a compelling and

Make no mistake, all of this is worthless if training, coaching, regular meetings, and consistent enforcement are not part of your defined culture. If you DO define, train, coach, and enforce, then the critics become guests, and then the guests become your friends. And that, my friends, is the end game. Do not delay. The outline is here.

Let me know if I can help in any way...and happy summer!

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