

# HOW TO STRIVE FOR A HIGH HOSPITALITY IMAGE

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Are YOU and your employees subconsciously destroying your Hospitality Image? You may think that food and drink are your only products, but the social amenities and appearance of your facilities are products vital to the lasting hospitality image you create in your customer's mind.

Management is largely responsible for employee moods. They, in turn, account for the dining enjoyment of your patrons. The attention, service and quality they provide your customers is worth thousands of dollars you'd have to spend in merchandising and advertising to bring these same people through your front door and to return again.

A few weeks ago, I directed the opening of the Music Mill in Indianapolis, Indiana. This was a 120 seat contemporary casual restaurant with a bar appealing to the 24 to 50 aged crowd who enjoy tasty foods and beverages served with a flair and style at reasonable prices. My opening concept was to hire a general manager who was adept at training both kitchen and dining room staffs and motivating them from that point onward. To achieve this, GEC Consultants contributed to the hiring and pre-opening training of fifty local men and women during a three week period prior to opening day.

I developed the following list of circumstances that I labeled "**35 ways to help the new owners to go broke quickly.**" I explained to them that if a guest in this foodservice establishment encountered these attitudes and activities exhibited by employees and management toward them, they would be potential victims of what we may call "**negative hospitality.**"

Does this list seem familiar?

1. Parking lot is not neat, clean or free from weather related impediments.
2. No one to greet or seat guests properly.
3. Reservations not honored promptly.
4. Patrons are left to wait too long for presentation of the guest check.
5. Guests are not thanked when departing and are not invited to return.
6. Customer complaints are ignored or handled with indifference.
7. Dining room personnel congregate in the bar pick-up or at host station.
8. Sloppy appearance of service personnel.
9. Service people operating with frowns and poor attitudes.
10. Servers ill informed about the menu items.
11. Employees griping about lack of adequate supplies.
12. Employees chew gum and/or smoke in public view.
13. Kitchen employees take meal breaks in conspicuous places in dining room.
14. Kitchen is out of the specials at an early hour.
15. Cold food served "warm" and hot food delivered "cold."
16. Food is prepared incorrectly, not as ordered.
17. Food arrives too fast or too slowly.
18. Guests at the same table do not receive their order at the same time.
19. Food lacks "eye appeal."
20. Quality of the food served is erratic.
21. No person in charge of expediting food from the kitchen is visible to servers.
22. Over-familiarity by servers with guests and too much conversation.
23. Noises and smells coming from the kitchen that irritate patrons.
24. The comfort of guests are not observed using common sense.
25. Servers are guilty of "inattention" and disappear when needed.
26. Employees engage in "high jinks" among themselves in public spaces.
27. Employees fail to recognize guests as individuals.

28. "Carry-out" food is poorly packaged and not checked for accuracy.
29. Promotional materials are false or misleading.
30. Booths, tables and chairs are not comfortable or are in poor repair.
31. Public spaces show evidence of accumulated dirt.
32. Unkempt and poorly supplied washrooms.
33. Silverware spotted or improperly washed.
34. Glassware spotted or improperly washed
35. No apparent control figure supervising the dining room.

Of course any of these problems may occur in your establishment. Try to avoid them by good planning, training and supervision. Train every worker that meets the public in how to handle complaints should they actually arise, and what to do to prevent the customer from forming a bad impression of your restaurant.

Good communications is the key to proper instruction which starts with yourself, other management and supervisors who must become sensitive to any customer unhappiness. Keep everyone alert to avoid the "35 problems" and to strive to solve problems promptly, handle complaints without disturbing other guests, be consistent in the techniques used in handling complaints, and strive to keep the customer's good will.

If your management team is trained to be sensitive to the needs of your customers and everyone in your restaurant knows what to do when problems arise, you can successfully combat the conditions which can lead to "negative hospitality" imagery in the minds of your customers.

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