

Cross Training

How much can you stand to win?



Many people have heard of cross training (specifically in sports), but organizations and companies use cross training as part of their cost saving measures. Cross training is a benefit to all, especially in the restaurant environment. Although money is big driver, this is by far not the only benefit. Before you throw in the towel because of the all the work, consider the impact on your bottom line. Cross training helps in financial ways with having staff know duties outside of their job description.

A restaurateur that utilizes cross training, has the benefit of running a smooth operation even if left short staffed due to the last-minute phone call on a Saturday night when fully booked, only a few hours



before show time. If your server calls in sick, then perhaps the other servers can split the section and things can be readjusted. If you only have one bartender scheduled and he or she calls in sick, you are in a pickle. A cross-trained server can take the bar and the sections could still be split. Same goes for a hostess, busser, and kitchen staff. The manager on duty may have to lend a hand and ensure the extra workload on everyone does not reflect in the service provided.

Trying to find a last-minute replacement can be a nightmare, and even if by some type of miracle, you manage to call someone in, they then feel like they are owed a favour. Organizations use the technique of cross training to not be caught short staffed, increase scheduling flexibility, and retain a tighter budget. Running with a lean staff means that someone can jump in during busy times to provide a consistent level of service.

Employees often leave because of lack of opportunity to move up. Cross training provides an opportunity for employees to keep learning and growing. The team feels more invested and becomes more engaged which boosts staff retention. The turnover rate and constant re-

training is something this industry has accepted as part of the deal. Millennials state that lack of opportunity is the number 2 reason they leave an establishment. Although not all restaurants can offer the ability for staff to move up the ranks, cross training can be a substitute. This shows the employee that they are valued and trusted while promoting growth. Most employees see the value in being crossed trained (as this grows their resume), but it can certainly be something that is mentioned as well. Employees are the bloodline of restaurants and deserve the opportunity to grow their craft and become better professionals. When employees are valued, it shows in their work which is then transferred to the customer.

Consistency in service regardless of circumstances drives revenues. Customers are generally not interested that a restaurateur is having a hard time hiring or retaining staff. They are there for an experience. If the experience is not up to par, the cost is then eaten by the restaurant. Costs such as using their buying power elsewhere and word of mouth, of course. The cost of one unsatisfied customer is extremely high. Studies have shown that it costs 12x more to get a customer back than retain one. Since it is the customer who pays all our bills, it is important to be able to think quick on our feet when confronted with a situation (such as the example above on a Saturday night). Even regulars will stop coming if the service slips or they have just one bad experience after many great ones. Consistency creates regulars and their buying power is huge. Being able to be flexible in precarious situations minimizes the damaging effects of staff shortages. This is a win-win-win situation. The restaurant, staff, and customers reap the benefits. The only real question is: How much can you stand to win?



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