

RESTAURANT MANAGEMENT 101

How to be a confident and capable restaurant manager

By Kevin Moll

What does the word “Management” mean? Look around the Internet and you’ll find many varying definitions. Here’s three examples of what some have said:

- “The activity of getting things done with the aid of people and other resources.”
- “Effective utilization and coordination of resources such as capital, materials, and labor to achieve defined objectives with maximum efficiency.”
- “The process of getting activities completed efficiently with and through other people including the process of setting and achieving goals through the execution of five basic management functions: planning, organizing, staffing, directing, and controlling; that utilize human, financial, and material resources.”

When you boil these three definitions down and summarize, as a restaurant manager you simply must produce results and get the work done! We have a proven, three-step process of helping managers enjoy results as detailed below:

STEP ONE - YOU MUST GAIN CONTROL OVER YOUR OWN TIME AND ACTIVITIES FIRST

A study conducted several years ago found that the average restaurant manager has 64 unplanned interruptions during the course of a day. This doesn’t surprise any seasoned restaurant manager, but if you’re new to the industry or a first-time manager, this means that early in the game of management, you’ll need to take firm reins over your valuable time!

Your FIRST responsibility as a manager is to hold yourself accountable for your own time and I had to learn this lesson the hard way. As a young manager many years ago, I was to attend a meeting with my General Manager, Dave Dalmadge, at 4PM on a day that I was scheduled off. When that day arrived, I was many miles away from the restaurant, enjoying my day off. About 4:15, I received a call from Dave and he simply said to me, “We had a meeting scheduled for 4PM today and you’re not here. I allocated my time for you, so get here as soon as you can” and he hung up.

An hour later, I walked into his office and after profusely apologizing, I said, “Dave, I’ve always tried to remember every meeting and it’s pretty rare that I forget commitments. How do you seem to remember everything?” He responded by pulling out a little bound book from his pocket. On the cover of the little book were the words, “Day Timer” and he then showed me that he wrote his schedule and every schedule commitment he had made in the book. He said to me, “Kevin, get this system, use it every day, and you’ll

never forget anything that's important." I eagerly ordered the 12 little monthly booklets and immediately found after using it just a short time that I:

1. ...was never later for another meeting.
2. ...never forgot anyone's birthday (because I plugged them in for the entire year in the 12 little calendars).
3. ...had less stress because I could see what events were coming up and I had plenty of time to prepare.
4. ...had a written record of what had happened and what I accomplished.
5. ...could integrate my personal and professional scheduled activities into one convenient spot.
6. ...was no longer embarrassed by my own lack of accountability.
7. ...started producing real results both at work and in my own personal life!

I'll always be thankful to Dave for the singular most important restaurant, and life lesson he taught me – how to hold myself accountable and how to control my own schedule. Suddenly and with very little work on my own, I began doing the right thing at the right time!

Even though this event happened over 35 years ago, I still use a calendar. The one I use now is a small, 12-month, "At-a-Glance" calendar that accompanies me wherever I go. Maybe a little old school compared to using a phone or Outlook calendar, but it's a system that works for me, especially because I can put tickets and other paperwork into that calendar. Whatever system you decide to use, you simply must take the responsibility for being personally accountable for your own time management because THIS is where good management skills begin.

Good managers do the right thing at the right time, the right way

STEP TWO – LEARN AND USE THE 10 CHARACTERISTICS OF TODAY'S MODERN MANAGERS

The second step of learning how to be a confident and capable manager means that you know and learn what the characteristics of top-performing managers are! Below are 10 top factors that will directly impact your ability to be a top performer!

1. **BE ACCOUNTABLE.** Unless you take responsibility for being on time, completing tasks and never being late, you'll never be accountable. Use a good calendar system and you'll find that you'll instantly be more accountable!
2. **LEAD BY EXAMPLE.** If a napkin falls on the floor, pick it up. Dress the part – be sharp, groomed and clean. Don't chew gum. Don't yell. Don't embarrass others publically. Just know that all eyes are on you and whatever YOU do will be acceptable in the eyes of your employees. Hold yourself to a high standard and set the pace and keep high standards.
3. **INSURE THAT YOUR PEOPLE SUCCEED.** Today's leaders don't tell their employees to "Jump." They jump WITH their employees, creating a mentality of working, "side by side" with them.
4. **BE COMPETENT.** Your ability to do everything in the restaurant builds your confidence. You as a manager should be able to jump in and temporarily help in any area that gets slammed. You should aspire to know as much or more than your employees about how every job is done. If you don't know how to do something, learn it! Competence builds confidence. You will quickly find that confidence inspires trust from your team, so don't be afraid to get your hands dirty!

5. LEAD OTHERS TO A MUTUAL ATTAINABLE GOAL. Every person wants to know what direction the team is headed and what their role is. Articulate the goal, the roles, the standards, benchmarks and key achievements and keep everyone informed! This process helps to promote and develop a sense of transparency in your management style which is another desirable trait of a good leader.
6. CONSTANTLY TRAIN. Norman Brinker, the founder of many restaurant concepts including Chili's had a saying that's always stuck with me and I've seen it proven over the years. "You are paid on your profits and promoted by your people." This means that people development (this means training) needs to take place all the time. Every shift you work is 100% training time for everyone on your team and every moment is a training opportunity.
7. LISTEN AND COMMUNICATE. There's a school of thought that says that if you listen well, you are a good conversationalist! Work on your ability to clearly communicate clearly, listen closely and don't tolerate rumors.
8. BE FAIR AND BE EVEN WITH EVERYONE AND DON'T FRATERNIZE. In order to treat your employees fairly and evenly across the board, this means you can't find yourself in compromising situations. Don't find yourself out late at night with people you're responsible for managing on a daily basis because you'll quickly find that your ability to manage them will be compromised unnecessarily.
9. EXPRESS EMPATHY AND BE WARM & APPROACHABLE. If you want to be an effective manager, you better understand what perspective your employees are coming from when they want to talk with you. If you're a good listener, are warm and approachable, and try to really understand what's being said, these qualities will take you far in your management journey.
10. BE MATURE. This means be honest and trustworthy, don't spread secrets or rumors, don't divulge confidential information, don't speak negatively of others and don't ever find yourself in a suspicious situation. Integrity in this business means everything.

STEP THREE – USE THE RIGHT TOOLS

The third step of learning how to be a confident and capable manager means that you know how to use the tools that are appropriate for your work. Fact of the matter is that you can be a highly qualified manager with all of the 10 traits we've detailed earlier, but if you're not using the right tools for the job, you won't be able to be productive. If you work in a multi-unit environment, many of the tools you'll need will be provided. If you work in a single-unit or small company environment, you may need to develop your own tools. What are some of these tools?

1. MBWA – MANAGEMENT BY WALKING AROUND. "You can expect what you inspect" is very true. If you don't know what's going on, all the time, everywhere on premise, conceptually you're out of control. I've known managers that walk a figure 8 loop around the premise. I know of others that set an alarm and walk the interior interior and exterior premise every 20 minutes. Whatever your preference is, you simply need to everywhere, all the time. This is why being a high performing restaurant manager is a job for Superman and Superwoman!
2. VIDEO CAMERAS. We have a client that has four restaurants and in each location, there's 12 cameras throughout the premise. In the office, there's a bank of four huge television screens, and on each screen, there's 12 camera views. The company Owner is able to view activities in 12 perspectives in four locations...48 views all at the same time. When he sees something that needs

to be addressed, he simply picks up the phone and calls the appropriate manager in that particular restaurant. His system of management can be referred to as MBSD – Management by sitting down. This is rarely the right tool to use by most managers, but it worked for him!

3. COMMUNICATION TOOLS. Almost every restaurant today has a management log. This insures that every shift can communicate the with shift leaders that come in next. Continuity of the flow of information is maintained. Restaurants without logbooks, or managers that don't use the logbook are all at a disadvantage.
4. RESTAURANT SYSTEMS. This includes the proper usage of temperature logs, order guides, employee schedules, and all of the other systems used in a restaurant.
5. TECHNOLOGY. The manager that tries to avoid using the functions that today's point of sale systems can provide is at a disadvantage. Sales mix, labor reports, sales volume, guest database, inventory, costing tools and many others are available for your use to help you run a profitable shift and operation. Wise managers will become quickly proficient with the POS system in your restaurant.
6. CHECKLISTS. This is the most effective way to insure that the things that need to happen, actually DO happen. All positions within a restaurant should have at a minimum, an opening and closing checklist. In the kitchen, multiple checklists are used for prep (par and build-to levels), ordering (part and build-to levels) and many others. If you're constantly running out of products, it may be that the correct checklist may not be in use! Checklists are only effective if they're used. (Expect what you inspect) Insure that you as a manager follow-up to insure that all checklists are being used and completed properly.
7. A MANAGEMENT SYSTEM. Last but not least includes a regular system of how to run a shift. Many managers don't know what they are supposed to do at what time! As the next page illustrates, certain management functions are to be accomplished during certain times. Make your life easier and divide the day into chunks that you can control. Use the chart as a guideline for what you should be doing and when!

IMPORTANT:

One of the most important aspects of running a restaurant is consistency. Not only in food and beverages but for you as a manager, consistency means your ability to consistency run a great shift. This does not happen by accident. It's by using the tools, the right way, all the time.