

Restaurant Systems - What they are and why it matters

We've all seen the "good" operators – you know, the ones that always seem to have a balanced life, a well managed business, and they always seem to know exactly what's going on. Upon further examination, the output of their restaurant is very consistent, professionally served, and they enjoy the fruits of their labor in the form of meaningful profit, happy employees and many regular patrons.



Don't think for a moment that they're the "lucky" ones among us. They are the "focused" ones who understand the need for well designed restaurant systems. Many wise independent owners and almost every restaurant chain have learned the importance of quality systems from top to bottom. In fact, growing from one location to two or more is virtually impossible without duplicating the systems found in the original location.

What exactly are restaurant systems? As consultants, we define them as, "Certain actions completed in an orderly sequence to achieve consistent results and outcomes." Practically speaking, the less dependence a business has on its owner, the better the systems. The net result is an owner who is in control that can actually spend time working on developing the business instead of getting caught up in the day-to-day fire fighting that we commonly see, or worse, an owner that has to work a job function within the restaurant.

An owner that has the time to oversee, direct, strategize and guide the business to be the best it can be is the desirable goal for most, so outlined below are the various systems and their components. Depending on your particular type of business, not all will apply, or perhaps you may even add a few of your own to the somewhat exhaustive lists below.

ADMINISTRATION

This includes: Trained management that knows every job function, organized file keeping/records, permits, licensing, inventories, budgeting, utilized financial reporting including timely P&L's and balance sheets, point of sale usage/programming, facility management including repair authorizations, maintenance, equipment purchasing, energy management, record keeping, deposits, cash accountability, approving vendors, approval/coding of invoices and expenses, employee schedule creation, maintaining budget and spending, fire/safety and security procedures, computer and other hardware backups and upkeep, alcohol security and management, front and back of the house oversight, communication with ownership and employees, china/glass/silverware breakage and controls, checklist utilization for all

routine functions including setup, breakdown and during service, leadership/enforcement of all policies and procedures within the restaurant.

PERSONNEL AND HUMAN RESOURCES

This includes: Employee recruitment, selection, the interview process, compensation, orientation process, employee policy manual, uniforms, structured benefits, methods of discipline, organized employee files,



job descriptions, organizational chart, training methods, training materials, training standards, regular employee meetings and teamwork, quality scheduling, timekeeping and recording, payroll management, tracking of productivity, performance feedback, retention and promotion, defined advancement opportunities and the steps to advancement.

PRODUCTS/CULINARY

This includes: defined product specifications for every item, management approved vendors, inventory and ordering sheets, defined order/delivery days and times, product prices and comparisons, recipe books, plate costs, plate specifications, food pictures, product labeling dating and rotation, established par levels of inventory, bulk buying opportunities, quality vendor relationships, receiving policies, invoice check-off and processing, invoice handling and payment (if COD), waste controls, portion controls, prep lists, checklist usage, special items, timely inventories, staff training on product management, sanitation training and certification.

BAR

Drink price categories, spills and comps, waste, portion training, recipes, prep, product ordering and receiving (management), garnishes, glassware, cleaning, checklist usage payment processing, steps of service, food service process, entertainment.

FRONT OF HOUSE

Steps of service, loyalty programs, POS training, server training, beverage handling, handling tables, reservation system, appearance and cleanliness, tabletops, checklist usage, table tents, menus, flowers/decorations, children, large parties, insuring guest satisfaction, coupons/discounts/incentives, holiday planning.

MARKETING

Market position, competition, vision, promotions, advertising, 12-month planning calendar, special events, public relations, community involvement, social media, web site, company image/branding, customer acquisition, guest engagement, database management.

The six categories above look a little like job descriptions for six departments within a business, don't they? To get your restaurant on track to having all systems up and running, a good place to begin is with an organizational chart and job descriptions for everyone in the business. Using the categories above, make sure that you have assigned every single responsibility out, and then make sure that the person responsible for acting on these has the authority, tools and support they need to get the job done.

Getting these responsibilities assigned and in place effectively requires that as an owner, you help your team prioritize the things that are most important to your operation.

Creating and implementing effective restaurant systems requires focus, time and dedicated effort to insure the processes are all "closed loops" with clear responsibility for accomplishing the tasks. For some restaurants, it may take a couple of months to pull the above systems together. For others, it may take years. We've had clients that have been open for 40 years or more that are just recently implementing the above systems into their business, so it's never too late to get a great start!

Attracting more patrons to your well-run business is an investment that will pay off. For owners that value their time, their quality of life and the well-being of their business, there's nothing like having a "well-oiled machine" to produce the desired outcomes – consistently.

If you would like help with getting your restaurant operating properly and profitably, please contact:

Mr. Kevin Moll, President
Restaurant Consulting Services, Inc.
2833 S. Colorado Blvd. Denver, Colorado 80222 USA
Office Main: 720-363-0164 Fax: 303-691-0555
<http://www.restaurantconsultingservices.com>

Restaurant Systems - What they are and why it matters