

PROFILE OF A HIGH PERFORMANCE RESTAURATEUR

“Kevin, you can’t run that happy hour promotion without putting your license in jeopardy.” (Bad advice from a liquor attorney – confirmed by the liquor code regulations book).

“Kevin, you can’t run that promotion, you’ll go broke.” (Bad advice from an accountant who didn’t know anything about liquor cost or liquor management).

It was 1989, and I owned a restaurant that was not in a great location – located on a one-way street into Denver. During the evening rush hour, people were headed out of town and not past the business. Because of this and to build happy hour and the subsequent dinner business, I needed a powerful promotion...actually, it needed to be a blockbuster. After a lot of brainstorming, I came up with the idea that hardly anyone could pass up; a 50 cent happy hour that would run from 5PM – 6PM only, Monday thru Friday. I mean, it’s a rare person who doesn’t like alcohol when it’s on sale!

My plan was to purchase inexpensive beer, wine and well brands and charge the costs to the promotions line on my P&L. I figured that by doing this, it wouldn’t impact my liquor cost, it would replace my conventional advertising, and a full house at happy hour would seed the place for dinner – which it effectively did.

Despite the naysayers (that I parted ways with shortly thereafter), this highly successful promotion ended up having very long legs and it gave me and my staff the opportunity to make a lot of money. Truth be told, I wouldn’t have traded that experience for the world. Know why? Because I learned firsthand that absolutely anyone is capable of being a high performance operator and I’ll tell you why in just a minute.

Now, 28 years later and much more than a casual observer in the restaurant/foodservice industry, I’ve become fascinated with the concept of high or exceptional performance and how it truly can impact every single person in this industry...even including those that are just getting into the business for the first time. Here’s how; high performance is not about a business or how it operates. It’s 100% about you as a person. It’s the high goals, ideals and standards you set for yourself as a person first, and these traits and hopefully exceptional results will then follow you into any position within a business.

What exactly is high performance from a restaurant perspective? I’ll share a few thoughts:

1. **You realize that the business, if you own it, is actually a financial tool that should serve you.** This realization brings along with it a whole new set of responsibilities; your employees, your vendors, your partners if any, and for your brand and for yourself. You owe it to yourself to maximize its performance in every possible way.
2. **High performance is the mental capacity and toughness to keep going when everyone says don’t, you can’t, you shouldn’t, it won’t work or you’ll fail.** Those words almost always get a high performance restaurateur fired up as they love a good challenge, just like I had with my restaurant many years ago.

At the core, high performance restaurateurs are winners and will likely overcome any odds, regardless of what anyone else says. Isn't this the toughest business in the world? Get past a failing or struggling restaurant and by the time you're done, you'll have learned a thing or two about money, about people, and most assuredly, about yourself.

3. **If you are an employee on any level, you owe your employer 100% of your loyalty, effort and honesty.** You're taking the paycheck, so do your best without fail, and opportunity is sure to find you. High performance is not about the position, it's about the person!
4. **It's the knowledge that your business is only as efficient as the systems you have in place.** Because you know this, you are constantly implementing new systems and procedures so your people no longer are dependent on you...you've given them structure with which they can perform their tasks without you. Great job! You have now allowed your people the opportunity to grow, independent of your daily oversight. You now have the freedom to work ON your business instead of IN it. We've all heard that before right?
5. **Because of the systems and empowered people you have in place, your business should be providing substantial profit to fuel additional growth and the desires of the owner(s).** More locations, more giving to causes that matter to you, more pay to your employees, whatever. Profit is the lifeblood of the business and you should have it in abundance.
6. **High performance is substantially about human interaction and working with others to achieve mutual goals - the proverbial win/win.** To illustrate the importance and interdependence of working with others, the performance wheel illustrated here has four primary drivers: Group Processes, Communication, Contribution and Interactions. You know that working with others requires knowledge and training so you strive to develop exceptional skills in this area.



Recently, my firm had the opportunity to conceptualize a concept and then craft a business plan for a new large restaurant. Our Client, a successful business person with previous ventures had never owned a restaurant before. In talking with him, it became immediately clear to me that he was already a high performance restaurateur...he just needed a restaurant! He had the mental toughness, outstanding interpersonal skills, financial seasoning and a deep desire to be successful in the foodservice business. He's a joy to work with and I'm confident that he will do exceptionally well!

Let me stress that anyone can be a high performer. An entry-level dishwasher with a strong desire to excel can succeed and I've seen, and maybe you have also, situations like this many times, provided that the coaching, resources and career path are all made available.

Those of us that have been in the business for a while know what a breath of “fresh air” an energetic new team-member can bring to the business. Eager to learn and willing to jump in and help without ever being asked, this is the type of high performer that, with mentorship, direction and opportunity can become a future GM or more!

Isn't it time we all took a deep breath, admitted to ourselves that maybe it's about time to crank up our own performance meter and strive for a higher level of personal and professional success? If we're all still working, why not make it as worthwhile as we can?

Allow me to subtly mention, “Restaurant Operations Weekly” as an outstanding emailed resource. I like to think of it as rocket fuel for newbies and for established operators, it's a proven guide for running a more profitable, smooth-running business. You'll find information, articles and restaurant consulting insights here that you won't find anywhere else. This is the “good stuff” that will help you produce exceptional results...AND IT'S FREE!

Thanks for reading, and a quick reminder that we're all here to serve others to the best of our ability. By giving in abundance, we will receive the same. I hope this has been helpful.

About the Author:

Kevin Moll is the President of Denver-based, Restaurant Consulting Services, Inc. Known as the restaurant startup and troubleshooting experts, our clients know that we can solve almost any restaurant problem and that we will protect them from the harsh realities of the business. We specialize in working with new and established restaurant owners of all sizes and types nationwide. No project is too large or too small, and we treat every client like they're our only one. Starting a new restaurant or wish to improve your current operation? Your call or e-mail is always welcome.

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