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Restaurant Operations Weekly[™]

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Welcome to the 15th issue of Restaurant Operations Weekly

Dear Friend,

My daughter got married this past weekend and things have been busy for the Moll family. Emily and her new husband will be living only 60 short miles away and as my son Jared got married about 18 months ago, my wife and I are now empty-nesters. Time passes and I suppose this is just another phase in our lives. We all have these planned or unplanned types of phases...a marriage, the purchase of a home, the opening or sale of a business, a death of a loved one or other major event...and these force us to look at our lives sometimes in a new light. Maybe Bob Seger's 1973 hit, "[Turn the Page](#)" applies?

What's changed recently in your life? One thing that I know that applies equally to every one of us is that in order to take care of others, you have to take care of yourself first. Time away to refresh your batteries, travel to new places to expand your world view, maybe even something as simple as tending a garden. Whatever it is my friend, be sure to take a step back every once in a while and take time to "*smell the roses.*"

OK - break time is over, let's get started...

HUMAN RESOURCES

"The Good Fire"

Many years ago, I had a dishwasher who did a great job keeping the dishroom clean. Spotless drain tables, clean floor and he happily jumped in for any task he was asked to do. Sounds like a great hire huh?

There was just one little problem. Every time a server brought back dirty glasses and dishes from the dining room, he would absolutely light up at them for getting his area "dirty." It got to a point where the servers were hesitant to even clear their tables!

One evening, we had a line out the door, and no kidding, more than half of the dining room tables were dirty with dishes, glass and silverware still on them. This young man was ruining what could have been a great night for business!

Clearly his situation was out of control. I instructed every server to clear their tables and get the dishes back to the dishroom, told the line cooks that they'd be busy soon, and then I jumped in and helped him get past the log-jam of dirty dishes that were coming in. This was a classic "coachable moment" as my friend Matt says.

After about 15 or so minutes, it became clear to me that he did not conceptually grasp the concept of his job, and not wanting to lose his enthusiasm, the next day I reassigned him to another part of the kitchen, but with little success. Unfortunately, it was time to move a different direction.

The day after that, I decided to meet him out in the employee parking area when he arrived for his shift. He pulled in on a red Honda dirt bike and after a little motorcycle chat, I said to him, "If you could be doing anything you wanted to right now instead of washing dishes or working in the kitchen, what would you want to do?" and he replied, "I'd really like to work on small engine repair" so my response to him was, "OK - tell you what. I'm going to get your shifts covered and from now on, you go do what makes you happy and I really support you!"

He just stood there for a few seconds, gave me a big hug and said, "I didn't want to let you down, and I will never forget this moment!" and off he rode. I never saw him again, but I know he's happy repairing engines someplace.

There's good fires (terminations) and bad fires, but a termination done the right way creates a win/win and is a real tribute to the manager who can execute this properly.

Have a problem employee? Can't reassign him/her to another position somewhere in the business? Work hard to make the separation rewarding and "freeing" for the employee and better for your business at the same time.

Obviously the example above resulted in a good outcome. Not every "fire" will be a "good one" and in many cases there are extenuating circumstances that you must carefully consider - it may be a good investment to obtain legal advice in sensitive situations prior to taking action.

SALES BUILDING

"Today is June 19, [National Martini Day](#)"

Interesting insights about the Martini:

1. A classic martini is gin or vodka, a splash of dry vermouth (French-white) and an olive or a lemon twist garnish.
2. Italian immigrant bartender Martini di Arma di Taggia in New York City is said to have invented the drink around World War I
3. If a Martini is shaken it is said to be 'bruised' or watered down. Many say stirring the ice will help chill without adding water to the mixture.
4. Many think the martini is derived from a British-made rifle called a Martini & Henry used by the English army 1870's because of its 'kick'.
5. It is said that John D. Rockefeller 'brought the Martini to Wall Street' thus establishing the '3 martini lunch'

WHAT ELSE HAPPENED ON THIS DAY IN HISTORY?

- **1912** The United States government adopted an 8-hour work day.
- **1931** The first commercial doors operated by a photoelectric cell were installed on the swinging doors between the kitchen and dining room of Wilcox's Pier Restaurant in West Haven, Connecticut.
- **1941** General Mills introduced 'Cheerioats.' The name was changed to 'Cheerios' in 1945.
- **1978** Garfield, the lasagna eating cat was born. He was brought into this world by cartoonist Jim Davis.
- **1987** Ben & Jerry Ice Cream introduced a new Ice Cream flavor, Cherry Garcia.

Why not run a martini promotion tonight, and every guest that orders one gets some complimentary "Martini History" along with it! It's much more fun to eat and drink when your guests know about the source or origin of what they're enjoying. What other local business will give them this information?

In today's competitive environment, you need to differentiate anywhere you can.

This style of promotion take almost no effort, is enjoyable for your guests and staff alike and is easy for you to monetize. Cheers!

For more food holiday ideas, [here's the link to the monthly calendar](#)



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FEATURE ARTICLE

"How Comfortable Is Your Restaurant?"

A few nights ago, I stopped in to visit a new Italian Bistro near my office. Warm lighting, floor-to-ceiling windows, relaxing ceiling fans, a well-designed and visually inviting bar area, soft music, wonderful aromas coming from the open kitchen and very comfortable seating were just a few of the things that encouraged me to stay a little longer than I had anticipated.

This led me to contemplate the impact and importance of what "comfort" and "atmosphere" mean to a restaurant owner and guests. First, what *ARE* the features that create that sense of "comfort?" According to some [experts](#),

there are essentially seven areas that when properly combined, create this desired sense. They are:

- **Lighting.** It's important to use the right type in the right areas. **Ambient** lighting helps set a mood and it makes guests feel comfortable. **Accent** lighting draws attention, and **task** lighting is used in work spaces.
- **Color.** This plays a large role in how people feel and behave in a space and they influence space perception. Pastel colors can enlarge a small space while dark warm colors can shrink a space. Bright and bold primary colors when combined with bright lighting encourage quick turnover. The color white neutralizes food colors - it makes them less appetizing and it causes glare, so white should always be avoided. The impact of other colors: Black/Gold = power. Brown = comfortable. Red and orange stimulate appetite. Green induces thirst. Yellow elicits warmth and well-being and is great in breakfast places. Blue is not a food color, so use it carefully and in smart combinations.
- **Sound.** When it's too loud, people can't hear each other, and when it's too quiet, others can hear private conversations. In most environments, the ideal volume is when people can talk and hear each other....they'll also stay longer and spend more. Bar areas should be louder than dining areas and the music style should match the concept.
- **Scent.** Research shows that custom scents can increase sales by 300%, so it's no wonder that so many retail establishments rely on scents to influence customers. Key scents to consider in your business may include: Baked bread = homey/warm/inviting. Vanilla = friendly. Lavender = peaceful, reduces depression. Cotton = casual, playful. Citrus = fresh and energizing. Pine = outdoorsy, happy, soothing.
- **Comfortable furniture.** It's surprising how many restaurants use uncomfortable furniture, and it's a critical component of comfort. Fact is, comfortable furniture translates into comfortable guests who end up staying longer and spending more.
- **Temperature and ventilation.** Ever go into a restaurant and when you left, your clothing smelled like food? Nobody likes this and as kitchens produce heat, smoke and smells, proper ventilation and temperature in your business is very important. A restaurant should not be "cold" in the summertime due to the A/C being held on 65 degrees because its hot outside. Comfort is defined by the comfort of your guests...not the comfort of the working staff members.
- **Seating and spacing.** Every table should be a "good table" and as people are protective of their space, booths are the most popular seats in most restaurants. Patrons in booths spend more because of the physical and psychological comfort they offer. Guests also prefer to sit in smaller sections / or larger spaces that are divided into smaller sections.

Round tables add to a soft appearance, but are hard to combine together for a larger group - most operators prefer to avoid them.

Other details, such as artwork, tableware, uniforms and fixtures, also have subtle psychological and behavioral effects on guests and should be considered, especially during the initial design process.

Everything guests see, hear, smell, touch and taste becomes part of their experience and a memory they will choose to repeat or forget. "The details are not the details...they make the design."

Next week, we'll see how "Comfort, Engagement and Food Quality all come together in creating a "Can't Miss" kind of dining environment. ***Want to find out why some restaurants succeed and why others fail? Stay tuned for next Tuesdays issue!***

RECAP

Take some time this week for yourself. Recharging your own battery will keep you on top of the game. Remember that a balanced manager/owner is one that takes care of him/herself first, then takes care of others. How can you expect to lead the charge in developing both profits and people when you're worn down? The restaurant game takes it out of you, so staying on top of things means keeping priorities in order.

So, maybe today is a good day for a martini! Make use of daily food holidays and make your place a little more fun. Set up daily promotions for the next 30 days and see how your guests and staff react. You'll be happy you did!

A "good fire" is an elusive method for some, and for others, it's an easy-to-handle commonplace HR technique. If you've not worked on perfecting the technique for "good fires" maybe it's time to add this skill to your HR tool-belt. I've seen many owners and managers use this technique to create win/win scenarios and it may be just what you've been looking for in your unique situation.

Want a better looking and more comfortable restaurant? Just start by changing out your regular light bulbs and replacing them with light pink ones! I did this myself a few years ago and was amazed how just one little change made the entire place (and all of my guest faces) look better! Try to work on one aspect of comfort every week and in just a couple quick months, your place will look better and your guests will spend more money!

Thanks for reading!



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[The Manager's Daily Checklist Sample Format](#)

[How to find meaning at work even when your job feels miserable](#)

[Think practice makes perfect? Think again. This article will change how you train everyone from now on](#)

[Predictive scheduling - How to adjust to local labor law changes](#)

Resources

[To Subscribe or Catch up on back issues of Restaurant Operations Weekly](#)

[How to Design Your Beverage Menu for Profit](#)

[Everything You Wanted to Know about Wagyu and Kobe Beef](#)

[The Giant List of 101 Culinary Terms \(from our friends at Toast\)](#)

[50 Restaurant Industry Statistics \(by Toast\)](#)

[Food holidays in June - Great Promotional Calendar](#)

[What it means when a restaurant gets a Michelin Star](#)

[Restaurant Feasibility Studies and Business Plans](#)

[Minimum Wage Laws in the U.S. \(US Dept. of Labor\)](#)

[Our complete list of consulting services - PDF](#)

[The World's Greatest Restaurant Systems Checklist](#)

***"TONIGHT...OR ANY NIGHT
FOR THAT MATTER, IS A
PERFECT TIME FOR A
MARTINI!"***

***"It is not enough that we do our
best; sometimes we must do
what is required.***

- Winston Churchill



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