



NOW is the moment to refresh staff Hospo Training

Hotels, restaurants, bars, cafés, clubs and stadiums are all feeling the tight squeeze of Covid-19. They're searching for ways to increase revenue and control costs. No matter the temptation, **now is not the time to take shortcuts with your staff onboarding and training.**

Here's 7 real reasons why you should double down on your company's hospo training now in order better navigate the challenges created by Covid-19.

1. The Covid-19 Problem

Covid-19 second waves have ended our chance of open borders in the near term. That means no international customers with their tourist dollar, no international students, and no enthusiastic and experienced foreign labour in the hospitality sector.

Teach your staff – the new hires *and* the old hands – how to be clean and hygienic in a Covid-19 world. Teach them how to be efficient. Give them the tools to *sell*, to make money, and to make you proud. Teach them how to *serve*, just like when we were young and still had our knees and hips and banter. Teach them how to make customers our best referees and advertisers.

Our Government seems inclined to incentivize hiring New Zealanders. We can continue to be paralysed by closed borders, or we can play the cards we're dealt and upskill the local talent pool to suit our immediate needs.

2. Challenging Domestic Expectations

The domestic market is *different*... Businesses that just reopen or regurgitate, expecting an automatic inflow of domestic dollar, are forgetting the one thing we are all talking about:

The Kiwi traveler, diner or drinker doesn't want to be treated like a tourist, but as a saviour, a hot property, someone to be lavished with service as they fill the foreign tourist gap.

Domestic travelers want local prices, they want New Zealand banter, *but they want international-standard service.* The most successful hospitality businesses post-lockdown will be those that answer this call and re-invest in authentic service, not just product flung hurriedly from the bar, kitchen or barista station.

3. Those social media reviews...

Domestic travelers are more likely to complain. Their feedback – both positive and negative – will quickly reach other potential domestic guests. This is both an opportunity and a risk.

Effective management of social media needs *everyone* on the same page – not just the person who controls the accounts and answers online complaints. Hospitality businesses must define for our staff the hierarchy of complaint handling in the moment. Staff at the coal-face should be coached with real world examples on resolving both common complaints, and also those tricky, rarely-encountered issues that escalate fast if poorly managed. Effective handling of complaints *before* they become negative online reviews can, in fact, help grow your reputation positively.



Help your staff understand how to release the pressure from tricky situations. *Turn potential negative feedback into a luxury opportunity to get GREAT feedback* and become that business that goes the extra mile for the New Zealand customer.

Training for tricky domestic customers will prepare hospitality businesses for when overseas tourists return.



4. Define your real Culture

Domestic travelers seek authenticity and storytelling. As owners and managers, we are aware of our company culture, but are our staff? With large numbers of new staff joining the team, it can be difficult to retain that link to the founder's vision and personality, or to a venue's history and ethos.

Now is the time to create training that introduces and reinforces the destination's culture and story. Show practical ways to integrate venue culture it into daily interactions. Computer programs or generalized online induction training are weak and ineffective when it comes to company culture. *The trick with these online programs is often for staff to click the mouse fast enough to finish up before smoko...*

Better trained culture leads to better customer service, stronger identity and point-of-difference, more return custom and more dollars in the till.

5. The consistency tightrope

In a Covid-19 world, successful hospitality businesses will be those that create *repeat customers* out of curious experimenters. Without consistency, repeat customers are quickly lost.

No matter whether a multi-national, a domestic franchise, a contract caterer, or a small family business, there are pitfalls in relaxing your standards simply because it is a winter Tuesday. We need to give our best workers some time off occasionally. But we also need to *empower the entire team to be consistent*.

Service needs consistency just as much as the food and beverage offering. Without it, customer satisfaction cannot be guaranteed. Hospitality businesses want customers to be sure of receiving first class product *and* service so they return again and again. If we want consistency from our guests, then consistency is what we have to deliver.

6. Radical Reform of Vocational Education

The direction of vocational education in PTEs and polytechs is changing rapidly. The education sector is consolidating under a new legislative framework that makes many future training decisions uncertain. It's tempting to put training on hold until things settle down.

Against this background, there are meaningful benefits to be had from in-house training programs. Such programs can be comprehensive/end-to-end, or alternatively subject-specific modules to improve targeted areas (e.g. customer service or upselling). Ignore the "noise" surrounding hospitality training generally, and simply deal with the problems you have today.



The options for hospitality businesses include: (a) go it alone, and develop your own robust internal training, (b) outsource your (expensive!) training requirements, or (c) implement a hybrid model that allows your staff to attain recognized New Zealand qualifications while retaining in-business control over content and delivery.

7. Better 360° upskilling vision



It's never just the food or the celeb chef. It's never just the outdoor view or the fashionable, tattooed bartender. Now, more than ever, it is our obligation to invest in our industry, to train our people, and to *make our businesses more resilient, more approachable, and more service-savvy.*

A fresh look at in-house training offers a re-shaping of expectations, encourages your staff to take big strides in bringing real-world service back to the forefront of their minds, *and prints indelibly for our customers that we aim to be their preferred, go-to venue for the future.*

Too often, we hear about owners and managers saying they need to retrain staff who come from the classroom and have no "experience". Take that burden and turn it into a positive with your own staff trained to your own specifications. If done right, training can become a profit driver for your business – less churn, more experience, more knowledge, correct procedure, better relationships, better feedback and improved profitability.