



WHAT DO YOUR CUSTOMERS THINK and how much do they tell you?

It often amazes me how much time, money and effort goes into making the front of house look fantastic, while no consideration is given to the back of house. This article is a combination of observations and information that I have obtained in the past month, and all of it is relevant to the areas that many businesses neglect.

I was recently accompanying a client of ours (a refrigerated transport provider) on their daily rounds. One stop in particular amazed me. It was a bakery where the retail area was full of new display cabinets, gourmet fridges, spectacular menu boards and visual point of sales. The staff were all in modern uniforms and it looked fantastic, however as I was with the transport company, we entered by a side door into the main kitchen area. What a difference. The kitchen looked like it hadn't been cleaned in months, the door was dusty, the fly wire broken, and all of this could be seen by any "Joe Public" walking along the street. How could the front and the back be so strikingly different?

My wife Angela is also a chef. When we go out for dinner, she judges the restaurant equally on the food and the bathroom facilities. One "three hat restaurant" in Melbourne comes to mind. I had possibly the best meal of the year at this restaurant, but Angela won't go back because of the bathrooms. Fortunately for me, I didn't need to go, but it is at the back of my mind what she might have seen.

In the references below are two blog posts. The first is a news article from the USA that covers this very point and highlights how a chain of service stations is combating the economic downturn by having clean, modern bathrooms. It is 2 minutes of must see for anyone that doubts the concept.

The second is from James Grima. James is the CEO of Positive Training Solutions, a specialised food retail

training organisation. James explained a staggering statistic to me:

"Did you know that 90% of unhappy customers will never tell you the reason why they will not return to your business?"

So for everyone that complains, there are 9 who won't even bother. James went on to explain "The 10% that bring the issue to your attention MUST be thanked for doing so. If the complaint relates to food handling, be aware that customers make a perceived connection between YOU (the food handler) and the food itself. Therefore it is imperative that your uniform and your personal hygiene are impeccable otherwise the customer will have a question mark over the store's food safety standards."

So next time you are considering a new plasma for the wall or fancy light fittings, maybe the money could be better spent on modernising your bathroom, installing a better door, or hiring a contract cleaner to conduct a deep clean of your kitchen once a week. The superficial finishes will all be wasted if the customer NEVER comes back.

To assist with the cleaning of your toilet areas, we have co-authored an article on bathroom hygiene that can be downloaded from our website. Of course if you want more useful tips on customer satisfaction you could always subscribe to both blogs as they contain lots of useful tips.

Until next edition,
Eat well. Eat safe!

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