



The Table Service Restaurant's Field Guide to Training Dynamite Servers



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Restaurants everywhere are striving to provide comfortable, memorable, and enjoyable dining experiences. Sometimes, the quality of customer service is the deciding factor in whether a diner returns to your establishment. To create a world-class serving team that provides the caliber of service customers will return for, you need a world-class server training program.

To help you create the dining experiences you want to associate with your brand, we've compiled a three-point instructional guide that you can use when training your team to provide exceptional service.

The three steps to server success included in this guide:

1. First Impressions
2. Welcomes and Goodbyes
3. Timing Courses and Service

1 ***Set Standards for First Impressions***

It's important to put your best face forward, literally, for first-time guests. When people enter your restaurant, they should be greeted by your "ambassadors" — the front-of-the house staff, servers, bartenders and host/hostess. As a restaurant ambassador, it's important that these employees are well-groomed and have a positive attitude. These are the first staff members a customer will encounter, so make sure they embody the restaurant's culture and represent your brand in a positive way.

In addition to staff, public areas of the restaurant should be clean and inviting. The waiting area should have plenty of seating so people aren't standing around or blocking the restaurant's flow. Bathrooms should be monitored for cleanliness (especially on busy nights) and well-stocked with supplies.

Points to remember to make great overall first impressions:

- Clean and professional work apparel
- Appearance and personal hygiene
- Wait area should be comfortable with plenty of seating
- Restrooms always clean and well-stocked



2 *Greetings and Salutations*

Restaurants are learning people will use self-service kiosks when available. By now, the majority of consumers are so accustomed to technology that they desire and even expect it in their daily activities. More than half of the respondents in a 2010 Hospitality Industry survey said they would be more likely to visit a QSR that offered self-service kiosks (up from 40% the previous year). At the Fenway Panera location that was the first to deploy the new platform, orders placed at the touchscreen kiosks account for 60% of their lunchtime transactions.

Kiosks enhance consumers' experiences — and benefit owners — in a variety of ways:

- Greetings initialized no more than 30-45 seconds after the patrons are seated
- Smiles and eye contact
- Address customers using full sentences
- A sincere “thank you” and an invitation to return again

3 *Timing is Everything*

No one relishes the idea of a long wait when they're hungry. Evaluate your business to gain insight into how many employees are needed for a given shift and schedule adequate coverage. Don't cut corners and assign one server to serve a large number of diners. Skimping on resources sets up your staff to make mistakes and to delay service, which ultimately cost time and money to correct.

With the optimal number of servers scheduled for the shift, they should be trained to keep the restaurant operating at maximum efficiency, which means acceptable wait times, accurate orders, satisfied customers and higher profits and gratuities for the staff. Tables should never feel like they are being rushed or ignored, so the right timing is key. A rushed dining experience isn't a pleasant one, or one that people will want to repeat. Instead, check on tables at a reasonable pace so your guests can have private conversations, finish their meals at their own pace, or enjoy dessert or an after-dinner beverage.



The time between taking an order and delivering an order should never exceed the following:

- Drinks are delivered in less than 3 minutes
- Drinks from the bar are delivered in less than 5 minutes
- Appetizers are delivered in 8 minutes
- Soup and salads are delivered in 5 minutes
- Entree:
 - Dinner should be delivered in 15 minutes
 - Lunch should be delivered in 11 minutes
- Dessert is delivered in 5 minutes
- Server should return with patron's paid receipt in 2 minutes

It's inevitable that timing issues will arise, and these cause a ripple effect throughout the restaurant. Servers who make errors in-putting their orders, for example, force the kitchen staff to remake selections that were prepared incorrectly. This causes a kitchen backup, which translates into guests at each table needing more time to finish their meals. This may cause slower table turns and longer wait times to be seated, even for people who have reservations. Lower table turnover means fewer sales and fewer tips. This is never a good way to start out a shift, so timing and accuracy are important for your business as well as for your customers.

Tips on timing:

- Lunch shouldn't exceed a total of 45 minutes
- Dinner shouldn't exceed a total of 60 minutes
- Service to-go shouldn't exceed 20 minutes

Stages of Service

Encourage your servers to use this guide as it pertains to your restaurant to create exceptional dining experiences:

1. INITIAL GREETING

- Make drink and appetizer recommendations
- Recommend beverages that will complement the meal
- Introduce special offers
- Take orders
 - Make recommendations
 - Support the customer’s final choice, i.e., “Excellent choice. You will love it.”
 - Repeat the order back to each customer to ensure order accuracy

2. CUSTOMER COMMUNICATION

- Servers should always communicate in a professional and friendly manner
- Servers should NEVER respond with a negative tone or place blame on another area of the restaurant
- Servers should be coached on how to take a positive, helpful angle to ensure the customer is always pleased with not only the result, but also the way in which it was handled

3. SERVICE

- Use full menu names when presenting entrees to customers
- Serve ladies first
- Keep an eye on your diners and watch for non-verbal cues during their dining experience
- Check back after patron has cut or bitten into food to ensure accuracy and satisfaction



4. PREPPING FOR THE END OF THE MEAL

- Recommend dessert two-thirds of the way through dinner
- Wrap-up and label left-over food tableside for diners
- Present dessert (if ordered) and drop check
- Check on your customers in a few minutes

5. PREPARE FOR NEXT GUEST

- Thank customers and invite them to return
- Close the check immediately
- Clear table
- Spray and wipe the following items with sanitizer: table, cushions, chairs, salt and pepper
- Make sure the floor under the table is dry and free of debris

About NCC

Since 1986, NCC has been delivering comprehensive software solutions to businesses in the hospitality and retail industries. Our software engineers combine years of experience in software development with a strong understanding of restaurant and retail operations to create products designed to work in a wide variety of environments.

Through a world-wide network of reseller partners, NCC has installed over 50,000 POS systems in more than 35 countries. NCC products are installed in wide range of retail and hospitality concepts including Table Service, Quick Service, Fast Casual, Bars, Night Clubs, Delis, Frozen Yogurt, Delivery and Concessions.