

with Lou Perri from the Stunned Mullet.



palate *pleasures*

GREAT STAFF, GREAT RESTAURANT

Hospitality – yes folks, this is indeed the industry that restaurants are a major component of. What does this mean exactly? I thought I would defer to the dictionary definition for this;

Collins English Dictionary: Hospitality- “kindness in welcoming strangers or guests”

This definition got me thinking – an entire industry which centres around kindness and welcoming. I mean you’ve got the Finance, Legal, Manufacturing, Automotive, Information Technology, Film Industries etc etc ad infinitum. And then you’ve got Hospitality.

I can’t think of one other industry that defines itself by a noble example of human interaction. From the name alone we can conclude that kindness and welcome are a fundamental component of our job. Certainly we prepare and serve food and beverage - the consistent quality of these are vital to our business, but I would say that the quality of our ‘kindness’ and ‘welcome’ is equally vital, if not paramount.

The urge to dine out is born almost solely of a desire for human interaction. We want to catch up with our family and friends, we like talking to people and we like being surrounded by people.

Maslow’s hierarchy of needs indicates that the sense of “belonging” plays a more critical role in our existence than does our physiological need for food, water, sleep and sex-WOW, big call Abraham!

So let’s establish that one revels in the idea of belonging– greeted warmly, made to feel comfortable and also special! We like to feel as if nothing is too much trouble – if we have special requirements we can ask, if we have questions they will be answered. Essentially, we crave that kindness! If it is missing, we feel robbed, ripped off, ignored, or worse - we feel as if we don’t “belong”. Even if we found no fault with the food, the experience leaves us with a bad taste (sorry!). And why would we ever want to repeat it?

That’s why the people dealing with the punters are so integral to the success of a hospitality business.

Experienced, personable and flexible staff are like gold. Having people out there on the coalface who you know can deliver human warmth, knowledge, dedication and attention to detail consistently – is one of the most effective stress relievers to the anxiety prone restaurateur.

In Australia, a start in the hospitality industry is not perceived as a genuine career option. It suffers from a distinct lack of drawcards in the opinion of many – low pay, unsociable hours,

hard physical work, lack of prospects to name a few.

More commonly, a job in a restaurant is seen as an in-between pocket money provider for students on their way to bigger and better things. A transit lounge on the way to a real job, if you like.

This is where we run into trouble when recruiting – sure there are a few out there looking, but really – do they want to be there? And, even if they say they do, how long will they stay?

Then there’s Generation Y thing ... They are different! It’s mostly Generation Xers running restaurants now and hiring the available labour pool which is Gen Y. Not wanting to harp too lengthily on a “back in my day” spiel, but an average 18 year old these days has never had a job before you hire them. Therefore it is up to you employer number one to instill a work ethic from scratch - to imbue a sense of responsibility and ownership, to implore them to grasp the concept of acting professionally in the workplace; to not treat work as an opportunity to discuss with their fellow Gen Y colleagues who got kicked out of Altitude last night ... And

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then there’s plain old common sense, which you can’t teach.

(I would like to note however, that the above is only a generalisation and I have luckily been blessed with the cream of the Gen Y crop!)

So in a nutshell, it’s hard to find the good ones and keep them. Harder still in regional areas where the pool of opportunity is even shallower. We just have to hope that we can raise the profile of the industry to attract the bright young things, and somehow remove the tarnished reputation it has. If we look to the USA and Mediterranean Europe where waiting tables is a highly regarded and skilled occupation, we can see that it is indeed possible.

I am looking forward to the day when an ambitious and dedicated Gen Y walks in, hands me their resume, and is not just merely looking for a gap year money spinner, but for a career!

