

Management Survival Guide

❖ **Think like an owner ...**

By this, we mean, not like an employee. There IS a difference, and every seasoned manager still remembers the moment he learned it. Gathering employee feedback is important, but it's equally important to filter the signal from the noise and pass only VALID feedback along for owner consideration. Develop an ear for the difference between gossip and actionable info. Listen, then explain the position of the business in terms an employee understands.

Try to think like YOUR owner. Whether you personally agree or not, your job becomes a whole lot easier once you operate according to your owner's principles. Most bosses are happy to answer questions, offer guidance and generally talk about themselves ☺

❖ **The safety of every guest, employee and entertainer is your first priority.**

Your friends may think your job is a party, but we never underestimate the importance of what you do. On any given night you are responsible for the safety and well-being of a large, constantly changing group of people, and the wrong decision can literally cost lives. Not everything can be prevented, but a vigilant manager can make a big difference. Learn to spot trouble before it happens; preferably when it's still outside the door. Don't let your ego get in the way of your de-escalation tactics. Don't be so blinded by a sale—or a tip—that you sacrifice the safety of yourself and others. A sale doesn't mean anything if someone is dead or the club is closed.

❖ **Beat the greet.**

What immediately indicates a well run establishment? For us, it's when every single employee greets us before we have a chance to ask a question. (Bonus points for heartfelt as opposed to scripted greetings.) How do you achieve this in your own club? By drilling "the greet" into every employee's head over and over again, of course. Call them out every time. Have a colleague "shop" the club and report results. When something as basic as a greeting, or lack thereof, engenders consequences, your employees will take it seriously.

❖ **Sweat the small stuff: lights, music, temperature.**

Many owners, upon arrival, notice when the lights are too dark, the music is too loud or the club is too hot. If a light bulb is out. If the TV has been playing an infomercial for the last 20 minutes. These are NOT items a guest will go out of her way to complain about, but guests notice, either consciously or unconsciously. It's another thing that sets a first class club apart from the other kind. Give yourself a mental checklist and run through it every time you arrive on the floor, especially when you're taking over for someone else. No one wants to hear it was the other guy's fault. Great managers develop a very specific form of OCD; in our experience, no one else—not the DJ, the bartender, the guest—can be counted on to help you.

❖ **Be in Two Places at Once.**

Ok, maybe you can't do that, but you can do the next best thing: keep moving, constantly. During peak times, the action is on the main floor, which is where you should be as well. But don't forget to check the door, the dressing room, the VIP areas, the back-of-house. Before the floor fills up, spend time at the door, watch how your staff handles incoming guests. Then keep moving. Your staff will be less likely to hide out and smoke cigarettes by the walk-in box if they know you might fly around a corner at any time. Develop an instinct for arriving on the scene ahead of a problem rather than behind it.

❖ **Educate to Duplicate.**

Even if you don't think you're a good teacher, you should be involved in the training process. No one knows better than you what you want out of a bartender (and what habits make you want to claw your own face off) so get your staff started on the right note. Too many managers pawn the new girl off on a random server and move on to some doubtlessly vital function, like sitting in the office. OTJ training IS important. But you set the program. Write the test. Do the orientation ... Orientation is just a fancy term for sitting down with new staff and explaining what you as a manager expect of them, basic policies and procedures, etc. It means more coming from you. The key concepts from orientation are the ones you enforce, because enforcement is even more important than training. If the rule is to put a fresh napkin down every time a drink is served, be sure to correct everyone who forgets, every time. Consistency is key.

❖ **Follow the Money Trail.**

In our clubs, there are multiple areas where money is exchanged, for admission, drinks, change, house fees, currency, etc. Carry a mental map in your head of how money flows, and pay extra attention to these areas throughout the course of the night. (Remember, gotta keep moving.) WATCH THE MONEY. Whenever a drink goes over the bar, the bills that come back should make sense. Train cash handlers to conduct transactions immediately; to hold bills up; to verbally count out change. This helps you watch the money flow and alerts you to anything that doesn't make sense. If you think like an owner, you care about every dollar. Spot check registers. Inspect the area AROUND the register. Watch the interaction between your guests and your staff—conversations that go on too long, transactions in places that AREN'T designated. Everything tells a story. Financial impropriety should be grounds for immediate dismissal.

❖ **Touch Tables.**

Touching tables is a restaurant term—it's when the manager of Applebee's comes over to make sure everything is ok. You aren't going to do that, but you should make it a point to get your guests' feedback. It's easier to do this when it's slow. Introduce yourself, give out your card. Find out who your guest is, where he came from and what kind of experience he is seeking. Introduce yourself to bachelor parties, regulars, big bangers. It's amazing what you will learn. (Listen with an open heart to what your guests tell you, but fine tune your BS detector; people will sometimes complain to get free stuff.) When it's busy, ask your servers for feedback. They are trained to interact with guests and form a connection—they get plenty of feedback in return! If you hear something 3 times from 3 separate parties, it's probably true.

❖ **Lead by Example.**

So you're a Manager. The title comes with some perks, and you've earned them. You get to sit down when your feet hurt. Use your cell phone. Have a drink with a high roller. But we implore you, as a manager, to lead by example. Stay on your feet, even when you're tired. Be focused and unaltered by alcohol, because you have to watch EVERYTHING. Use your cell for business but not Facebook or Zombie games, even when it's dead. Do this so you can stare every employee in the face and say, if I can do it, so can you. This is one of the most effective management tactics we know, because it leaves no room for argument.

❖ **Choose Your Own Adventure.**

The real perk of being a manager is the ability to shape your environment. Some owners allow more creative freedom than others, but we challenge you to come up with your best promotional, entertainment, beverage and hospitality ideas. Present them, then implement them. We all have things that excite us, things we excel at—use your natural enthusiasm and talent to contribute to the business. One caveat—not every idea makes the cut, which is why you should come up with a LOT of ideas. Seeing something new come to life and being able to say, “I did that!” is as rewarding an experience as any.

❖ **Entertainers ARE Our Business.**

We’ve all heard this a hundred times, but it’s still true. (We’ll be sure to let you know the minute it’s not.) You may treat your entertainers differently than your employees. You SHOULD. If your entertainers are independent contractors, you need to have a grasp on what that means, what they are contracted for, and what aspects of their performance you can or cannot control. The key to working with entertainers: you have to like them. They have to like you. Every conversation with an entertainer is a negotiation. Respect them as business women, even when they seem to lack that respect for themselves. Don’t let them treat you like a guest. Figure out what motivates them and incentivize good behavior. Look out for their safety and don’t let them put themselves or the club in danger with reckless behavior. Remind yourself everyday (because you will have to) that they are your most precious resource. Don’t take anything an entertainer does personally. Make every decision about an entertainer a BUSINESS decision. On that note, good luck!