



**TOP
10**

**WAYS TO DELIVER
GREAT CUSTOMER SERVICE**

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When Zagat surveys diners nationwide each year, they invariably discover a curious trend: Service scores typically trail behind food scores, even at the country's finest restaurants.

To create a top-notch experience for customers, close this “service gap” with seamless service that has every facet of the operation working in synchronicity. Get your team in synch and deliver great customer service with these 10 tips.



Build a Service Culture

Top-notch service must be embedded into an organization's culture. If the service attitude is not already part of your company's culture, invest substantial resources for training and building commitment to uphold high standards across all levels of your business.

- Hire for attitude as well as experience. Great servers are, by nature, friendly and helpful.
- Take your time with training. Define the amount of time servers will train and shadow experienced servers before they set out on their own.
- Set standards and stick to them. Managers should evaluate servers every day.

Make Service a Team Effort

Hold daily staff meetings. Pre-shift meetings give everyone a preview of the upcoming shifts and help create rapport among your team. Meetings should include reviewing information about the day's menu and specific needs of expected guests—from what foods they like to what tables they prefer.

In non-commercial operations, such as hospitals, organize service teams for everything from patient satisfaction and standards to employee and physician satisfaction. Set up a VIP hotline for senior managers and directors to address and resolve issues daily.



Know the Menu

Educate servers about the menu and prepare them to answer questions about dishes, including origin of ingredients. Be ready for questions ranging from the mundane to the obscure such as:

- What ingredients are in this sauce?
- Are ingredients purchased from local purveyors?
- Is the coffee organic?

Give diners detailed information about each dish before they have to ask. Avoid the mystery “drop and run”—explain everything that is delivered to the table, including the bread basket, compound butter and appetizers. Also, make sure everyone on your team is up to date on your restaurant’s allergy and substitution policy and able to articulate it to your customers.

Create an Experience for Guests

Great service goes beyond just being hospitable to customers. It hinges on creating an experience for them. Make guests feel special so they want to come back.

This starts with the décor and the greeting at the door. Servers' friendly efficiency along with good food makes guests feel that they are being taken care of. Consider using the "five-foot rule," which states that employees must acknowledge guests who are within five feet of them. This can be achieved through simple actions such as a smile, a greeting, holding the door, asking if they're looking for the restroom, or saying goodbye.

Add a Personal Touch

Personal attention can make or break a guest's experience. Knowing what guests like to drink or how they like a dish prepared goes a long way to enhance the dining experience. To add a personal touch:

- Introduce guests to the chef or bartender to discuss their preferences.
- Create profiles of return guests.
- Address repeat guests by name when they arrive and know their preferences.
- Once guests become regulars and you know their nuances, impress them by having something they prefer already done or made for them upon their arrival.

Ask managers to add "table touches." By visiting each table, the manager shows guests that they value their business. Ask specific questions, such as, "Was your burger served at the right temperature?" or "Was everything cooked to your liking?"



Foster Repeat Customers

Use social media to communicate specials, frequent-diner programs to reward regulars and small incentives to make loyal customers feel special.

Occasionally surprise guests with a complimentary appetizer, drink or dessert.

Here are some great reasons:

- This is a regular customer.
- It's their birthday/anniversary.
- It's their first time in the restaurant, and they say they love it.
- They were forgiving of a gaffe on your part.

Focus on Guest Contact Points

Pay attention to detail and put yourself in your guests' shoes as they enter the restaurant.

Review these contact points to ensure you are putting your best foot forward:

- Are the parking lot and entrance clean?
- Are there any lights burned out, outside or inside?
- Are advertisements or event posters up to date?
- Are your bathrooms maintained every 20 minutes with all dispensers full, dry counters and no overflowing trash receptacles?
- Do your tables wobble? If so, are unsightly coasters and napkins used to prop up a leg?
- Are your condiment dispensers clean and full?
- Is the floor under tables inspected and clean before seating new guests?
- Are menus presentable?
- Is each guest check accurate, expedited and reconciled quickly?
- Does each member of your service team make eye contact, smile, thank guests and invite them to return?

Anticipate Diner Needs

As the saying goes, the best service goes unnoticed. Anticipate diners' needs so they won't have to break engagement with their dining partners or search out servers to fill their water glasses.

Notice the attitude of each customer as they arrive and match your service with their needs for that visit. For example, if guests stroll into the restaurant, looking around and talking about the aesthetics, they're clearly not in a rush. On the other hand, if a man in a suit sits down at lunch and can't take his eyes off his phone, he probably wants a quick meal. Alert your team to get his order in quickly and be ready to drop a check immediately.





Read the Table When Clearing

The rules of bussing tables are not set in stone, so the rule becomes: Know what the guest wants.

Should servers fully clear the table between each course? Many diners want plates taken out of their way once they're done eating. But what if one of the guests isn't finished eating? Because of these dynamics, it is imperative to be able to "read" a table. If a guest physically takes a plate and hands it to a busser, that table is okay with pre-bussing.

Avoid the "grab while asking" method of clearing dishes from guest tables. This is supposed to be a two-step process. First ask guests if they are done. Then if they are, remove the dishes. Servers who simply snatch plates while announcing, "Let me get this out of the way," miss an opportunity to bond with the guest through professionalism and courtesy.

Know Diners' Pet Peeves

Zagat regularly ask diners about their pet peeves. Zagat's 2015 Dining Trends Survey found:

When asked, "What irritates you the most about dining out?" the No. 1 complaint nationally was service (26%), followed by noise (24%), prices (17%) and crowds (1%).

Diners in Miami take the biggest issue with service (32%), while Portland, Ore., diners cite noise (31%) as their chief complaint.

When Zagat asked, "What's your biggest service complaint?" the top complaints among diners were inattentive wait staff (24%), slow service (17%), rude staff (10%) and inadequate training of wait staff (9%).

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Our team of over 100 procurement specialists has a strong focus on analyzing and negotiating competitive food and non-food contracts and delivering best-in-class customer service.

Our Mission

To design and manage customized procurement programs that make a difference in each client's ability to meet their organizational objectives and exceed their customers' expectations.

Contact Us

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