

The Road Map For Increasing Your Tips



Let's face it, one of the great things about bartending is getting tipped. They're like financial pats on the back. Tips make a good night that much better and a bad one much more tolerable. When bartenders reach the point where they no longer appreciate getting tipped, I think it's probably time for them to get out from behind the bar.

Tips are also something of a financial health barometer for a bar and therefore a legitimate managerial concern. For one thing, when bartenders are earning sizeable amounts of gratuities, they presumably won't be as likely to put their jobs in jeopardy by ripping off the house. Although it is speculation and I appreciate that exceptions abound, incidence of internal theft can be expected to drop when bartenders are well compensated for their efforts.

Another reason to be mindful of staff gratuities is that guests rarely reward blasé service or lackluster cocktails. Going through the motions doesn't equate to attentive service and inadequate drinks are an affront. So unless your establishment attracts an unusually generous crowd, a staff that hauls in good tips is likely one that understands their primary missions.

The reality is that some bartenders are better generating tips than others. While an innate ability for a few, most have honed their tip-making skills through long hours of trial and error. While in most cases the essential difference is attitude, it always renders down to improving guests' experience.

In an effort to flatten the learning curve, here is a short list of field-tested ways of improving gratuities.

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- **Lighten Up and Smile** — It is nearly impossible to give guests the impression that you're genuinely glad they came in with a scowl on your face. One of the keys to hospitable service is greeting people with a smile and welcoming attitude. There is nothing passé about making people feel comfortable and at home at your bar.
- **Slow Down** — There is a natural tendency to rush behind the bar to keep up with rising demand. Cranking out drinks as quickly as possible is the objective, right? Well, that type of thinking should only apply at concession stands and service bars. What would happen if you dared break with convention and slowed down a few rpm? The likely result is that you'd make better drinks, waste less product, act less frazzled and pay more attention to your guests. Even when people are standing at the bar waiting to order, the bartender need only acknowledge them and say that he will be with them in a few moments.
- **Develop a Specialty** — Some bartenders proudly let it be known that their Martinis are second to none; others boast of concocting unrivaled Margaritas or Mojitos. Whatever your interest, choose a category of drinks and make it your own. Become an expert on the spirits used in your area of specialization. People will readily want to sample your specialties and then brag to their friends that they know the "King of Martinis."
- **Know What You're Talking About** — You should be able to accurately answer guests' questions regarding the menu or a specific product quickly and knowledgeably. Fumbling for answers or searching for someone else to deal with the situation diminishes your credibility and that of the business. People like to know that they're in capable hands. With surging consumer interest in premium spirits, it is far easier to up-sell a guest when you can quickly articulate why a particular brand is worth its elevated sales price.
- **Improve Your Sales Abilities** — Most people are open to accepting suggestions from a bartender if appropriate and delivered with conviction. As the resident expert and captain of the ship, so to speak, you need to always be looking for ways to enhance a guest's overall experience. Suggestive selling is a proven means of boosting ticket averages and thereby increasing the amount upon which your gratuity is calculated. It's a classic "win-win" situation.
- **Establish a Connection with Your Guests** — The value of treating people like welcome guests cannot be overestimated. After all, who doesn't "want to go where everyone knows your name?" This means that you need to connect with your guests and make them feel at home at your bar rather than being out in public, just one of a countless throng. Two effective ways of accomplishing this is maintaining good eye contact with people when speaking to them and acknowledging guests by their names. People appreciate being recognized. Not only that, but the process by which you learn a person's name is often through conversation, after which an invaluable connection has been formed between you and your guest.
- **Look Your Best** — Your appearance has an impact on the impression you make and speaks volumes about your degree of professionalism. How comfortable are you being served by someone with dirty fingernails and a rumpled uniform? Looking your best and dressing for success are important aspects of your job and making great tips.
- **Stress-Free Service** — Sure it's busy and you're in the weeds, but it is not the guests' responsibility to appreciate your overburdened situation. While people seem to be most demanding when you can emotionally least afford it, transferring stress onto your guests does them a disservice and dampens their evening. It's called collateral damage and a guilty apology after the fact does little to make up for what transpires in the heat of the moment.

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- Flip a Bottle Now and Again — An entertaining way to keep guests seated at the bar longer is to adroitly flip a few bottles now and again. It makes a spectacular impression on folks and you'll look confident and accomplished. It's a guaranteed crowd pleaser and tip-enticer.



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On this site

The image shows a close-up of a bartender's hands in a dark suit jacket and blue shirt, pouring a clear liquid from a bottle into a glass. The background is a blurred bar setting with various bottles. The text 'BarProfits.com' is at the top left, 'Building a Sustainable Bottom Line' is below it, and 'Now Live!' is written in large, bold, red letters across the center of the image. 'On this site' is written in a small black box at the bottom left of the image area.

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