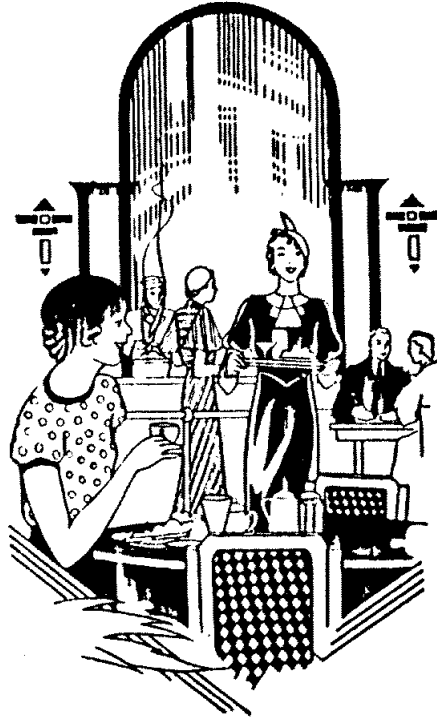


“Y’all Come Back Now, Ya Hear?”



Attracting new clientele to your establishment is often no more challenging than increasing your marketing and advertising budget. On the other hand, getting those same people to come back another night is considerably more challenging, and entirely dependent on whether you met or exceeded their expectations the last time they were in. The public will remain loyal as long as you do. However, once disappointed, they'll tear your listing out of the phone book, and for weeks advise everyone they know to do the same.

Rivalling execution and attentive service in importance is creating a connection with your clientele. Actually, when it comes to building repeat business, it exceeds all other considerations. People go where they feel most comfortable, and what's more comforting than being made to feel at home, like you're one of the regulars. Treating people like welcomed guests has a significant impact on building repeat business.

There are several field-tested ways of accomplishing this. High on the list is for staff to maintain eye contact with guests when interacting with them. Considering the often

loud and distracting circumstance, maintaining eye contact is a quick means of creating a rapport and human connection with people. Staff should also make a concerted effort to acknowledge individuals they recognize as having been in before. After all, who doesn't appreciate being acknowledged? A quick "welcome back" is like money in the bank.

Keep them coming back, that's how you perpetuate a business. To that end, the following will help.

- **Taking The Lead** — There are occasions every night when staff is in the position to assist guests with their drink selections. The ability to quickly size someone up and pair them with the perfect cocktail is an invaluable attribute behind the bar. Guests nearly always go along with bartenders' suggestions on what to drink; it's like being fed insider information. People enjoy the personal attention. Likewise, bartenders should ask guests questions about their drink preferences. The more they know, the better service they can render.

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• **Develop A Specialty** — Some bars proudly let it be known that their Martinis are second to none; others boast of unrivaled Manhattans, Margaritas, or Mojitos. Whatever your interest, choose a category of drinks and make it your bar's specialty. People naturally want to sample what you do best, and when they discover that it lives up to advanced billing, likeminded aficionados will soon be calling your bar home.

• **In Good Hands** — Bartenders and servers should be able to quickly answer questions regarding the menu or specific products. Fumbling for answers, or looking for someone else to deal with the situation diminishes their credibility and that of the business. People like to know they're in capable hands. With consumer interest in premium spirits soaring, it's easier for bartenders to up-sell guests when they can articulate why a particular brand is worth the higher price.

• **Fair Pricing** — Who doesn't want to think they are getting the most for their hard-earned money? Considering the nature of the economy

and people's sensitivity to prices, offering guests drinks with high-perceived value will become more of an enticement in getting them to return another night,

• **Anticipating Needs** — Service excellence can be defined as anticipating guests' needs before they realize the need themselves. Refill water glasses and replenish breadbaskets without being asked. Likewise, many cocktails should be served with a back of water. So after you serve a Martini or Scotch, neat, return moments later with a glass of water. It's a classy thing to do and guests will appreciate the service.

• **Be Entertaining** — Lastly, tell your bartenders that enjoying themselves behind the bar goes with the territory, even when a night turn frenetic. Fun is contagious and an invaluable commodity in this business. Likewise, humor is a great equalizer. Laughing is a simple pleasure everyone can use more of in their life. Making a guest smile may well be the best thing that happened to the person that day.

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