

How Will They React With the Chips On the Line?



Expect the unexpected. It's a common enough saying but one that's especially true in this business.

Take for example a recent incident that occurred in a high-profile Florida sports bar. A young man seated at the bar was beginning to show signs of impairment, so one of the two bartenders on duty refused the man further service. He became suddenly enraged, withdrew a knife from his pocket, and with all deliberate force, impaled his own hand to the bar top.

The man started howling in pain. The bartenders stared in horror and started screaming. Pandemonium broke out in the lounge as mortified guests scrambled out of their seats and bolted for the doors. Although agitated, the manager on duty had the presence of mind to call the police, then quickly started calming the panicked guests.

Alerted by the commotion, the two doormen threaded their way inside through the onrushing crowd, raced to the bar and grabbed the frenzied man from behind. At the same moment, one of the line cooks went behind the bar, took hold of the man's wrist and extracted the knife from his hand. The doormen and several employees struggled to hold onto him. When the police

arrived, it took three officers to handcuff the man, who by that point was hovering somewhere between shock and dementia.

What would you have done in that situation? What would your employees do? Granted it's a horrendous occurrence and hopefully neither you nor your staff will ever find yourself eye to eye with someone crazed. But one of the marks of a talented management team is preparing the staff to cope with the unexpected. Anticipating situations before they occur and devising a strategy for handling them when they do can make all the difference.

Just as in life, most situations that arise on a daily basis are prosaic and less complicated. For instance, a young man around sixteen years old walks up to your bar and orders a non-alcoholic beer. What should your bartender do? Is it advisable to serve a minor an O'Douls or Sharps when their labels state they contain alcohol? While it's true they contain less than .05% alcohol by volume, the brew could potentially have a deleterious affect on the person. Regardless of your decision, the staff should know how you want that situation handled.

Have you addressed the question of whether to serve alcohol to a pregnant woman? The

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danger to the unborn fetus is beyond dispute and yet is there sufficient grounds to refuse service? Many on your staff may have serious reservations about serving alcohol to an obviously pregnant woman. You may perceive the conflict and yet not feel the business has a legitimate right to take a confrontational posture. The situation has the potential to be a flash point — it has already sparked a fair amount of controversy. Better to discuss the matter now than when it presents itself during the next happy hour.

What if two people sit down and order three drinks, the third cocktail ostensibly for a friend in the rest room or parking the car, should the bartender prepare and serve all three drinks? This is a relatively common ploy. The missing person is likely under age or already intoxicated. What if your bartenders had never encountered the situation and proceeded to serve the alcohol?

Along the same lines, does your staff know how you want them to handle a customer who orders a drink and says “and make it a strong one!” People who want something for nothing can be a vexing problem for bartenders and servers alike. Talk it over and help them develop a strategy to effectively deal with it.

One of the more difficult situations to handle involves an intoxicated guest in a party of four or five with open bottles of wine on the table. How do you prevent the person from consuming more alcohol and thereby fulfilling your legal obligation without removing all of the alcohol from the table? What advice would you offer your service staff?

When The Stakes Increase

Like cooking with grease, the potential for a major flare-up between people drinking alcohol seemingly goes with the territory. Yet acts of violence on your licensed premises pose a significant problem. You are legally obligated to protect the physical safety and welfare of your guests and employees. Whether the person was the aggressor or victim, each must be protected from harm and injury. The days of telling combatants to “take it outside” are long gone.

Have you covered with your staff how you want them to respond to fights on-premise? Do they understand that the licensed premises also includes the parking lot? Are they to physically intervene or back-off and call the police? What are they to do if weapons are involved? Of equal importance, have you instructed your security in the concepts of excessive force and illegal detention? The actions of over-zealous security personnel can be construed as an act of violence.

Perhaps the most precarious and dangerous incident that can happen at your business is an armed robbery, and here again you can help your staff anticipate how best to respond.

The operation is most vulnerable at closing, a time when there is the most cash on-hand and the fewest employees on-premise. Urge your staff to remain calm, alert and observant. Emphasize that their safety and welfare is the primary concern. Money can be replaced, human life cannot. Follow the perpetrator’s instructions and commands completely and without hesitation.

They should make slow, deliberate movements; don’t do anything sudden. Instruct them to tell the perpetrator in advance everything they are about to do and to keep their hands within sight. If they need to place their hands where the robber can’t see them, they should tell the perpetrator what they’re doing. In addition, they shouldn’t stare directly into the robber’s eyes. It will heighten his anxieties and general state of paranoia.

During a robbery, employees should open the cash register and back away, allowing unobstructed access to the money. Unless there is a silent alarm and absolutely no chance of being detected, security systems should be activated only after the perpetrator has departed the scene.

Are Your People Life-Savers?

In the event someone in your establishment begins to choke, how many employees could save a person’s life by performing the Heimlich maneuver? Anyone eating and drinking —

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especially drinking alcohol — is obviously at risk of choking. You can spare your employees the tragedy of standing by and watching helplessly as someone chokes to death.

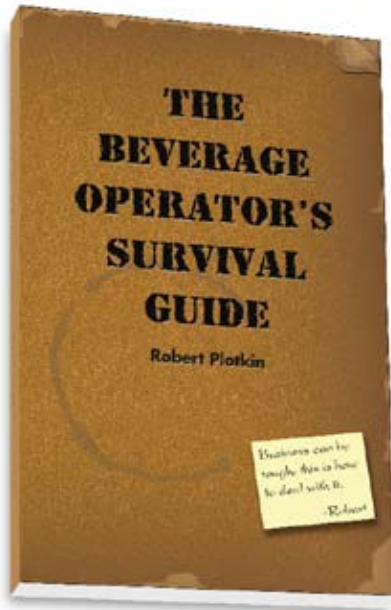
The American Red Cross is ready, willing and able to train your service staff how to respond to such emergencies. They will also train them what to do if someone stops breathing and how to initiate cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR)

on adults, children and infants. The techniques differ for each. When seconds matter, knowing precisely what to do can literally mean the difference between life and death. The training is invaluable.

At the police academy, cadets are taught that in a crisis situation, a person can do one of two things — panic or think. The police are trained to think, so should your employees.

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This Month At BarMedia



Healthy survival is all about contingency planning. Think about any day and how many things happen to change the way you expect it to go. Put policies and procedures in place that will, in the long run, make your business a more lucrative and positive place to be.

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