

Insights and inspiration from the restaurant world

Is your assn providing four-star dining or serving fast-food?

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Restaurants and assns are both designed to offer customized memorable experiences. They are venues for regeneration, retreat and reflection, and settings for personal and professional celebration. Many times they are locations for mutually beneficial business transactions. And certainly they represent a safe place to escape the day's concerns, enjoy dialogue, and ponder new ideas with others.

Successful assns are similar to successful restaurants in many more ways. Consider the chief staff executive to be the "owner" of the establishment. He or she assembles a professionally trained team, provides the vision to develop tasty offerings, coordinates the team to deliver pleasing presentations for all the senses to enjoy and then holds the team responsible and accountable for doing so in a consistently efficient and satisfying manner.

Restaurants have a front of the house and a back of the house. Assns do, too. The front welcomes and serves the patron, while the back prepares the desired meal. Front and back must coordinate. The kitchen stores must have the inventory for the day's menu offerings, the servers must have the expertise to engage the diners in making satisfying selections, cups and plates need to be clean and available. Everything has to come together in delivering what the patron asked. The front and back have to know what each is doing, what's needed for their success and how each is progressing if the desired experience is to be produced.

In a restaurant, excellent customer service combined with desired offerings are access to increased profits and enhanced customer loyalty even in the face of expanding competition. Likewise for assns and their staff. Members are secured when excellent member service is coordinated between all departments for the best design, development and delivery of member-valued experiences.

Restaurants know that training is a continuous process. Servers are increasing their ability to make valuable recommendations by learning how to vividly and accurately describe and relate offerings, while the kitchen staff is always experimenting to enhance the taste and appearance of their dishes. These efforts extend the members' dining experiences.

Where is your assn providing a four-star dining experience? When is serving fast-food to your members appropriate? What is the overall ambiance of the membership experience? Are your staffers order-takers or sommeliers? What changes need to be made to the menu based on patron feedback?

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