

WORK SMARTER NOT HARDER

The ***SERVICE THAT SELLS!*** Workbook

Alcohol Beverage Service

PENCOM
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Section Three: Precision Service



To be sure, guests appreciate *Caring Behavior*. But the warm-and-fuzziness will fade fast if there are breakdowns in the mechanics of the service delivery.

Did you get the order right? Was the drink garnished properly? Did the bartender follow the recipe? Were all the necessary condiments provided with the food or beverage?

These are all elements of *Precision Service*. Execute them seamlessly, and they'll more than likely go unnoticed by guests. Botch one or two, however, and the dining experience hangs in the balance.

Providing *Precision Service* is simply doing the job you were hired and trained to do. It's no problem, of course, when your section or bar is under control. The scene changes, however, when you get into "the weeds."

Stay Out of the Weeds

If you're like most servers or bartenders, you've spent some time in "the weeds" – that unique piece of restaurant real estate where you're out of control, swamped, sweating, losing it, freaking out, and ready to find a *real* job.

It's a common nightmare. But you can't wake up from this one. Who suffers? Everyone does. Guests have to interact with flipped-out servers, who often blame customers for their lack of patience. The end result is bad service, low sales and lackluster repeat business.

It's order-takers – not salespeople – who get into trouble. Here's why:

- They waited for the guest to decide what's good without offering any guidance or suggestions.
- They didn't have enough product knowledge to answer a question about a particular item.
- They forgot to bring out something that was supposed to accompany the order.

What's the secret to staying out of the weeds and in the money? O.A.P.A. – Observe, Anticipate, Prioritize, Act.

Observe. Keep an eye on your section or bar. See who needs what. Scan the faces of your guests. Do they need anything?

Anticipate. When approaching newly seated guests, anticipate their needs by asking: “Can I get you something from the bar? A glass of wine, cocktail, beer. We’re featuring Sutter Home and Clos Du Bois wines by the glass.” Try to make suggestions before the guest has to ask.

Prioritize. Which guests need your attention first? Second? Third? Always acknowledge newcomers first. They can be anxious. Other priorities include guests who have a problem with their food or beverage, guests who just received their food or beverage (try to check back after they’ve had two bites or two sips), and guests who are ready to pay.

Act. Don’t just re-act. Control your section before it controls you. How? Through suggestive selling. The funny thing about the restaurant business is that to stay out of the weeds you can never be in the present. You have to focus on what you have to do next.



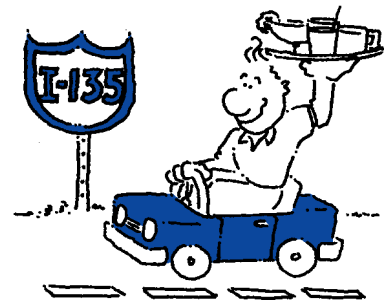
Think about the worst “in the weeds” experience you’ve ever had. Describe it in the space below.

Now, take an aspirin, and using what you’ve learned in this strategy, describe in the space below what you could have done differently to stay *out* of the weeds and *in* the money.

Drive I-135

A lot of *Precision Service* is about timing – bringing guests what they want ... *when* they want it. But even the best servers can get bogged down, especially when they have three tables full and two more have just been seated.

Not to worry. There’s help up ahead. It’s called I-135, a highway that leads to better service and higher sales. Here’s what it means:



I: Immediately acknowledge your guests. Say it with a smile even if you're busy. Drop a cocktail napkin or coaster on the table in front of them and say, "I'll be right with you." Remember these words: "Grace under pressure."

1: Try to take the initial beverage order within one minute. Sixty seconds doesn't sound like a long time, does it? But to the guest a minute may seem like an eternity.

3: Deliver the beverage and suggest an appetizer within three minutes.

5: Check back for drink refills or the appetizer sale within five minutes.



Let's make sure you've got the I-135 steps down. Writing them below will help you remember them.

I: _____

1: _____

3: _____

5: _____

Did you get them all right? Then let's move on to...

The Perfect Pour

Attention, Bartenders: You play a key role in making sure the beer you serve turns out to be the beer guests expect. The perfect pour begins with a "beer clean" glass – one thoroughly washed and rinsed, then stored upside-down on a raised mat that allows air to circulate. Don't put the glasses upside-down on a towel to dry. It contaminates the end product. And never, ever serve beer in a warm glass, no matter how clean it is.

Now you're ready to pour. Grab the tap handle at the *base*, opening the faucet all the way in a quick, smooth motion. Pulling from the top starts the flow too slowly, which causes excessive foam. In the beginning, tilt the glass at a 45-degree angle, then straighten as you pour, being careful not to overfill and shooting for a one-inch collar of foam.



Why a foam head? Because it produces a better-tasting and better-looking product. A beer with little or no foam seems flat and retains CO₂ gas, which guests swallow. As a result, they get filled up faster, and your operation sells less beer.

A proper foam head amounts to nothing, however, if it has disappeared by the time the beer reaches the guest. Bartenders should always prepare wine and mixed drinks before the beer portion of the order. Servers, meanwhile, should be staged nearby, ready to deliver the goods while they're still good.



In the spaces below, write three “do’s” when it comes to pouring a perfect beer and three “don’ts.” Feel free to use the tips previously mentioned or, better yet, include ones based on your own experience or procedures in your operation.

Do’s:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Don’ts:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Opening Wine

Attention, Servers: You should carry a wine opener with you at all times. First of all, it's tough to open a bottle without one. Second, if you can operate a corkscrew with confidence, you'll be well on your way to wine-selling success.

Here's a step-by-step guide to opening, presenting and pouring wine:



- With the label facing toward the host (the person who placed the order), present the wine and repeat its name: *"Your Sutter Home Merlot..."*
- With the knife part of the corkscrew, cut just below the lip of the bottle to remove the foil. Put the foil in your apron, not on the table or bar.
- Wipe the top of the bottle with a napkin.
- Place the point of the corkscrew in the middle of the cork and turn firmly. Try to keep the point in the middle of the cork and apply more pressure as you turn.
- After three or four turns, take the fulcrum of the corkscrew and latch it to the lip of the bottle.
- Pull up slowly, until the cork releases from the bottle.
- Remove the cork from the corkscrew and place it in front of the host.
- Wipe off the top of the bottle again.
- Hold the bottle with the label facing toward your guests and pour a sample of wine into the host's glass.
- After the host approves the wine, pour it clockwise around the table to women first, men second and the host last. Pour each glass about two-thirds full, taking care that you don't touch the rim of the glass with the bottle.
- To avoid dripping wine on a guest or on the table, twist and pull the bottle up in one smooth motion as you finish pouring.
- For parties of five or more, use good judgment when pouring to make sure everyone gets some wine. You may have to fill the glasses less than two-thirds full to accommodate each guest. If you're unsure how far the bottle will go, it's better to pour less than too much. The best approach of all, however, is to suggest two bottles of wine at the start. Then you'll have plenty to go around.
- After pouring the wine, place red wines on the table in front of the host. White wine bottles should be placed in a ceramic or metal chiller.





Review the previous wine-opening steps, paying particular attention to any techniques you're not currently doing. Then, before the start of an upcoming shift, go to the bartender and offer to open a bottle of the house wine. Open it the same precise way you'd do it in front of guests. Practice makes perfect.

NOTE: Be prepared to open a bottle in front of your manager or trainer.

That's the Spirit

When serving cocktails, presentation is key. Guests want to feel like they're getting something out of the ordinary, especially if they've ordered a premium or super-premium pour. They don't want to see, for example, a brown, dried-out lemon wedge adorning their Fris and Tonic.

A simple rotation system will help keep fresh fruit fresh. Remember: "First in, first out. Last in, last out." And, if it's your job, be sure to cover cut fruit thoroughly at closing time. A little prevention goes a long way.

For servers, it's bad form — as well as unsanitary — to present drink orders after you've carried them by the rim of the glass. Instead, grab hold at the base or stem. You shouldn't be touching where guests will be sipping.

At the point you present the drink, make it a habit to repeat the brand name. Don't say: "Here's your gin Martini." Do say: "Here's your Beefeater Martini."

Repeating the brand enhances guests' perception of quality and shows that you know what *Precision Service* is all about.



There are many ways you can put to work what you've just learned about *Precision Service*. But, for now, determine the three best ideas you picked up in this section and write them below.

The Three Best Ideas:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

At the end of *The Service That Sells! Workbook for Alcohol Beverage Service*, you'll be transferring these ideas to a Final Action Plan, which outlines your time line and game plan for improving your sales and service delivery with the strategies that work best for you.