

## TEAM TALK- A pre-shift meeting primer



However sophisticated your training may be, its merits will soon be lost without effective and consistent reinforcement.

One of the most effective ways managers can reinforce training is through short and well planned pre-shift meetings. These are 10-15 minute sessions where managers can build confidence and gain valuable feedback.

Typically held just prior to a shift, the meetings are essential for improving customer care and boosting average spend as they present an opportunity to exchange ideas, test menu knowledge and highlight special dishes.

The most effective shift meetings are simple, informal and interactive. Interactive being the key word here. Attendees should be encouraged to do most of the talking, following the rule where you speak 20% of the time and they speak the other 80%.

Managers can control the meeting by introducing discussion topics, and encouraging participation through questions and role play exercises.

Here are a few discussion ideas:

- Test menu knowledge through role play, with the manager playing the role of the guest and server recommending menu items
- Discuss customer care, such as handling complaints or telephone etiquette.
- Describe the specials, and have waiting staff describe them back
- Review forthcoming promotions or advertisements, or discuss any large parties or groups coming in
- You can brainstorm marketing ideas, sales goals or review average spend.

When determining which topics to discuss at a shift meeting, it is important to consider the meeting from the employee's point of view or WIIFM (what's in it for me?). First you must explain the benefits of putting what they learn into practice. Second, you must identify the reasons why they should listen and participate. Typically employees benefit through an increased knowledge and the confidence to do their job more effectively.

### **Managers should also...**

**Be prepared-** set out objectives for the meeting beforehand. Organize all relevant support materials and be familiar with them well in advance of the meeting.

**Avoid distractions-**hold meetings in a place where will not be distracted by events outside or inside the restaurant. Appoint someone to answer the telephone during the meeting.

**Be enthusiastic-** it is contagious. To develop enthusiasm and motivation, managers must lead by example.

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**Ask questions-** direct questions to different individuals throughout the meeting. This ensures that everyone stays focused on the topics being discussed, and encourages dialogue.

**Encourage feedback-** ensure that employees understand the topics being discussed in the meeting.

To help you prepare your cast for the restaurant show performance, and as a small thank you for visiting the web site, I am offering a complimentary sampler of the Rehearsal Guide for shift meetings. The guide is an extract from the Rehearsal Guide which is included with A Role in the Show training package. I hope you find the information useful.

To download, click on the link below.

<http://www.lexingtoninteractive.com/pdf/freeguide.pdf>

### About the author

Robert Duprey has over 22 years management and training experience in the Restaurant and Hotel industry. He started Lexington Interactive to provide eLearning specifically for the Restaurant & Hotel Industry. The company is developing a catalog of interactive hotel and restaurant training courses for the video game generation. Contact Robert at: [robertduprey@lexingtoninteractive.com](mailto:robertduprey@lexingtoninteractive.com)  
[www.lexingtoninteractive.com](http://www.lexingtoninteractive.com)