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Pam Simos

- Hotel/Restaurant degree
- Published writer
- 30 years of hospitality experience
- Serving all size clients

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GuestService PAM SIMOS

Thinking Before Speaking

What you teach your team about effective communication can mean the difference between customers that come back ... the those that don't

Training your team to adopt effective communication skills will add to your guests' overall experience. While we train our teams how to sell menu items, set up and maintain equipment, operate the computer system and practice safety and sanitation procedures, we often forget to teach them how to communicate effectively.

Don't assume your staff knows how to speak properly to your guests—most people don't know and must be trained. Your guests will judge your operation by the degree of “care” that is conveyed in the words and the messages your employees send.

Choosing the right words and positively conveying messages can make the difference between repeat business and a one-time stop at your establishment.

When training your staff to communicate effectively, teach them these tips:

- Speak with an upbeat, well-modulated voice that conveys energy
- Use positive, flowing gestures and open body language
- Maintain effective eye contact
- Use animated facial expressions
- Use *team* words that build partnerships such as everyone, we, together, our, let's/let us. Avoid using the word “you” in a scolding or blaming fashion, which places the receiver in a defensive position (see examples below).

Rephrasing sentences and rewording thoughts to convey a positive message may take seconds longer, but the outcome is well worth it. As a result, you will stimulate repeat business and add more money to your bottom line. Here are some re-worded phrases you can teach your team:

Matt Loder, owner of **Crabby Bill's**, headquartered in Indian Rocks Beach, Florida says: “We teach our team to take the time to *think* before they *speak*. A little more effort on their part creates a “caring” culture in our restaurant that encourages guest loyalty”.

Pam Simos is President of Five Star Training and an FRA member. Her company, Five Star Training, specializes in reducing labor costs and maximizing profits through training. She can be reached via the web at www.five-startraining.com or by phone toll-free at (800) 385-7827(STAR).

DON'T SAY:	SAY:
“We ran out of...”	“We sold out of...” (<i>Ran out</i> conveys lack of preparation, while <i>sold out</i> suggests your item was popular)
“I don't know.”	“That is a great question, I will ask my owner/manager/co-worker and let you know.” (The majority of the time, someone will know the answer)
“Your credit card is bad.”	“I am sorry Mr./Mrs. Carrera, we are having some trouble getting authorization on your credit card—do you have another form of payment?”
“No.”	“I'm sorry we don't have ___ on the menu, but the ___ has a very similar taste.” or “I'm sorry we are unable to___, but here is what we can do...” (Always say “I'm sorry” when you are unable to accommodate a guest)
“You forgot to sign.”	“Mr./Mrs. Hsu, would you please provide me with your signature?”
“You need to show me your I.D.”	“I'm sorry for the inconvenience, would you mind showing me your identification?”
“We can't do that.”	“I'm sorry we are unable to accommodate you, but here is what we can do...”
“I don't know, I'm new.”	“That's a good question. Let me see if I can find the answer for you.”