

# How to Create a Sales Culture

**D**id you know that you can make more than \$100,000 this year by teaching your servers to sell properly? Developing a solid sales strategy that focuses on suggestive selling is the key to reaching this goal. It takes only a few extra seconds to offer suggestions. Training your servers to become a profit center is essential to the growth of your restaurant, especially in a sluggish economy. You can develop a sales-centered culture by:

- integrating sales-related objectives in your server job descriptions and manuals
- including sales performance as part of the server evaluations
- teaching specific selling techniques and conducting role playing exercises in sales training seminars
- setting goals and tracking sales
- holding sales contests to create excitement.

## The Menu: A Sales Brochure

How can you expect your servers to sell if they are not trained in menu knowledge? You will benefit by having your team sampling every item and learning details such as descriptions, sizes/portions and ingredients.

Every server should receive at least two-three



**GUIDE THEM:** Profits increase when waiters use suggestive selling techniques.

- suggest sides such as mushrooms on steaks and french fries with sandwiches.

The following menu items offered to an entire table will add \$1.00 more per guest:

- offer one dessert for sharing or a dessert to go
- suggest one carafe or bottle of wine/champagne per table
- recommend one appetizer per table for sharing.

- name-brand liquor for a smooth and flavorful taste
- wine matched to an entree

The more you offer suggestions, the greater the opportunity to increase sales. When guests are enjoying one course, preview the next course. For example, say: "Save room for our Double Decker Delight." Listen carefully to what the guests say. You may hear some clues that

*By creating a sales-centered culture, you will boost your profits with just a little effort.*

hours of suggestive selling training upon hiring and a refresher seminar every four to six months.

"To keep sales and quality a priority, we place two to three dinner entrees on tables at preshift meetings and have servers describe, taste and critique the items," says Mike Carcaise, v.p. of operations at Dan Marino's Town Tavern. "It builds their confidence on flavors and presentation. It also helps them practice their verbal selling techniques."

## Upselling and Add-On Sales

Knowledge is power, and power breeds confidence. The more your servers know, the more your profit will grow. So how can you earn an extra \$100,000 each year? It's simple: Train your staff to sell an average of \$1 more per guest. Beyond selling beverages with the meal, your servers can:

- upgrade alcoholic beverages (sell a call instead of a well, a premium instead of a call, or suggest frozen specialty and premium drinks)
- offer to add meat, poultry or seafood to a salad

## Four Key Selling Strategies

Here are some additional ideas to help teach your servers how to sell:

**Sell with a smile.** The more enthusiasm generated about a menu item, the more likely guests will order it.

**Sell the benefits.** It's important to tell the guest how they can benefit from a particular food/beverage item. Here are some examples:

- combination appetizers-entrees, so the guest can sample a variety of items
- frozen thirst-quenching drinks on hot days
- large platters to satisfy hearty appetites

will signal greater sales opportunities. Here are some common phrases:

- "It is our anniversary/birthday." (bottle of champagne)
- "I'm starved." (large Captain's Platter)
- "What do you suggest?" (your favorites)

By developing a sales-centered culture, you will maximize your chances to expand bottom-line profits with minimal effort.

**Pam Simos** is the president of Five Star Training, a St. Petersburg, FL, company that specializes in maximizing profits through training. She can be reached at [www.five-startraining.com](http://www.five-startraining.com) by email: [star5training@aol.com](mailto:star5training@aol.com), or toll-free: at 800-385-7827(STAR).