



Rethinking STAFF TRAINING

Empowering Staff, Enhancing Experiences

By Brandon Willey

The vibe and service quality often dictate success in the bustling world of bowling and family entertainment centers. At the core of that success? Outstanding staff training ensures every guest leaves with a smile and plans to return. Frank Price, the brain behind "The Experience Rescue" and managing partner at FL Price, says, "Without solid training, you're just hoping your guest experiences don't fall flat. It's about ensuring your team is equipped, not just present."

There are many challenges in training a typically younger workforce. New hires often feel overwhelmed by the responsibilities thrown at them if the onboarding process is rushed or inadequate. They need time to absorb the nuances of their roles with thorough training and constructive follow-up, which helps prevent frustrations and errors. "Let them practice," Price suggests, "and guide them with positive coaching rather than micromanaging every step."

Safety is a top priority in any location-based entertainment venue, and bowling centers are no exception. Comprehensive training on facility-specific safety standards is essential for preventing accidents and ensuring a secure environment for guests and staff. By investing in comprehensive training focusing on communication, safety, family-friendliness, conflict resolution, and cultural inclusivity, center operators can ensure their facilities are welcoming, safe, and enjoyable for all guests.

The Art of Communication in a Noisy World

At the heart of exceptional guest service is effective communication. Staff at entertainment venues need to

master both verbal and non-verbal cues to meet guests' needs proactively. This becomes even more crucial in a high-energy environment like a bowling center, where noise and activity levels are high. Training programs should focus on active listening skills, helping staff pick up on both said and unsaid guest needs, and making guests feel genuinely heard.

Safety First and Always

Safety isn't just another box to tick—it's imperative for ensuring that fun never turns into a trip to the emergency room. Comprehensive safety training tailored to specific venue needs means every team member knows how to handle everything from a spilled drink to a full-blown emergency. Regular drills and updates on procedures keep everyone sharp and prepared. "It's about creating a reflex of safety," notes Price.

Emergency response training and regular drills are critical for effectively preparing staff to handle various incidents. Moreover, given the unfortunate reality of modern safety concerns, preparation for more severe incidents, such as active shooter situations, should also be included. Staff need to know how to respond!

Regular updates and refresher courses on safety protocols are crucial to keep staff informed about the latest safety measures and technologies. This ongoing training can include new regulatory requirements, advancements in safety equipment, and updates to emergency procedures. Encourage staff to report potential hazards and participate in safety discussions.

Competitive Strategies

Navigating Tough Conversations

No matter how smooth operations are, challenging situations will pop up. That's where conflict resolution training comes into play. Equip your staff with the skills to de-escalate and resolve conflicts gracefully, turning potentially negative experiences into demonstrations of care and professionalism. "Teach them to handle the heat without getting burned," advises Price.

Service recovery training is essential for maintaining guest satisfaction and loyalty. Staff should be trained on techniques for empathetic listening, offering sincere apologies, and providing immediate solutions or forms of compensation to rectify the situation. Empowering your team to make on-the-spot decisions can save a disgruntled guest.

Inclusion: Beyond Checking Boxes

Today's guests come from all walks of life and embracing that diversity can set a venue apart. Recognizing and addressing the special needs of families can make a significant difference in their experience. Enhancing accessibility for all guests is a vital part of inclusivity training. This involves ensuring that facilities are accessible to individuals with disabilities and neuro diversities and accommodating various needs, from dietary restrictions to language barriers, assistance with lightweight balls and lane bumpers, and accommodating strollers and other family necessities.

Encouraging Loyalty

Price stresses the importance of ongoing engagement and recognition. Training staff to provide genuine, positive interactions helps build relationships that encourage repeat visits. "Recognition goes a long way," says Price. "A simple thank you can turn a good experience into an unforgettable one."

Role-playing can often provide a safe environment for first-time encounters with different scenarios. Price explains, "Role-playing builds confidence in team members that can help them learn their day-to-day roles without feeling the pressure of the actual live job. These exercises help employees learn how to handle various situations before they face them on the job."

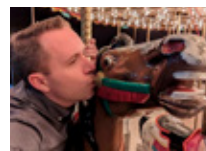
Continuous Improvement and Feedback

Price emphasizes, "This generation responds to encouragement and immediate feedback. Consistent and ongoing

positive reinforcement is not always financial or tangible. A simple thank you, offering congratulations, or supportive coaching feedback and role-playing from a manager or lead shows you care. When you are not around, these things will make a huge difference in staff motivation."

Furthermore, Price adds, "This is especially true for today's young workforce, who are eager to progress in their work position. If upward mobility is scarce in your center, create "in-between" steps, titles, and additional responsibilities to meet this need, for example, a "training Jedi," lead supervisors, opening and closing responsibilities, cross training multiple positions, or use inventive titles, like "Innovator of Fun" that carry unique responsibilities and perks.

Investing in comprehensive training and reinforcement systems for staff in these critical areas can significantly elevate the guest experience at your center. Effective communication, robust safety protocols, adept conflict resolution, and cultural inclusivity are essential to exceptional service. By prioritizing these training areas, you can create a welcoming, safe, and enjoyable environment that encourages repeat visits and positive reviews, ensuring long-term success. ●



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