

Generation “WHY”?

New Trends for the New Generation



This year’s Culinary Trends issue is loaded with new ideas that can spark the creative juices of hospitality leaders. These fresh ideas and approaches are capturing the interest of consumers, and they are terrific opportunities for you as operators to put them into practice at your businesses this year. For many operators, though, that excitement will be quickly stifled when they present these ideas to the people they must rely on to bring them to life: their Generation Y staff.

There’s a saying in this business that we often use with our clients: “Front-line staff deliver bottom line profits.” Being at centre stage of a restaurant is tough enough without trying to incorporate every whimsical idea that your manager hears about. If a new idea is to succeed, management must first gain trust from their staff. This starts with answering the question: “Why bother?” Your staff loves change—but they hate transition. The fact is that the success of these new initiatives will be driven by your front-line staff.

“Because I said so!” is rarely the precursor to the launch of a successful idea. I’m not sure that the command-and-control stance worked all that well with Generation X, but I know it is not the recipe for success with Gen Y (approx.

age 20 – 30). In fact, I like to call them Generation WHY. This group wants to know WHY you do everything you do in your business: why it matters to your guests, why it creates a competitive point of difference, and, in particular, why it matters to them, your staff.

GETTING THE TEAM ON BOARD

That said, here are few helpful approaches to consider when getting your team on board with new ideas:

1) Frame the benefits

Explain why this new trend is right for your concept, how it fits with what already exists, and why implementing this trend into the business will build on the overall brand. Your staff may like the way things are now and need reasons to invest in new ideas.

2) Answer the question: “What’s in it for me?”

Customers are always looking for something fresh, and happy customers

means more customers. More happy customers equals higher revenue and higher tips. Everybody wins. Get creative and make sure that your staff help guests truly connect with the experience and everything that your concept has added when adopting these new trends.

3) Educate

The more you involve your team in the process, the more ownership they have over the outcome. The best operators tend to be the best teachers. You can spend your time demanding change or coaching it. It is critical that both the back- and front-of-house staff relate to, connect with, and are engaged by your offerings. The more they stand behind your products, the more they can and will connect with their work experience. Connecting your new trends to your staff will not only improve your guests’ experience, it will also improve staff retention, as they will truly be engaged with your business concept.

To some, these steps might seem pretty basic, but I challenge all of you to really spend time with your teams on WHY you are doing what you are doing this year, and not just WHAT you plan to do. Our current core staff members are a new generation that can help take your business to new levels and thrill your customers in ways that may not have been seen before. But in order for that to happen, you must connect this generation — Generation WHY — to your core purpose.

For great ideas on improving your business, check out



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