



Paul Jackson, Managing Director of Danes Gourmet Coffee, talks about perfecting customer service to keep your clients coming back.

The rules of espresso engagement

Picture this: you walk into your local cafe, the barista warmly greets you by name and then promptly confirms your signature ‘macchiato with one sugar’ order. You feel welcome and at home as you retire to a seat and anticipate your sure-to-be-good coffee.

Although there’s nothing extraordinary about this scene, unfortunately it’s far from the norm in cafés across the country, where service is all-too-often left on the sidelines. Customer service should be a large component of the coffee experience, yet it’s often overlooked by café owners and baristas alike. The good news is that it doesn’t take much to provide great customer service, provided you have the desire and commitment.

DELIVERING A HOLISTIC CAFÉ EXPERIENCE

One part of running a good café is ensuring you’ve got the right coffee, machine and the skills to match. The other part is the personal part, where you are interacting with your customers. So in addition to making great coffee, you want to provide your customers with the full package.

Make the most of the opportunity to show your customers you genuinely care and are committed to serving them. With this comes a loyal and growing customer base, and ensures a healthy trade now, and into the future.

EXAMINE YOUR ATTITUDE TO SERVICE

The aim of great customer service is simple: to make your customers feel appreciated and comfortable. Start by

acknowledging that the customer is everything. Without them, you would have no business, so always take it to heart that you are there to serve the customer.

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If you’re a café owner, the onus is on you, as you will set the tone for your business and your staff. When making hiring decisions, always consider a prospective employee’s potential for providing great customer service. An extroverted, bubbly personality can’t be taught, so look for individuals with these character traits when selecting new staff.

CUSTOMER SERVICE IN ACTION

There are no secret tactics for providing excellent customer service, but there are a few guidelines you can follow to ensure you’re doing all you can to show your customers they are valued.

Always acknowledge your customers – Whether it’s a smile, a nod, or a hello, acknowledge the customer within a short timeframe of them entering your café, even if you’re busy. This immediately helps them feel welcome and at ease – after all, many customers consider their favourite café to be their second home.

Make eye contact – some customers may be shy, and you may sense this. You can still interact with them by making eye contact, which will make you both feel more comfortable with each other.

Learn their name – The café experience is a very personal thing, particularly when you consider that many of your customers are visiting you on a daily basis. Familiarise yourself with the regulars and get to know them on a first-name basis. Build rapport with them and show them you genuinely care by taking an interest in them.

Get to know their order – If you struggle with names, at the very least, get to know your regular customers’ orders. After greeting them, confirm their order, and they’ll immediately feel good knowing you care enough to remember what their coffee of choice is. This type of engagement is worth tens of thousands of dollars to a café, where a loyal customer base is a crucial element of success.



GOING THE EXTRA MILE

One highly successful Sydney café owner is known to be a master at nurturing his relationships with customers. He’ll sometimes give a complimentary coffee to a customer he knows (which is a very low-cost way of rewarding regular customers, particularly when some are buying several coffees a day). Closing time may have come and gone, but he’ll squeeze in one last order for a regular customer who turns up at the door. These simple touches show his care for customers, and have earned him a loyal customer base that is consistently growing.

Finally, you can go even further with your customer engagement by learning how to share your passion for coffee with your customers. As a barista and/or café owner, your love for all things espresso is probably what’s brought you here. Having a passion for coffee is wonderful, but you also need the ability to share this with your customers.



So make the effort to learn the right communication skills.

Go beyond basic menu knowledge by learning how to speak about the type of coffee you are serving, the flavour profile and its day-to-day variations, as well as the different blends on offer. In order to do this, you need the

knowledge and vocabulary that will enable you to express your passion and expertise.

If you’re a dedicated barista you hopefully already understand how important ongoing training is. There’s always more to learn and more ways to educate your palate. Rack up your “tasting miles,” and work with someone who will help you increase your coffee vocabulary.

SERVICE SIMPLICITY

Engaging with your café customers is about learning basic retail skills, but ones that are often forgotten. Cafés that implement these principles will foster a warm and welcoming atmosphere and be rewarded with a loyal customer base.

To create that atmosphere it takes a positive, optimistic mindset, and like the standard of coffee, it starts at the top. So go the extra mile for your customers, and let your passion shine through. You’ll be creating a great experience for your customers, and encouraging them to return, time and time again.