GUIDE TO PROFITABLE FOOD & BEVERAGE

Foreword / Introduction
Prioritizing the Business
Food & Beverage 101: The Basics
Labor Costs & Controls
Building the Banquet Business
Sample Job Descriptions
Communication & Management Style
End Note
Table of Contents

Foreword / Introduction ............................................... 1
Prioritizing the Business ............................................. 3
Food & Beverage 101: The Basics .................................. 5
Labor Costs & Controls ............................................... 33
Building the Banquet Business .................................. 39
Sample Job Descriptions ........................................... 49
Communication & Management Style ......................... 53
End Note ...................................................................... 69
Foreword / Introduction
Foreword

Since 1991, Profitable Food Facilities has been in the business of advising and evaluating public and private golf courses (among other recreational facilities classified as being in the "captive market" business) how to better manage the food and beverage (f/b) within. Volume sales has ranged from $50,000-$3,000,000 annually. Each club has distinctive challenges, but there are common threads that identify all the f/b operations, the core of which is discussed here.

This manual can best be described as a collection of primers and notes based on findings at over 100 golf establishments. It has been designed as a quick read, the direct opposite of bulky hospitality volumes that often sit untouched on shelves in offices everywhere, begging to be read. It is hoped that this minimalist approach is not so overwhelming. Consider it an invitation to think differently or to be used as a benchmark against which any course owner or general manager can compare their current f/b business performance.

Introduction

If golf course managers and owners were to be surveyed about which of the departments were the most challenging to understand and have control over, the food and beverage (f/b) department would likely yield many votes. Often misunderstood and seldom given credit for the sales and profit potential, f/b is instead avoided and the source of much misinformation.

Surprisingly, ownership and general management tend to feather off from so-so results and accept the general excuses given by their own key f/b personnel, the most popular being, "Hey, everyone else is losing money in golf f/b.” Rarely is the explanation backed up by the hardcore data necessary to support the numbers that Accounting generates every month. Without a timely set of systems and procedures designed to monitor how f/b is performing, speculation is the only approach to P&L outcomes, and that is unacceptable.

The following pages are an antidote to the dead ends, mystery and frustration that plague many a public course or private club. Whether the f/b facility within the golf operation is low or high volume, everything in this manual can be applied. This can be the tool to help all involved to better understand the complexities of controlling the most important resources: labor (dollars and personnel,) product (food and beverage) and revenues.
Prioritizing the Business
The golf course or club in itself is unique within the hospitality segment, alike yet different in many ways from a stand-alone restaurant, hotel or similar venue. There are usually many separate revenue centers at a golf course:

- A formal dining room for a la carte lunch and dinners.
- A more casual dining room (members’ grill) for golfers to gather in.
- Multiple bars on the property.
- Catering and banquet operation.
- The halfway house out on the course.
- Snack bar or café at the turn.
- Vending machines.

Following are the priorities for a course that is chasing after the elusive food & beverage business:

1. The golfers, your customers—after all, this is why the course exists. Taking care of the players and/or members food-wise is a must. The facilities already exist, so they should be utilized as much as possible. Many courses measure the f/b sales in terms of “per cap,” or f/b revenues per round.

2. The banquet business may rank second as a target niche, but in terms of profit and sales potential, it is the mother lode—higher menu prices that rarely are challenged, profit margins that make a la carte dining pale by comparison, and labor costs that any restaurateur would envy. The banquet and catering business alone can make or break a club’s budget. It is often the difference between black and red ink on the bottom line.

3. Breakfast and Lunch. By the nature of the sport, these two times for dining fit hand in glove with golf. For the course lucky enough to be near a business district, there is the bonus possibility of attracting a non-golf lunch crowd that is looking for alternatives to the chain outfits or local, independent haunts.

4. Dinner. At the bottom of the list, and rightly so. The nation is littered with country club dining rooms that had ambitious beginnings to be a five-star dinner destination for members, yet are now idle with minimal to no patronage. The competition down the street from chain eateries and trendy one-of-a-kinds is fierce, fueled by a continual bombardment of television, radio and print ads, as well as the weekly restaurant reviews that appear regularly in the media. Is it any wonder that when a working spouse arrives home from work and asks the family where they would like to go out and eat tonight, that the local club is but a distant memory. The failure of the club’s dinner business is likely the seed that sprouted the concept of membership f/b “minimums,” whereby the member is gently forced to occasionally eat at the club or forfeit a chunk of change either monthly or quarterly when it is dues time.
Food & Beverage 101: The Basics
Purchasing Strategies

Good food costs are partly influenced by smart shopping for the best prices. Negotiating a more favorable contract is not a guarantee for a great bottom line, but more like icing on the cake. Suppliers are in the business of making a profit, too. Dealing with them is not unlike buying a car—one never really knows just how great of a deal has been struck, and unless you ask, no one is going to cut you a deal.

Before looking at ways to get more favorable arrangements with vendors and suppliers, it is in the best interest of the golf course to take a hard look at how purchasing is currently being handled. Questions are in order:

- When was the last time any accounts (each different supplier that comes to the back door is a separate account) were put up for bid? It is not uncommon for a chef or f/b manager to take the path of least resistance and many business relationships are kept going simply because it is simpler than renegotiating. It should be a standard practice to review accounts at least every two years; the process re-energizes relationships and makes it clear to the sales rep that the course takes its spending power seriously.
- How many accounts does the course have with different suppliers? Too many courses make the mistake of spreading out their business, choosing to spend a little bit of money with several similar vendors instead of leveraging the account by doing the bulk of purchasing with a “main” supplier. There will always be specialty items that can be had only from unique sources, but this tends to be an excuse from the chef more than a valid reason for having to open up the back door several times a day instead of once or twice. The perfect offense for this type of defensive response is to point out that multiple suppliers are delivering the same item, price differently. What is the strategy?
- Why are golf courses so secretive or reluctant to share information for prices paid at the back door? Clubs within a specific locale would do well to network with one another to find out how they can all do a better job on the bottom line. By siding with a course close by, an f/b manager may discover he/she is paying much more for the exact same product the neighbor is buying.
- Is the course a “high-maintenance” account? Generally all suppliers give respectable service, but some courses abuse that willingness to take care of the customer by constantly running out of product or forgetting to order something, causing the supplier to have to make more than the scheduled number of deliveries. In extreme cases, a twice-weekly stop makes five visits per week. Every time a truck backs up to the loading dock the fuel and labor meters are ticking away—the only way a supplier can make that up is to raise prices or start adding surcharges to the invoice.
- What do petty cash purchases look like? The same courses that are always running out of goods tend to make countless trips to the local market to avoid further embarrassment. Needless to say, the prices are higher, time and labor dollars are wasted, paperwork is increased; it’s the perfect cocktail for losing money (An inspection of local market receipts often reveals that goodies have been purchased on the course’s tab that have nothing to do with the business.)
After the above questions have been addressed, it is time to sit down with any supplier and do some research. The following issues should be discussed to meeting the objective of improving prices:

- Find out if discounts or further reductions in prices are available.
  - In return for lower mark-ups or margins, the typical agreement a primary supplier is asking for is that the bulk of a club’s food supplies (maybe 80%) will be purchased through them—even they understand that secondary vendors are necessary. When chemicals, paper goods and smallwares are added to the mix, reaching 80% is easy.
  - Most primary suppliers will track usage of particular products that are eligible for rebates once certain quantities are reached, but it doesn’t hurt for the chef to do the same.
  - In cases where unusually large quantities are involved, a manufacturer of a food product (not the supplier) will recognize the value of the course as a customer and extend a deal known as “deviated pricing”; in this case, the supplier will lower the price further and be reimbursed by the food maker. At the least, most manufacturers have promotional budgets that allow for them to reward heavy users with free product.
  - A course that truly has its ordering act together could propose fewer deliveries per week in exchange for a percentage discount. Most main suppliers do offer discounts for minimum “drop” or load sizes.
  - The course that pays its bills quickly (14 days or less) may qualify for a discount, the argument being that the supplier is probably using the course’s money to help keep its own warehouse stocked.

### Receiving

After all the work that is put into purchasing product, at least as much effort should be put into what happens at the back door when the goods are delivered. Many things can go wrong during the delivery, and the people checking in the order need to be trained in accepting shipments properly.

Everyone is guilty of merely going through the motions at times. The trusted receiver should have a sense of ownership and protect the interests of the golf course. It is amazing how many orders, large or small, are signed off on without being checked in properly.

**Tip:** Check past invoices for signs that each item, line by line, has been “checked” or circled to indicate that someone is actually confirming the count.
Effective receiving requires the person to be knowledgeable about a variety of things:

- **Product specifications.** If the menu calls for a specific type of patty for burgers, the receiver must be aware so as not to accept an item that has been shipped in error by the supplier. That person should also be able to identify product that is less than satisfactory. This is particularly true for vegetables and fruits. If a golf course develops a reputation for never sending back product because of marginal quality, let it be said that the produce supplier may learn where to "dump" the stuff that another business may reject.

- **Invoices.** The receiver must be able to read and understand invoices as they relate to product descriptions, prices and quantities. Supplier invoices can be tricky to those unfamiliar with the paperwork. Shortages or returns should be accompanied by documentation in the form of credit memos. Shortages are not unusual.

- **Security.** The back door never is to remain open without someone standing watch. Allowing delivery personnel to come and go (including golf course personnel,) is an invitation for problems. Schedule product deliveries at slow times so that there is no excuse for taking short cuts during the checking in of an order.

- **Labeling and Dating Goods.** Label and date goods while the product is assembled in a stack on the floor. This helps the rotation process, ensuring freshness and decreasing the possibility of having to throw something out days later.

## Storage

After receipt, food and beverage products must be moved as quickly as possible into their designated storage areas. Golf course f/b personnel—not delivery people—should be putting product away. Deliveries left out in a back room unattended are subject to deterioration in quality (e.g., fresh fish should be iced and refrigerated at once, not left to sit on a counter for a couple of hours) and the possibility of pilferage. Frozen and chilled items deserve priority over dry goods when being put away.

Storage areas must be secure and lockable. Ideally remote areas are kept locked at all times, accessible only by management or with management attending. How many sets of keys is debatable, but two or less is preferred. Alas, there are courses guilty of keeping keys attached to a big spoon or other object so that the key will not get lost—a sign that the key has been lost before. Keys or locks should be changed with moderate frequency, certainly when a "key" person terminates.

Wire shelving/cages are commonly found within larger storage areas, for holding more expensive and tempting products (alcohol, meats, linens, smallwares and stemware.) Locked areas inside of locked areas sends a message to the staff that the course is serious about running the f/b business.

Alcohol seems to be a source of temptation and possible abuse. Despite the fact that the bar working area is very economical in terms of efficiency and storage, it remains a very open space. All alcohol should be locked up at the end of the day. Quantities should be only enough to handle a day and half of volume. Requisition sheets should be in use, a system for tracking alcohol from any storage area to another.
All storage should be neat and organized at all times. Keeping things in order makes the inventory process easier and quicker, helps for smarter ordering and increases awareness of quantities—a knack that comes in handy when something suddenly is missing. Partially full boxes should have the flaps cut off. Empty boxes are to be broken down immediately and placed in a holding area. Garbage and trash tasks are handled in a similar fashion to deliveries; management observes the job and re-secures the area.

Storage relates also to quality control. Improper storage can cause product to deteriorate. Most food products, including frozen goods, experience some sort of loss in quality if stored too long. Procedures must be in place to minimize the possibility of waste due to poor ordering, a change in volume patterns or the act of storage itself. Pressure to keep costs down can tempt management to serve product that is of marginal quality, which can only have a negative impact on your customers.

- **FIFO**, a common acronym in the hospitality business, means first in, first out inventory rotation. The product that has been on the shelf the longest is the first to be used. This means newly received goods must be put behind or beneath the goods that were there first. The chef or manager that does not have a smart ordering system in place (usually ordering by the seat of one’s pants) risks having heavy amounts of any item not getting the FIFO treatment, mainly because the employee assigned to put the goods away may take the easy way and load the new stuff on top of the old stuff.
- Dating and labeling delivered goods and prepared (in the kitchen) foods is also a way to combat waste. Marking the date with stickers or a pen can aid in rotation and also help to gauge how fast the usage is on a specific item. This is especially helpful for fruits, vegetables and meats, all items that have comparatively short shelf lives.
- Maintaining proper temperatures, humidity and ventilation can also prolong the life of food and drink.
  - Freezer storage temperature should be 0° F.
  - Refrigerated areas should be no warmer than 40° F.
  - Dry storage should be 50°-70° F.

Soft drinks (cans and bottles, unknown to most as some of the most expensive and non-profit contributors to the bottom line) should be stored with alcohol. Beer and sodas should be removed from main storage in complete cases—there should be no partial cases allowed. Wine and liquor by the bottle makes more sense.

**Sanitation and the Golf Course Kitchen**

It is likely that if most people knew how much handling of food occurs from the time it comes in the back door to the moment it is plated and served at the table or over a counter, they would be surprised, maybe hesitant about dining out. Even more likely is how shocked they would be if they were aware how many negligent chances are taken in the handling of food. All foods should be treated as a delicate commodity. It is crucial to educate employees in the proper methods for food handling.
Routine inspection of restaurants to prevent food-borne disease is mandated by food sanitation codes throughout the United States. But the shrinking tax dollar together with the mounting public pressures for prevention of environmental pollution have placed food protection programs in fierce competition with other environmental programs such as air, water and solid waste programs. Combined with the fact that chain operations get the attention because of a high public profile, and that there are many "greasy spoons" keeping inspectors busy, a golf course may not be an immediate priority on the Health Department’s list.

Whereas restaurants or food facilities once were subject to inspection every few months, the normal rate is often only once per year. An inspection can be a good thing, so not being subject to them can lull management to sleep as far as being 100% aware that the facility is doing everything it can to prevent sanitation problems.

Liability insurance premiums are higher than ever before, and if you include this with lost business, lost wages, lawyers’ fees and legal claims associated with food-related incidents, it stands to reason that any food facility, from course kitchen to the snack bar, has a great stake in keeping customers not only happy but healthy, too. The best protection against food-borne illness is education. A food handler who knows proper methods of storing, preparing, and serving food protects the customer’s health. The course that mandates that one or more staff be certified by licensed programs, regardless of local or state code is taking the extra smart step. For areas not as strict, there are many types of training programs from which to choose, including home study courses, community college curricula, video instructions and private companies that hire themselves out to give the necessary information to satisfy the need for sanitation education.

It has been shown that investigation of food-borne disease outbreaks consistently reveals that the major factors causing bacterial illness are:

1. Preparing foods several hours in advance of service.
2. Inadequate hot or cold storage of foods.
3. Inadequate cooking of foods.
4. Inadequate re-heating of foods.
5. Contamination of foods from infected workers or other sources.

A routine health inspection will most likely check the following:
- Are hot and cold foods kept out of the danger zone of 45-140° F?
- Are foods stored properly?
- Are displayed foods protected by glass?
- What is the condition of the toilet facilities? Can the help conveniently wash their hands in the kitchen?
- Are grease traps in good repair, clean and unclogged?
- Is garbage covered and disposed of properly?
- Do employees wear caps, hairnets, disposable gloves, etc.?
- Is there a designated area for employees to store personal belongings and change into their uniforms?
It is recommended that pest prevention be an ongoing service (monthly is common) rather than as needed. It is not unlike servicing a car. By going for routine checkups, something is less apt to go wrong when it is least expected. And as most pest companies usually charge an initial, higher start up fee as compared to the monthly visits, the economics also make sense.

If a customer suspects that an illness is related to something that was eaten in your facility, a general guideline for management involvement should be established.

- Get as much information as possible from the party.
- Be polite and show concern but do not debate/argue or admit liability.
- Let the party tell their own story. Do not introduce theories or symptoms.
- Do not diagnose or advise on treatment.

Before this happens, it is wise to check with the course’s liability insurance carrier for clarification on how to handle a claim of food-born illness.

Some comments on dealing with a health inspector: Food facility operators should take advantage of the experience and knowledge that a health inspector can bring to a food service establishment during a routine or investigative visit. Routine inspections should be received as an objective review of the facility’s condition and the employees’ practices, rather than an unpleasant conference over a poor report card. Many of the regulations the health department enforces have subtle but logical foundations.

According to the health code, inspectors are required to announce their presence before entering the kitchen to begin an inspection or investigation. Of course, that does not mean that they must wait for a manager to get off the phone and escort them. Do not try to stall the inspector. Routine inspections are unannounced so that the actual operating conditions may be observed.

At times there may be disagreements with certain cited violations. Rather than challenge the inspector, it is recommended that you obtain a copy of the regulations to which they are subject. That way specific rules may be reviewed before inspections or in the event that any inspection request seems unfair.

There is no set formula for behavior or attitude that is most beneficial to the food manager when they deal with a health department inspector. However, attentiveness to an inspector’s comments or requests (and immediate correction, when possible) indicates a sincere attempt on the manager’s part to comply with health codes. Consider the health inspector as an ally, not enemy.
Managing the Numbers

It is critical to the success of the f&b operation that the course has a set of systems and procedures for monitoring the significant amount of dollar going into and out of the course in the form of product and cash. The typical course takes f/b inventory once per month (insane as it may sound, a few do it quarterly,) with the f/b department walking an untidy pile of bills once a week to the Accounting Dept.

At month's end, the Accounting Dept is doing its best to generate a P&L. If the numbers are less-than-satisfactory for f/b, just exactly what can be done about researching or investigating? Probably nothing. The paper trail is icy-cold and the easy out is usually a declaration that things will come out in the wash, for sure.

It is a bad arrangement: First, the f/b department should be keeping a less complicated, yet efficient set of their own “books.” Second, tracking numbers monthly is not very effective. Weekly would be ideal. In extreme cases or conditions, key items are counted daily.

Inventory Systems

The accounting core of the f/b system is a weekly inventory of all product and beverage. Taking a physical count of everything, however, is only the beginning. Doing something with the inventory numbers by analyzing the results the same day helps management make smart decisions and/or take corrective action, if needed. The weekly numbers are a substitute for guessing as to why there might be a spike in the beverage cost.

The weekly inventory is to be taken the same time (early morning or late night) on the same day each week, the exception being month end. Food and beverage are treated as two separate accounts. Within the two basic groups beverage is further segmented into beer, wine, spirits and soft drinks; food may be split into meat, seafood, grocery, dairy, etc. The f/b department keeps a logbook or ledger of the purchases for the week. Following is a basic formula:

\[(\text{Beginning inventory} + \text{purchases}) - \text{ending inventory} = \text{usage}\]

\[\text{Usage (dollars)} \div \text{net sales} = \text{COG %}\]

For example, Golf Course X takes a first week's food inventory of $10,000 on Monday morning. The bills are tracked for that week and add up to another $5000 in food purchases. The next Monday morning, the inventory value is $5500. The food sales for that same week are $24,000. The formula:

\[\$(10,000 + 5000 \text{ purchases}) - \text{ending inventory of}$5500 = \text{usage of}$9500\]

\[$9500 \text{ usage} \div \text{sales of}$24,000 = 39.6% \text{ COG for food only}\]
To further illustrate tracking sub-groups within a category, the same formula is applied to the different beverage groups in the following example:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Beg Inv</th>
<th>Purchases</th>
<th>Ending Inv</th>
<th>Usage</th>
<th>Sales</th>
<th>COG %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Beer</td>
<td>575</td>
<td>650</td>
<td>425</td>
<td>800</td>
<td>2900</td>
<td>27.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wine</td>
<td>1500</td>
<td>400</td>
<td>1175</td>
<td>725</td>
<td>1925</td>
<td>37.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liquor</td>
<td>4800</td>
<td>475</td>
<td>4825</td>
<td>450</td>
<td>2150</td>
<td>20.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soft</td>
<td>2250</td>
<td>1000</td>
<td>1600</td>
<td>1650</td>
<td>7000</td>
<td>23.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Totals 9125 + 2525 - 8025 = 3625 ÷ 13975 = 25.9

Combining the previous examples will yield the overall COG for f/b:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Beg Inv</th>
<th>Purchases</th>
<th>Ending Inv</th>
<th>Usage</th>
<th>Sales</th>
<th>COG %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Food</td>
<td>10000</td>
<td>5000</td>
<td>5500</td>
<td>9500</td>
<td>24000</td>
<td>39.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beverage</td>
<td>9125</td>
<td>2525</td>
<td>8025</td>
<td>3625</td>
<td>13975</td>
<td>25.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Totals 19125 + 7525 - 13525 = 13125 ÷ 37975 = 34.6

There are other benefits to taking a weekly inventory. Management is more aware of what is sitting on the shelves. If the first inventory or two is painfully long because boxes have to be shifted to see behind or under something, the people involved should wise up and start keeping things more organized. The ideal inventory should involve no lifting or moving of boxes, the only exception being the need to weigh opened cases of meats, etc.

The weekly process will also motivate management to keep product at sensible levels. In an age of multiple deliveries per week, there is no excuse for having excess foods (particularly perishables) on hand. Unnecessarily heavy inventories lead to higher waste and undetected pilferage while tying up the course’s cash on shelves.

Inventory sheets should be laid out like the storage facility, with items listed as they are found on the shelves. The most common misstep is to list items alphabetically, which means a lot of page turning or bouncing around the room while counting, also likely to cause something to be missed on a shelf. The unit of count should be as finite as possible; counting partial cases will not be as accurate as counting the individual units within.

**The Concept of a Theoretical F/B**

Determining the COG by taking usage dollars and dividing by net sales (sales tax backed out) yields what is known as an **actual COG**. Although the actual COG is a true report card as to how the f/b department has been performing, to condemn or praise the results is jumping the gun; the actual COG must be compared to a **theoretical COG**, one of the most revealing, possibly fascinating tools available within the hospitality numbers structure. Remarkably, it is also one of the least used tools.
The theoretical COG, sometimes called ideal or standard COG, is simply an average COG based on the menu mix, or what menu items have actually been sold or rung into the cash register. It is a perfect world scenario that does not take into account the things that management may or may not be aware of, including waste, pilferage, portion control, employee discounts, guest comps, etc.

To illustrate, imagine a very basic menu at the 10th tee snack bar that consists of only three items: Hot dogs, fries and sodas. The upper half of the chart below shows a 1:1:1 ratio of items sold; a hot dog selling for $3.50, fries for $1.75, a fountain soda for $1.00. The * denoting net sales indicates that tax has been backed out—most snack bars include the tax in the price. The plate cost for each item (what it cost to serve) is shown as a dollar amount and also as the COG percentage. At first glance, the menu appears to have been geared to a total COG of 31.1%. In the real world, menus never break down into the 1:1:1 equation. The sales mix is instead a synthesis of all kinds of counts, some high, some low, some in between. Looking at the lower half of the chart below, the sales mix at a snack bar is likely closer to the following:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th># sold</th>
<th>total sales</th>
<th>net sales*</th>
<th>plate cost</th>
<th>COG%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>hot dog</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>$3.50</td>
<td>$3.27</td>
<td>$1.00</td>
<td>30.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>French fries</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>$1.75</td>
<td>$1.64</td>
<td>$0.68</td>
<td>41.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fountain soda</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>$1.00</td>
<td>$0.93</td>
<td>$0.14</td>
<td>15.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td></td>
<td>$6.25</td>
<td>$5.84</td>
<td>$1.82</td>
<td>31.1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th># sold</th>
<th>total sales</th>
<th>net sales*</th>
<th>plate cost</th>
<th>COG%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>hot dog</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>$1,050.00</td>
<td>$981.00</td>
<td>$300.00</td>
<td>35.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>French fries</td>
<td>188</td>
<td>$329.00</td>
<td>$308.32</td>
<td>$127.84</td>
<td>23.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fountain soda</td>
<td>465</td>
<td>$465.00</td>
<td>$432.45</td>
<td>$65.10</td>
<td>15.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td></td>
<td>$1,844.00</td>
<td>$1,721.77</td>
<td>$492.94</td>
<td>28.6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note the changes the total numbers have undergone, based on a revised sales mix. Whereas the f/b manager may have been under the assumption that the menu had been tailored to produce a 31.1% COG, in reality the operation should be running a 28.6% COG. The difference may not seem like a big deal, but if inventories revealed that the snack bar was running a 32% COG based on the above mix, the 3.4% spread would mean that about $60 worth of sales (or some product) is unaccounted for.
The snack bar menu below is closer to the real world. The format is slightly different, but the analysis is the same. Each item contributes its sales and profit margin towards a summary or average as to how the facility should be performing.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Cost</th>
<th>Net Sale</th>
<th>Price</th>
<th>COG</th>
<th>Units Sold</th>
<th>Total Cost</th>
<th>Total Net Sales</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>assorted danish</td>
<td>$0.47</td>
<td>$1.42</td>
<td>$1.50</td>
<td>31.3%</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>$47.00</td>
<td>$141.51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tuna sand</td>
<td>$1.17</td>
<td>$3.54</td>
<td>$3.75</td>
<td>31.2%</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>$32.76</td>
<td>$99.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>grill chicken sand</td>
<td>$1.29</td>
<td>$4.01</td>
<td>$4.25</td>
<td>30.4%</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>$76.11</td>
<td>$236.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hamburger</td>
<td>$0.73</td>
<td>$3.07</td>
<td>$3.25</td>
<td>22.5%</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>$32.85</td>
<td>$137.97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cheeseburger</td>
<td>$0.78</td>
<td>$3.30</td>
<td>$3.50</td>
<td>22.3%</td>
<td>157</td>
<td>$122.46</td>
<td>$518.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hot dog</td>
<td>$0.36</td>
<td>$1.89</td>
<td>$2.00</td>
<td>18.0%</td>
<td>196</td>
<td>$70.56</td>
<td>$369.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cheese steak</td>
<td>$1.14</td>
<td>$4.48</td>
<td>$4.75</td>
<td>24.0%</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>$72.96</td>
<td>$286.79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>coffee/tea</td>
<td>$0.11</td>
<td>$0.94</td>
<td>$1.00</td>
<td>11.0%</td>
<td>117</td>
<td>$12.87</td>
<td>$110.38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fountain drink sm</td>
<td>$0.15</td>
<td>$0.71</td>
<td>$0.75</td>
<td>20.0%</td>
<td>500</td>
<td>$75.00</td>
<td>$353.77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fountain drink lg</td>
<td>$0.20</td>
<td>$0.94</td>
<td>$1.00</td>
<td>20.0%</td>
<td>800</td>
<td>$160.00</td>
<td>$754.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gatorade</td>
<td>$0.77</td>
<td>$1.89</td>
<td>$2.00</td>
<td>38.5%</td>
<td>312</td>
<td>$240.24</td>
<td>$588.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bottled water</td>
<td>$0.40</td>
<td>$1.42</td>
<td>$1.50</td>
<td>26.7%</td>
<td>193</td>
<td>$77.20</td>
<td>$273.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>juice</td>
<td>$0.53</td>
<td>$1.89</td>
<td>$2.00</td>
<td>26.5%</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>$38.69</td>
<td>$137.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>draft beer</td>
<td>$0.35</td>
<td>$2.12</td>
<td>$2.25</td>
<td>15.6%</td>
<td>715</td>
<td>$250.25</td>
<td>$1,517.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wine cooler</td>
<td>$0.75</td>
<td>$2.36</td>
<td>$2.50</td>
<td>30.0%</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>$64.50</td>
<td>$202.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pizza</td>
<td>$0.72</td>
<td>$1.89</td>
<td>$2.00</td>
<td>36.0%</td>
<td>275</td>
<td>$198.00</td>
<td>$518.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>chicken fingers</td>
<td>$2.12</td>
<td>$4.48</td>
<td>$4.75</td>
<td>44.6%</td>
<td>283</td>
<td>$599.96</td>
<td>$1,268.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>french fries</td>
<td>$0.32</td>
<td>$1.42</td>
<td>$1.50</td>
<td>21.3%</td>
<td>779</td>
<td>$249.28</td>
<td>$1,102.36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>onion rings</td>
<td>$1.04</td>
<td>$3.30</td>
<td>$3.50</td>
<td>29.7%</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>$101.92</td>
<td>$323.58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>soft pretzel</td>
<td>$0.18</td>
<td>$0.71</td>
<td>$0.75</td>
<td>24.0%</td>
<td>267</td>
<td>$48.06</td>
<td>$188.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>chips</td>
<td>$0.23</td>
<td>$0.71</td>
<td>$0.75</td>
<td>30.7%</td>
<td>283</td>
<td>$65.09</td>
<td>$200.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cookie/candy</td>
<td>$0.31</td>
<td>$0.71</td>
<td>$0.75</td>
<td>41.3%</td>
<td>594</td>
<td>$184.14</td>
<td>$420.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>giant ice cream sand</td>
<td>$0.50</td>
<td>$1.42</td>
<td>$1.50</td>
<td>33.3%</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>$55.00</td>
<td>$155.66</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**TOTALS**

$9,907.08

**THEORETICAL COG**

29.0%
This same principle can be applied to any menu: A la carte dining, banquets, beverages only. The more menu items included, the more accurate the analysis. Note: These spreadsheet formats are easily doable on Microsoft Excel or similar software. Most club POS systems have f/b capabilities built into the package. The following example is of a club that has two dining areas, one formal, the other a more casual place for members and golfers. Note the difference in COG for the two concepts; the Grill Room menu is geared for margins that are more aggressive, which helps to offset the higher COG in the main dining room, a typical situation at most clubs.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Menu</th>
<th>Price</th>
<th>Plate Cost</th>
<th>Units Sold</th>
<th>Total Sales</th>
<th>Total Cost</th>
<th>COG %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>French Onion Soup</td>
<td>$4.00</td>
<td>$1.08</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>$92.00</td>
<td>$24.84</td>
<td>27.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clam Chowder</td>
<td>$6.50</td>
<td>$1.50</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>$487.50</td>
<td>$112.50</td>
<td>23.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crabmeat Appetizer</td>
<td>$9.00</td>
<td>$3.50</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>$225.00</td>
<td>$87.50</td>
<td>38.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kid Family Buffet</td>
<td>$7.00</td>
<td>$2.45</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>$294.00</td>
<td>$102.90</td>
<td>35.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family Buffet</td>
<td>$14.00$4.90</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>$1,134.00</td>
<td>$396.90</td>
<td>35.0%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Atlantic Swordfish Steak</td>
<td>$19.00</td>
<td>$7.97</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>$532.00</td>
<td>$223.16</td>
<td>41.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grilled Breast of Chicken</td>
<td>$13.00</td>
<td>$4.66</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>$1,001.00</td>
<td>$358.82</td>
<td>35.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fettuccine</td>
<td>$13.00</td>
<td>$4.59</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>$585.00</td>
<td>$206.55</td>
<td>35.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lamb Chops</td>
<td>$22.00</td>
<td>$10.79</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>$286.00</td>
<td>$140.27</td>
<td>49.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shrimp Dinner</td>
<td>$13.00</td>
<td>$3.00</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>$130.00</td>
<td>$30.00</td>
<td>23.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lobster Tail</td>
<td>$26.00</td>
<td>$14.59</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>$598.00</td>
<td>$335.57</td>
<td>56.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Filet Mignon</td>
<td>$22.00</td>
<td>$8.65</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>$328.70</td>
<td>$193.43</td>
<td>44.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Red Snapper</td>
<td>$19.00</td>
<td>$8.41</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>$347.00</td>
<td>$193.43</td>
<td>44.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medallions of Pork Loin</td>
<td>$16.00</td>
<td>$4.86</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>$208.00</td>
<td>$63.18</td>
<td>30.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delmonico Steak</td>
<td>$21.00</td>
<td>$7.92</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>$609.00</td>
<td>$229.68</td>
<td>37.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whole Wheat Linguine</td>
<td>$13.00</td>
<td>$4.59</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>$1,014.00</td>
<td>$358.02</td>
<td>35.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Desserts</td>
<td>$4.50</td>
<td>$1.87</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>$636.50</td>
<td>$143.99</td>
<td>41.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ice Cream</td>
<td>$2.50</td>
<td>$0.50</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>$97.50</td>
<td>$15.50</td>
<td>20.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Main Dining Room Totals** $8,892.50 $3,351.51 37.7%

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Menu</th>
<th>Price</th>
<th>Plate Cost</th>
<th>Units Sold</th>
<th>Total Sales</th>
<th>Total Cost</th>
<th>COG %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Batten Down Salad</td>
<td>$8.00</td>
<td>$1.45</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>$360.00</td>
<td>$65.25</td>
<td>18.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Centerboard Wrap</td>
<td>$8.00</td>
<td>$1.60</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>$320.00</td>
<td>$64.00</td>
<td>20.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gunwale Salad</td>
<td>$6.00</td>
<td>$1.01</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>$192.00</td>
<td>$32.32</td>
<td>16.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schooner Shrimp</td>
<td>$9.00</td>
<td>$2.12</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>$243.00</td>
<td>$57.24</td>
<td>23.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amidships Wrap</td>
<td>$9.00</td>
<td>$1.79</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>$882.00</td>
<td>$175.42</td>
<td>19.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lake Naomi Burger</td>
<td>$8.00</td>
<td>$2.62</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>$640.00</td>
<td>$180.80</td>
<td>28.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keelhaul Sandwich</td>
<td>$9.00</td>
<td>$2.74</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>$783.00</td>
<td>$238.38</td>
<td>30.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portside Burger</td>
<td>$9.00</td>
<td>$2.10</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>$1,035.00</td>
<td>$241.50</td>
<td>23.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Windward Wings</td>
<td>$8.00</td>
<td>$1.53</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>$312.00</td>
<td>$59.67</td>
<td>19.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pasta Special</td>
<td>$12.00</td>
<td>$1.65</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>$144.00</td>
<td>$19.80</td>
<td>13.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turkey Dinner</td>
<td>$9.00</td>
<td>$2.38</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>$441.00</td>
<td>$116.62</td>
<td>26.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Half-Hitch Sandwich</td>
<td>$7.00</td>
<td>$2.87</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>$196.00</td>
<td>$80.36</td>
<td>41.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Grill Room Totals** $5,548.00 $1,331.36 24.0%

**Clubhouse Grand Total** $14,440.50 $4,683.16 32.4%
To further refine the previous examples of theoretical COG, data including known waste, discounts and complimentary food and/or drink are factored in to get a truer picture of where the actual COG should be. Any spread between actual and theoretical COGS can be attributed to a fairly finite set of causes: Unknown waste, theft, poor portion control, or inventory error.

**Special Beverage Issues**

The complexity of properly managing and maintaining a f&b operation, and the perceived lack of profit often ensure that this area is secondary to greens fees and in the bottom line focus. Some facility operators have even gone so far as to call food and beverage “necessary evils.”

While both food and drink are necessary, beverages are easily the lesser of those two evils. Because food is commonly considered a loss leader (wrongly so,) drinks (both alcoholic and nonalcoholic) are relied on to boost a course operation’s bottom line each month—at least that’s how beverages should be looked at.

Not all beverages are created equal. Many boast higher profit margins than others (selling fountain soda yields much greater returns than selling bottled soda, for example) and some beverage categories don’t mesh with the needs of a facility’s clientele, such as an extensive wine list that serves no purpose other than an f/b manager’s presumption that it lends an air of prestige and culinary depth.

Particularly with beverages a manager can create plenty of leaks if he/she fails to pay attention to such crucial factors as inventory control, product selection and employee training and relations.

When calculating the COG for a facility’s food and beverage operation, the food and the beverages must be considered as two separate entities. Beverages need to be treated as a business within the business, with one or more lines on the profit-and-loss statement. Some facilities separate beverages into individual categories, each generating its own COG or pour cost. For example, alcoholic drinks are typically broken down into beer, wine and liquor. Typical COG for wine is 35%, 25% for beer and 18% for liquor—these are industry standards and only a reference point. The prices charged ultimately influence where the percentages should average, which might be an overall pour cost in the 25% range for a country club or public course.

Nonalcoholic drinks, meanwhile, can be divided into fountain soda, coffee and tea—all solid moneymakers with an average COG in the 12 to 15 percent range typically (some courses put coffee and teas in the food category to give a more finite picture of what is going on in beverages.)

Charting weekly COG numbers is strongly recommended. As mentioned earlier and worth repeating, it’s not unusual for more diligent f/b managers to perform daily counts of specific items, which allows for more timely recognition of numbers that are either too high or too low.
Calculating COG for beverage sales is one thing, but how do you know if that number is what it should be? Comparing the actual COG with a theoretical COG is one way to find out. “Theoretical” refers to what the COG would be in a perfect world: no pilferage, no spillage and no under- or over-pouring.

If the actual COG for alcoholic beverages at a facility is 28%, but the theoretical COG is 23%, one must determine the reason for that five-point spread. One way to do so is by comparing usage to sales. Say the point-of-sale system indicates 100 plastic bottles of beer were sold, but the weekly inventory reveals that 120 were used. Were the missing bottles stolen? Miscounted? Not even delivered? A detailed and up-to-date inventory system will help find the answer.

Draft beer is trickier. If the standard keg holds 15.5 gallons, there are 1,984 ounces of brew in a barrel. If club serves a 16-oz paper cup, the potential yield is 124 cups per keg. Even the most efficient bartender is going to spill a little, but if the operation is getting only 90 glasses per keg, something is askew. It could be equipment problems. Perhaps the employees need better training. To find out, begin an experiment using a full keg and track sales until the keg is empty.

Remote snack bars, temporary bars, and carts that don’t have the luxury of a cash register can still compare beverage usage to beverage sales by relying on the cup count—a method discussed in detail under cart management in another part of this manual (see page 29, Managing the Beverage Cart).

Nonalcoholic drinks are just as critical to monitor as alcohol. The general profit margin on fountain soda is sharply higher than bottled nonalcoholic beverages like soft drinks and juice. For example, a five-gallon bag-in-the-box (BIB) of fountain syrup is designed to yield about 3,800 fluid ounces of soft drink. If a facility is paying $45 for a BIB, it averages out to just more than a penny per ounce. If a 20-ounce cup half-filled with ice is the standard serving size, that cup will hold about 15 ounces of fluid. Throw in the costs of the cup, straw and lid, and the total expense is about 25 cents. Sold for $1.50, the pour cost is less than 17 percent, equating to $1.25 in gross profit.

Compare that to the 20-ounce soft-drink bottles that beverage distributors cheerfully sell to facilities for as much as 50 cents each. If one sells the bottle for that same $1.50, the pour cost jumps to 33 percent with only a $1 gross profit margin. Specialty drinks, such as energy enhancers and sport ades, are even less profitable, costing anywhere from .75 cents up to $2 each. That’s why aggressive courses might charge a premium for bottled beverages.

If feasible, a golf course should focus on fountain drinks and consider bottled drinks a secondary option—do not hide them, just don’t prominently display for all the world to see. Incidentally, draft beer offers the same advantages over cans and bottles. Bottled and canned beverages deserve special attention, as they are notorious for being profit-killers.
Be careful when you price various cup sizes. Don’t simply pluck a number out of the air based on what the course on the other side of town or the local convenience store is charging for a 20 oz. soft drink. A golf course cannot compete with those entities on price. Golf courses are arguably totally different animals - a captive market with the ability to push the envelope a tad, knowing the customer will accept the terms. Consider the other end of the spectrum - the local movie plex that charges $3.50 for a soda and suddenly an aggressive pricing strategy or positioning actually seems reasonable.

Another advantage of the BIB system is storage. Bottled drinks take up a ton of real estate and it always seems like the supplier can never find the stack of empties to put back on the truck. Good inventory practice includes keeping stock on the shelves at manageable levels. Beverage vendors are rarely sensitive to this issue and often unload far more cases of drinks than a facility needs.

Contributing to excess inventory is the fact that alcohol and soft drink distributors usually discount for bulk purchases or special deals. Overreacting to a sales pitch or leaving a less-experienced staff member in charge of ordering can actually make managing the operation more difficult. Saving a buck or two on a case may, in the long run, be a strategic gaff. Again, excess inventory means restricted cash flow, unnoticed theft and long hours taking inventory counts.

Also worth noting is that empty beer kegs and carbon dioxide tanks are valuable. A $10 or $15 deposit fee is usually tacked on to each invoice and then credited upon their return, so don’t store them in an unsecured area frequented by the public, where they can easily be stolen.

Beverage distributors, as savvy product-placement specialists, are more than willing to help you merchandise their brands. With huge promotional budgets, they will provide a course with free menu boards, display refrigerators, neon signs and table tents in exchange for the facility’s commitment to experiment with new products that may increase the manufacturer’s market share. Management must decide how far to take such merchandising efforts. In one venue, this form of advertising might be considered colorful and energetic, while in another it could be viewed as garish clutter. Determine if the new beverages and subsequent marketing materials are really appropriate for the core customer.

This ties into the importance of determining how the beverage business will fit into your facility’s overall operation. Keep in mind that everything has a hidden cost. A glass-fronted display case at the turn or in a snack bar, for example, will definitely increase beverage sales—but sales of bottled drinks that are less profitable.

Also, be selective and wary of trying to promote new beverages that manufacturers are hot to move. There are numerous cafés, bars and restaurants with dusty inventories of fad drinks. Remember Pepsi Clear? Until the staff receives multiple requests for a specific beverage from customers, it makes sense to stick with the standards.
A major step in defining the goals and image of your concessions and course is deciding which beverage brands and flavors to carry. A course may be seeking an image defined by beverages that relate to health or a country club might be famous for stocking a bar that is proudly seen by the members as an altar to booze.

When it comes time to add more beverages to the mix, or only for a price comparison, contact other courses in the area to find out what the going rates for specific brands are before agreeing on a price with your distributor. If more golf clubs would share information instead of keeping everything top secret there might be a few more success stories.

Negotiation plays a large factor. Alcohol has tighter guidelines for bargaining, while soft-drink contracts allow for a bit of negotiating room. A higher-volume beverage account is more likely to yield price breaks from a distributor. But by taking the position that a facility is neither the distributor’s largest nor its smallest account, by paying the bills on time and by earning a reputation as a low-maintenance account that seldom orders incorrectly, a club or course can earn some negotiating clout come contract renewal time. And, as in other transactions, sometimes simply asking for a better deal is all it takes to get a better deal.

**Managing the Bar**

Often enough a course bar may have built its reputation on a “strong pour.” The goal for management is to walk the tightrope that straddles a successful bar COG while maintaining the customer’s perception that a fair drink is poured for the price. But it is doubtful that any customer has been persuaded to frequent that course based on the value of the liquid refreshments. Yet be aware that not having a policy in place as to how many ounces are considered a pour is risky and irresponsible.

There are many tools to control pours: metered spouts, spouts with different flow rates, electronic sensors, the shot glass, jiggers, etc. The disadvantage to these types of controls is the customer perception that the bar operation is skimping or being cheap. The key to managing pours without that negative perception is training staff how to properly “free pour.” This can be done by filling empty bottles with water and letting them practice the technique. No bartender likes to be seen using a jigger—it’s an insult to the craft.
Exactly what a “strong pour” should be is debatable, but a 1½-2 oz pour is considered a respectable drink. Regardless of the pour spec, the bartending staff is responsible for getting “x” number of drinks out of a bottle. For example, if the spec everyone has agreed on is 1¾ oz, then the size of the bottle dictates the yield. If a liter of vodka is 33.8 oz; theoretically there are at least 19 drinks to be had from every bottle of well vodka.

One liter = 33.8 oz. \( 33.8 \text{ oz} \div 1.75 = 19.31 \text{ pours} \)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tip: Management and staff should be familiar with all bottle sizes for alcohol and wine:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>One quart = 32 oz</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One fifth = 25.6 oz</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One 750ml (wine) = 25.4 oz</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One split = 375ml = 12.7 oz</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Normally a bottle of wine yields at least four glasses. Many golf courses make the mistake of ordering the wrong stemware (too large of a glass,) then compound the error by allowing staff to “top off” the glass of wine as the customer takes a mental x-ray of how full the glass will end up, or the bartender ensures the tip prospect filling it to the brim of the glass.

Bartenders must be well trained to ensure profitable bar receipts, particularly in a public course where the bartender collects and rings in all amounts of revenues. With the possible exception of an unmanaged cart person, it may be easier for a bartender to steal sales than for any other person on the payroll. It is accomplished by misusing the POS system and/or the improper handling of beverage products.

Golf businesses spend thousands of dollars on elaborate POS systems with sophisticated software for tracking everything down to last cherry tomato, but alas, the machine ends up being used as only a cash register. Used properly, these newer machines can be valuable for controlling revenue and product, and combined with a strict set of employee policies, will diminish the prospects for unacceptable behavior:

- **Do not allow “No-Ring” sales.** When any cashier collects money from a customer, the option of hitting the “no sale” key may exist. The drawer opens and change can be made, but no sale is recorded. A smart cashier is not going to take the chance of stuffing money in their pocket several times throughout a shift, so a bank is slowly built up until the end of a shift; the bartender only has to make one withdrawal. There are many schemes to track how much has not been rung into the register (paper clips in a coin slot, toothpicks in a stack, etc.) This is why the art of a mid-shift drawer inspection needs to be revived. Management only need announce that from time to time a bartender’s drawer may be pulled for cash verification with sales rung in.
- **Remove tip jars.** An affront to the customer to begin with, tip jars are an easy place to put revenues. It is difficult to monitor, so a course may enlist the service of a shopper service (often called “spotters”). Shoppers pose as guests, appear to sit at the bar and look at nothing but see everything. The shopper is not necessarily looking for obvious theft, but taking note of procedures and policies being followed. It is important for management to explain in advance what is the desired outcome of the secret visit.
• **Watch for “under-ringing.”** A premium cocktail may be ordered and made, but the sale is rung in as a well drink, the bartender pocketing the difference. This can be curbed in by having a smart POS keyboard layout that allows for recording anything ordered via preset keys—bar menu mixes are compared to bottle usages.

• **Limit the number of employees working the register.** Courses that allow more than one employee to work a cash drawer have created a recipe for cash problems. Shortages or discrepancies are difficult to resolve if the till is community property.

• **Tag and mark bottles.** Bartenders have been discovered bringing in their own bottles and pouring from them. This kind of theft does not impact COG because the bartender buys the alcohol—the course loses out on the sales. To prevent this, management tags or marks every bottle that comes through the back door.

• **Establish strict procedures for voids and over rings.** Other scams used by people working the bar include exchanging food for drinks with kitchen personnel, accessing complimentary drink coupons and switching them for cash, ringing up food sales on drink keys (to keep beverage COG from sagging,) or claiming a phantom “void.” All f/b cashiers should be required to contact a manager at the time of any mistake made during the ringing in of a transaction; waiting until the end of a shift to reconcile a void is unacceptable. The paperwork for all voids or overrings should have two signatures, one being the manager’s.

• **Define your “comp” policy if you choose to offer one.** Some clubs allow the bartender “comp” privileges, maybe a set amount of drinks the person is allowed to give away. This is to discourage the ongoing temptation to give away drinks to friends, employees or regular customers. The policy for complimentary drinks needs to be explicitly defined and strictly enforced. This includes the use of requisition sheets (for tracking bottle movement about the property) and “spill” sheets for recording returned drinks, mistakes or spills. The more rules and regulations in place, the more apt that honest employees will remain honest.

• **Do not allow comp drinks for employees.** Refrain from the policy of allowing employees (including management) a complimentary alcoholic drink for a job well done at the end of the shift. Not only is it allowing staff a foot in the door for worse habits, it could finally be a major liability if course or club personnel were involved in a traffic accident or worse on the way home after a drink(s).
Smart Menus

Everything about f/b starts with and is driven by the menu; it has a continuous impact on all aspects of the operation. This includes production requirements, equipment needs, kitchen layout and staffing/service needs. The menu is an extension of the golf club’s f/b marketing plans. The properly planned and smartly designed menu fuels revenue and builds a path towards profits while satisfying the target audience.

Keeping in mind the cliché (old, but true) that a golf course menu “can’t be everything to everyone,” a first objective for a menu must be simplification for the sake of execution and maximum efficiency. This applies to the snack bar as well as the clubhouse dining room. Offering several items that use the same raw or prepared ingredients helps to streamline ordering, storing and production.

Entrees are the core of a menu. By keeping a menu “tight” and limiting choices to the basic center-of-the-plate food groups (beef, chicken, fish and pasta) the problems associated with big menus start to disappear. A smaller menu can be augmented by daily specials that regularly change. Emphasis on specials stimulates the customer’s curiosity while also allowing the chef to flex his/her creative muscles. Specials can also be a great tool to help move product off the shelves as wanted.

Menu design is more influential in a guest’s selection than given credit. Artwork, font style, readability, descriptions of the food and layout all play parts in marketing the goods to the end user. The focal point of a single-sheet menu (upper center) or a single-fold menu (interior right side, upper center,) combined with the use of “boxing” or highlighting can have enormous impact on what moves. A slogan (Best In Town!) or a “signature” item also tend to influence what people order.
Following is a list of most common errors made in planning and managing menus:

- Guessing at the price without doing the homework necessary to charge the correct amount, one that makes a fair profit while giving value to the guest.
- Portion sizes that are too large. The nation is groaning and straining under the weight of meals that are far too much for the average human being to consume. People are getting fat and sassy. Blame it on the fast food chains, which have quietly been upping the ante with "value-size" and "super-size" marketing ploys that have us all eating more now than we did twenty years ago. It's happening with soft drinks, too—a "large" used to be 22 oz. For the golf course it all translates into members splitting meals, half-orders, a decline in appetizer and dessert sales, and reams of doggie bags going out the door. Few courses have figured out that if the portions were reduced to more ordinary quantities, the price could be reduced, too. The pre-occupation with quantity over quality is a disturbing trend.
- Incorrect wording and misspellings on menus. The error may be a typo or it could be from ignorance, but in either case it challenges the credibility of the kitchen and management. It's a common sight on the "specials" chalkboard, too. Note: Only the neatest writer or printer should be allowed near a board that requires longhand.
- Menus that have been allowed to deteriorate to unacceptable standards: Dog-eared, grease-stained, prices crossed out by hand with new prices scribbled in, to name a few good reasons for investing in new menus.
- The same set of principles works for the snack bar. Menus that have missing numbers or sloppily aligned wording also send out the wrong message.

The menu planning process is ongoing. There should be no such thing as a final menu. Thanks to a renewed interest in ethnic and regional foods (television food networks and cooking programs) people want "new," or management may determine that change is in order for other reasons, like profitability and/or popularity issues.

"Menu engineering" is a term used to evaluate and analyze if an item is a good fit for the golf course menu. Using the criteria "popular" and "profitable" are all that is needed to sort out a strategy for a great menu. A profitable item is ordered often. A profitable item produces a high margin that contributes to the bottom line.

The basis of a menu item’s profitability is not the level of food cost (percentage,) but the contribution margin. Just because a menu item has a low cost of goods percentage does not declare it a great contributor to an operation’s profit base. Consider the following example:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Menu Item</th>
<th>Food Cost</th>
<th>Menu Price</th>
<th>Food Cost %</th>
<th>Contribution Margin</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chicken Dinner</td>
<td>$3.77</td>
<td>$10.95</td>
<td>35.4%</td>
<td>$7.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Steak &amp; Lobster</td>
<td>$10.90</td>
<td>$24.95</td>
<td>43.7%</td>
<td>$14.05</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Arguably this is an example of the numbers being massaged, a little mathematical semantics, if there is such a thing. It illustrates that the goal of an effective menu strategy is to increase the contribution margin of a menu item (or take more money to the bank) rather than decrease its food cost percentage. The increased margin is being looked at as overall input to a course's financial health rather than what it does solely for f/b.

It is the chef’s or f/b manager’s job to analyze each menu item to determine if it can be managed better. Thus, when compared to the entire menu, each item, based on the two factors of popularity and profitability (which are determined by menu mix and plate costs) will fall into one of four slots defined below.

- Profitable but not popular
- Popular but not profitable
- Both popular and profitable
- Both unpopular and not profitable

The latter two categories require little thought. Something neither popular nor profitable should be eliminated from the menu. The item popular and profitable is best left untouched.

The other two categories are more problematic. Something profitable but not so popular may only require a few adjustments:
- Reposition the item to a more visible spot on the menu.
- Renaming or giving a better description of the item.
- Consider a price decrease or add value to the item by offering a larger portion or upgrading the quality.

The popular item that is not so profitable gets a similar treatment:
- Carefully increase the price or decrease the portion size.
- Relocate the item to a not-so-obvious section of the menu.

Menu Prices

Methods for calculating the menu price require a scientific approach rather than guesswork. Objective pricing strategies can help to guarantee a course’s profit goals while satisfying a customer’s perception of the value of the dining experience. Subjective pricing, based on hunches and gut feel generally fail to consider profit requirements and portion sizes as they relate to what it costs to put the meal on a plate.

Yet managers and chefs tend to use the gut check system is used most often. Unfortunately it is the path of least resistance and many times key people are uneducated about smart pricing. Setting prices based on profit goals is not that difficult with a bit research.
Before any objective pricing can happen, two systems must be in place.

- **Recipe standards**: A by-the-book recipe dictates exactly the amounts and types of ingredients that must be used to make a menu item. This includes portion size. Every menu item is made up of one or more parts. A bottled water is at the simplest end of the scale while a dinner plate is an example of an item made up of many parts, including garnish, sauces, accompaniments to the entree, a bread basket that may be served when the customer is seated, etc.

- **Each recipe or unit must be assigned a value for cost**: It is critical to know what the cost is to produce one portion of each component of the menu item, whether by the ounce or unit.

There are a variety of procedures for figuring plate costs. Two are most widely used, the first accounting for all ingredients, the other only the “center of the plate.” In the latter method management calculates the entree feature (sometimes referred to as the protein) and adds a standard or average cost for the non-entree items, including salad, vegetables, bread, garnish, etc. This method is more appropriate for a la carte dinners and banquets.

Examples of method for taking into account all menu item ingredients:

**Cheeseburger Plate**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Spec</th>
<th>Cost</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hamburger patty</td>
<td>4 oz.</td>
<td>.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bun</td>
<td>4” sesame seed</td>
<td>.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cheese slice</td>
<td>½ oz. cheddar</td>
<td>.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lettuce</td>
<td>2 leafs iceberg</td>
<td>.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tomato</td>
<td>¼” slice 4x5</td>
<td>.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mayo</td>
<td>½ oz.</td>
<td>.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Garnish</td>
<td>Dill pickle wedge</td>
<td>.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>French fries</td>
<td>5 oz.</td>
<td>.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Misc condiments</td>
<td>Catsup, mustard</td>
<td>.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Cost</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>1.27</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Salmon Dinner**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Spec</th>
<th>Cost</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Salmon filet</td>
<td>7 oz.</td>
<td>2.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baked potato/butter</td>
<td>70 ct.</td>
<td>.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vegetable</td>
<td>3 oz.</td>
<td>.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salad/dressing</td>
<td>3 oz. mixed greens</td>
<td>.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bread</td>
<td>assortment</td>
<td>.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Garnish/lemon</td>
<td>parsley</td>
<td>.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Cost</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>3.48</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Examples of “center of the plate” method, whereby accompaniments have an average value but the entrée is separate:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Spec</th>
<th>Cost</th>
<th>Extras</th>
<th>Total Cost</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Salmon Dinner</td>
<td>7 oz.</td>
<td>2.25</td>
<td>1.23</td>
<td>3.48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Filet Mignon Dinner</td>
<td>8 oz.</td>
<td>3.95</td>
<td>1.23</td>
<td>5.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chicken Dinner</td>
<td>½ chicken</td>
<td>2.78</td>
<td>1.23</td>
<td>4.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pasta Plate</td>
<td>10 oz. linguini</td>
<td>1.15</td>
<td>1.23</td>
<td>2.38</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

After plate cost has been determined, a price can be set, depending on the COG goals. If a course has a desire to be at a 35% food cost on the dinner menu, then the majority of top sellers need to be priced to yield a 65% gross margin. The basic formula for pricing an item to meet COG criteria is:

\[
\text{Plate cost ÷ desired COG %} = \text{approximate price to charge}
\]

Examples:
(Salmon Dinner Plate Cost) \(3.48 ÷ .35 = $9.94\)
(Filet Mignon Dinner Cost) \(5.18 ÷ .35 = $14.80\)

No menu is going to list a price at $9.94 or $14.80, which means management now has the latitude to shift the price in the direction that best benefits the course’s goals and meets customers’ perceptions with respect to value. If the salmon dinner is the top seller on the menu, it makes sense to price it at a point where it helps to weight or drive the overall COG. Therefore, pricing it at 10.95 puts the salmon plate at a 31.7% COG.

**Tips on Pricing:**
- Data has shown that people seem uninfluenced by prices set at .25 and .75 (e.g. $8.25) when reading the menu. In other words, the same item could be priced at .50 or .95 or .99 with no perceived loss in value.
- Pricing at the turn or similar type of snack bar on a course might be more convenient if all items are priced at .25 increments with tax included. This has several advantages
  - The change-making process is simplified. The employee can process the sale quicker (which may come in handy as foursomes are often pressed to move on to the 10th tee.)
  - The cash register needs no coin other than quarters.
  - The chance of making an error while giving back change is reduced.
Yields

As prices are a result of checking plate costs, so is plate cost affected by a yield. A “yield” is the net weight or volume of a food item after it has been processed and made ready for sale to the customer. The processing of many foods means some sort of loss during either preparation, cooking or portioning.

Canned goods or product that has been pre-portioned for delivery are generally associated with a 100% yield, or no waste. Meats and vegetables that undergo some sort of trimming, cleaning or cooking will have a yield factor less than 100%. It is best to perform yield tests on items that have high costs or low-cost products that are used in large quantities.

Nowhere is this task more important than in meats. The typical course that serves prime rib, filet mignon and fish would benefit from performing a yield test or two. It should be standard operating procedure for the chef.

For example, the cost of a prime rib coming through the back door might be $6.00 lb—a 12-lb rib costing $72.00. But as any cook knows, despite a slow-roasting process even in a special oven, a prime rib shrinks, perhaps by as much as 20%, not counting the need to trim off a bit of fat; the final yield may be only 75%, or a 9-lb edible portion of rib. This means that the true cost of the prime rib is not $6.00, but $8.00 per lb. The yield factor or percentage is calculated by dividing the usable or edible weight by the original weight, then multiplying by 100 to shift the decimal a percentage.

\[
\text{(Usable(servable wt. ÷ original wt.) × 100} = \text{Ratio of usable wt. to original wt.}
\]

\[
(9 \text{ lbs ÷12 lbs)} = .75 \times 100 = 75%
\]

The cost per servable pound is found by dividing the back-door purchase price by the yield percentage:

\[
\$6.00 \text{ lb ÷ .75 = } \$8.00
\]

The cost per servable pound is the information needed to calculate what the portion cost actually is, not based on the back-door price. If the prime rib portion is this example is to be a 10 oz cut, then dividing $8.00 by 16 (oz.) reveals that the finished product is 50 cents an ounce, or $5.00 per portion.

Once the yield percentage has been calculated (and this is a procedure that need not be done every time, but deserves at least a monthly spot-check,) any cook can make an educated guess as to how much product needs to be ordered and prepared. For example, a banquet for 200 people with a 10 oz. cut of prime rib is the featured entrée; the yield is 80%. Knowing that to serve a 10 oz. cooked portion really means that 12.5 oz. of raw prime rib will be needed tells a chef that 200 × 12.5 oz = 2500 oz of raw meat. 2500 oz ÷ 16 = 156.25 lbs need to be ordered.
Managing the Beverage Cart

Whereas all POS systems within a course may be connected to a central data bank, the cart is usually a separate venue with no cash register system. The operator literally works out of a cigar box or change pouch. This pretty much amounts to the cart person being on the honor system, unless some sort of inventory system is in place. Holding the cart person accountable for inventory, or sales equal to usage, will aid in preventing that employee from becoming an unknown “partner” in the f/b business.

The system is fairly simple, not unlike what major league stadiums or arenas implement—rarely do they use cash registers, instead employing a system called a “cup count,” which means for each unit of inventory unaccounted for at the end of a shift, there should be an appropriate amount of cash to match the usage. Draft beers or sodas are perfect examples; the cups are inventoried before the start of business and at the end of the shift. This format can be used for any item.

To better manage liquor, some courses use the “minis,” or 50ml bottles of alcohol to mix cocktails. The minis are comparable to just under a 1¾ oz pour; more expensive, yes, but also more control.

Other issues related to cart management:
- The cart is an extension of the kitchen. Whether serving prepared sandwiches or having the equipment to hold hot dogs and buns separately, including a condiment bar, the cleanliness and sanitation of the cart must sparkling. Keeping any type of food next to cigars or cigarettes is unappetizing and unhealthy.
- A cart driver must be trained properly, by both the pro shop and the kitchen
  - A thorough understanding of golf etiquette, including cart paths as they relate to restrictions and the 90˚ Rule.
  - How to approach any group at the tee box, fairways and greens.
  - A basic understanding of the game in order to be able to make friendly and intelligent conversation pertinent to the game, e.g., knowing the toughest holes, recognizing the difference between a par and a bogie, the dread associated with a three-putt, etc; the list is endless, but the more the driver can “talk shop,” the more opportunity to relate to the customer.
  - Knowledge of the course layout for better navigating the terrain and intercepting groups at smart intervals.
- Returning to the cart barn to re-stock is time that could be better spent on the course. Therefore, beverage carts should be equipped with a radio or cell phone for purposes of calling ahead for product so that it is waiting and the turnaround time is short.
**Special Note:** For courses using the cart GPS system, there is an incredible opportunity to take the customer experience to the next level. Providing tee sheet names and cart numbers to the beverage cart person literally provides her/him with one of the most powerful tools in the world of business: Name Recognition.

People working the carts probably know a handful of repeat players already, but it is the first-timers that should be targeted for a knockout—imagine the impact of being able to drive up to a group and address them by name. Here is a truly unique chance to elevate the golf experience at your course above the competition. The same system is even more so applicable to the turn.

It will take coordination and communication with the pro shop, but any player can be described by what they are wearing (red cap, striped shirt, green shorts.) A two or three word description next to a name on the tee sheet, along with the cart number, is all the cart person needs to “make” the golfer when intercepted on the course.

**Vending Machines**

This is the last line of defense against losing a sale. Only in the most extreme cases are vending machines recommended, as margins are narrow and sales opportunities limited. For a course with no beverage cart and limited hours at the snack bar or turn, they make sense. But the profit margin on a 20 oz. bottle of soda is about three times less than a fountain soda. Convenience does not pay in the long run.

Vending machine revenues also might be negotiable. For example, one facility may retain 10 percent of its vending machine revenues, while another keeps 30 percent, simply because the manager of that operation has taken on the responsibility of keeping the machines stocked rather than relying on the delivery person to do so. In any case, vending machines are not the strongest source of bottom-line revenues.

**Pros and Cons of Subcontracting a Concessionaire**

There are many times when course ownership, frustrated at trying to keep f/b under control or having abandoned the effort to crack the code for deciphering f/b numbers, ponders the idea of farming out the operation to someone else. It sounds attractive, the concept of letting an “expert” deal with the f/b headaches while the course gets paid for it. The arrangement is more likely to be found at smaller course venues, maybe the seasonal snack bar. The plusses and minuses:

- The word “expert” is subjective. There are people that really do know what they are doing and look for opportunities just like the course that has struggled with f/b; they know the profits that are possible, enough to pay a reasonable fee for the privilege of taking over while still making a tidy sum at the end—and they do a nice job of it, taking care of the golfer in every way imaginable. It’s a win-win deal.
- Then there are those that think they know the restaurant and/or concession biz but have no clue about the sport or the golfers’ needs. It wouldn’t be a first if golf course management overestimated the f/b experts while at the same time the experts underestimated the subtleties of the links’ dining experience.
• Turning over f/b to an outsider does not disassociate the course from the food, at least in the eyes of the players. If service is poor, or the food poorer, the course is going to take the hit when the complaints start rolling in. Giving over f/b to a subcontractor means a good amount of control will be sacrificed. Unless strict guidelines and agreements are reached before the deal is struck, the venture is not much more than a game of chance. Key areas for discussion:
  o Menu options and quality of food to be used in terms of specs.
  o Pricing and portion sizes.
  o Hours of operation, including the cart; how to handle inclement weather situations and tournaments.
  o Staffing, including quality of personnel, dress code, etc.
  o Options for auditing the concessionaire’s books. If it is to be part of the deal, also consider using cash registers that cannot be reset for purposes of keeping ongoing sales totals.
  o Cleanliness and sanitation procedures and standards.
  o Weekly meetings between the concessionaire and course management.
• The first-year contract should be just that—one year. If the course has discovered that f/b has jumped from the frying pan into the fire, the pain is temporary. It has been shown that golf course personnel are reluctant to confront or challenge the people that were subcontracted, partly because they lack expertise, maybe for fear of an issue escalating into something worse.
• The details of the deal can vary: The concessionaire may pay a flat fee or rental charge, or the fee can be based on a percentage of sales. The latter set-up requires more maintenance, hence the need to have a POS system that will not allow data to be altered.
Labor Costs and Controls
Second only to product costs is labor dollars. The f/b manager’s job is to control costs while meeting the golf course operation’s goals while ensuring the customer’s experience is a positive one. In addition to economic concerns, the manager has the task of helping employees find satisfaction and meaning in their jobs.

To control labor costs, management must identify factors that influence the required number of hours to use. Every golf property is different, but the following issues all affect productivity:

- **Menu**—Items that involve complex production techniques and are labor intensive will require more hours than simpler fare (a sandwich, for example). Menus characterized by convenience foods or product that comes through the back door at an advanced stage of preparation are also less labor intensive.
- **Service**—A course featuring intensive dining room attention and multiple-step service procedures, or a one that has chosen to staff areas regardless of little customer traffic can expect higher labor costs.
- **Number of meal periods and total meals served.** Predicting how busy a meal period will be is never a sure thing, but there are several tools a manager can use to make an educated guess and at least get close.
  - Keeping track of meal period sales in a logbook, so that days can be compared from week to week.
  - Reviewing reservation sheets.
  - Monitoring weather and cultural events that influence whether people will stay home or go out (sporting events, world news, economic trends, etc.)
  - Holidays or other calendar events.
- **Facility design, kitchen layout and equipment**—Although f/b employees are often praised for their adaptability to the poorest of conditions, efficient kitchen design can increase productivity and decrease labor costs.
- **Job descriptions**—In the lower volume course setting, the f/b manager or chef may be required to be more “hands on,” meaning it is expected of them to play less of a supervisory role and be more involved in the day to day operations. Employees fortunate enough to be cross-trained by management will not only get more satisfaction at work, but also be able to do more. A course that promotes an atmosphere of teamwork will also benefit from higher productivity. The quality of supervision and training is in direct proportion to quality and quantity of output by staff.
- **Schedules**—Although the hospitality business is characterized by long hours and hard work, common sense should dictate where performance peaks and when the return starts to diminish. More often than not, schedules done by managers or chefs reflect (a) the needs of the employee and not the business, or (b) a lack of initiative for keeping staffing at smart levels, resulting in understaffing and overworking a dedicated few. This leads to several unsatisfactory outcomes:
  - People suddenly find themselves getting a lot of overtime, become used to it, and eventually expect it.
  - Younger people, perhaps first-time workers, think they want to work full-time. The f/b manager happily obliges and the person is ground up and spent six weeks into the season.
  - Schedules are duplicated from week to week, regardless of pattern changes in the volume, leading to times when many hours are wasted, or just as bad, times when the customer gets short-changed because not enough people are on hand to take care of business.
Basic steps need to be followed when making schedules. This piece of paper posted weekly deserves to be analyzed to make sure that the labor costs set by the schedule will be within the limits established by the course’s operating budget. The manager or chef must calculate a labor cost percentage based on the labor hours written into the schedule. This is done as follows:

- Each employee’s labor hours are converted to labor dollars, daily and weekly.
- Hours and dollars are totaled to determine a total labor cost, daily and weekly.
- Food and beverage revenues are estimated for the coming week, by each day.
- Daily and weekly labor dollars are divided by daily and weekly net sales to convert data to a labor cost percentage.

As most employees are paid differing rates of pay, management may use an average hourly rate (based on a previous payroll or by adding up pay rates and dividing) to convert hours to dollars.

Estimates for f/b sales can be determined by checking scheduled banquets and tournaments for the week, comparing tee sheets to previous weeks’ play and using other tools mentioned above (weather, the logbook, etc.) to make an educated guess as to how much business to expect. If the course is keeping data on golfer per cap, then multiplying the rounds by the average sales per golfer is an easy way to project that sector of sales.

In any case, the chart on the following page is what all f/b schedules (cart, dining room, banquets, etc.) should look like—not just names and times. The information at the bottom is optional, but appears here to emphasize the need for taking breaks to avoid overtime and labor law infractions.

---

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date/Day</th>
<th>Mon</th>
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Average Hourly Rate: $7.85
10-7 shifts mandate a one-hour break
All shifts 6-8 hours mandate a half-hour break
Weekly labor percentages are an average of seven days. As in most f/b scenarios, the slower days of business will have a higher labor percentage while the busiest days (normally weekends) will show a lower-than-average percentage.

When building or creating an f/b schedule, management (including the chef) is advised to use a system often referred to as a bar graph. The graph breaks a day down by hours and allows the manager to view at a glance how many staff is on the clock at any one time. Using the graph helps to expose some of the errors associated with the method of just writing in punch-in and punch-out times (9:00 am - 5:00 pm, for example.)

Often schedules are constructed to satisfy the needs of peak dining periods but fail to address the slower periods, resulting in excess labor during the lead-in times to a meal period or at the end of a busy period. Most opportunities for saving labor can be found before lunch, in the afternoon between lunch and dinner, and after dinner.

To avoid extra labor costs, the first strategy to employ is “staggered” schedules, which basically means not bringing on everyone at the same time. In most golf course f/b operations, the staggering and overlapping of shifts will ensure the greatest number of staff on at the same time during peak business, whether at the turn or for a banquet.

The most aggressive operations will not bring in personnel on the hour (9:00 am, 11:00 am, 3:00 pm, for example) but will break down the shift into half-hours, maybe even quarter-hours to get the maximum bang for the labor buck. This is management that has learned that the more people on the clock when not needed, the less work gets done. People with no one to talk to or be distracted by accomplish more. Another truism that relates to this theory is that all f/b teams work hard when volume is heavy; but what separates the truly great team from the average team is what happens when volume is slow. The great team never lets up—the down time is used to prepare for the next rush or at least put the place back together after the crunch.

Not every employee hired needs to be full-time. Part-time staff is crucial to the successful schedule. The f/b manager that relies strictly on full-timers will likely get boxed into a situation that causes more hours to be used than necessary. Split shifts (two short working periods separated by a longer break than normal) are also an answer to meeting the needs of the employee and the f/b budget.
Common scheduling challenges or goofs:

- Despite the fact that certain days have equal sales potential (say Tuesday and Wednesday,) the totaled hours from shifts isn’t remotely close; one day may have ten more hours on the schedule with no explanation.
- Scheduled overtime. Time-and-a-half translates to unnecessary spent dollars. An employee making $10 per hour is now paid $15; granted, the hour was necessary, but at a premium of $5 per hour. Pure waste.
- Unscheduled breaks. The unpredictability of the hospitality business makes it hard to schedule a break. The course or club that does not monitor breaks but circumvents the problem by paying people straight through the shift is leaving itself open to serious Labor Board issues, primarily because employees’ time cards do not show break documentation. It doesn’t matter whether the break was taken or not. The time card should reflect a rest period for longer shifts.
- The time card is sacred. It is not something to draw cute pictures on nor should anyone be allowed to write in changes or cross out punches. Only a manager’s and employee’s initials or signature should appear for alterations.
- Schedules that are not followed. If the course restaurant’s schedule shows 500 hours projected, then one would think the payroll summary would match. Rarely does this happen. Miraculously the checks issued for a specific pay period usually exceed the scheduled hours. How can this be? Simply, staff quickly learns how to milk the system to satisfy individual needs. Pity the manager that does not take the time to see if all the hard work in making a schedule is actually respected by the personnel.
- Special Note to the general manager or owner: It is a wise business practice to personally hand out payroll checks, at least once or twice per year. This entails putting a face (and picture identification) to a name. The idea is to confirm that no ghost employees exist, that is, someone else isn’t taking the check and cashing it for the wrong reason.
Managing Other Expenses on the P&L

Food, beverage and labor are not the only debits or expenses to the bottom line at a golf course. Other categories merit attention; separately they may be considered insignificant, but combined they quickly add up to a sizable chunk of change, and all are areas of accountability for an F&B manager or chef.

• Utilities—Many clubs do not assess utility charges to the F&B operation, a generous concession to F&B management that one would think in return would show up as more robust profits. It must be kept in mind that when looking at the overall clubhouse blueprints, the small space known as the kitchen has an incredibly high demand for water, gas and electricity—it’s an intense area. It is the responsibility of the F&B personnel to be sensitive to energy consumption, or in other words, assume a sense of ownership.

To avoid wasting resources, it is suggested that all kitchen spaces and equipment be analyzed for the best times to turn things on. If a particular piece of equipment isn’t used until dinner, it shouldn’t be turned on at 7:00 am. Equipment should be turned on at a staggered pace, to avoid higher “demand” rates. Golf course kitchens are considered commercial accounts by the local gas company, which may mean that the equipment is eligible for routine maintenance or calibration at little to no charge.

• Linens—Never was an invoice so difficult to decipher than the one that comes with the local linen company’s weekly delivery. Based on a formula that factors in “floating” inventories, replacement costs and unseen pick-up counts, taking the time to learn this part of the F&B business can mean a big payback in lowering costs. Increased rates have motivated many courses to invest in the equipment for doing their own laundry.
  o The issuing of kitchen staff’s uniforms (pants, chef jackets) should be tracked and monitored to ensure that one employee isn’t holding on to two weeks’ worth of outfits.
  o Bar mops or towels are sometimes graded for their condition, the ones with holes or that appear a bit ragged can be specified for special cleaning and are cheaper.
  o Management should make the effort to tally what gets sent out for cleaning each delivery. Counts by the supplier are often inaccurate, and it usually ends up costing the course.

• Kitchen utensils, smallwares, glassware—Silverware gets thrown in the trash, staff is careless with china, customers and employees add to their collections; these are all the primary reasons why courses spend more than they need to in keeping the right levels of supplies or tools in stock. In extreme cases it is advised to inventory these items monthly.

• Paper, janitorial supplies—These supplies deserve the same thought process as food and beverage products, which means they should be spot-checked for periodic usage.
Building The Banquet Business
As mentioned at the outset of this manual, f/b sales potential is based on four basic components - customers, banquet business, breakfast and lunch, and dinner. The golfers are built-in traffic, also likely responsible for the bulk of the lunch trade. The shortcoming of dinner prospects has been spoken to; that leaves group sales, or banquets/catering. This is truly the action worth chasing after.

While industry standard COG for a la carte (non-banquet) business hovers at 35% and labor costs anywhere from 30-50%, catering group events drives down the cost of doing business with numbers that can easily come in a 20% COG and 20% labor. Selling public functions is the only way to fly for the community golf course or country club if financial independence is hoped for in the f/b department.

For the course that takes this component of f/b seriously, there is a person on staff dedicated to selling events, including tournaments and outings in addition to weddings, etc. This job title for this position has been labeled many ways, including Sales or Event Coordinator, Banquet Manager, Group Sales, etc. It is a salaried position that is equal to or reports to the top f/b position.

General management and ownership that understands the value of this position has been known to make an incentive program an integral part of the compensation plan. The wisdom of this strategy is to motivate the person to stay busy—a group sale, from the client’s initial phone call to cutting the wedding cake takes a lot of follow-up and detail work to make it a winner for everyone. Unfortunately there are banquet sales people (mainly on straight salary, with no cut of the action) that view that first phone call as more work, and are less apt to go the extra mile in securing a sale.

A flourishing banquet sales program needs a master plan to ensure continual sales and profits.

- **Marketing tools**—For public courses that do not restrict groups to those that can be vouched for or sponsored by a member, there are many avenues for getting the word out:
  - The "yellow pages" in the phone directory remains a cornerstone for advertising. The headings within that have proven to attract those in search include "Banquets," "Catering," and "Weddings."
  - Websites via the Internet are gaining popularity but until now have failed to yield the same results as the phone book.
  - Advertising in bridal publications is also more of a long shot.

- **Telephone protocol**: Now that automated telephone answering systems have sadly taken the place of a real voice actually answering the call, there is the dilemma of ranking the information available on the "menu" that greets a caller. Group Sales somehow gets indexed several notches down to “Press 7,” when it really deserves to be "Press 1."
  - This could be a $10,000 call. If the caller is unlucky enough to get a recorded message from the Sales Manager, there had better be a policy in place that guarantees a prospective client will be called back within the same day or early next. The recorded message should emphasize that. People get impatient these days. They may have a list in front of them of several places to inquire about—let’s not give them an excuse to hang up and go to the next name.
• **Premium rates.** It is a good bet that the first question prospects will ask will be the availability of a specific date. Saturdays are the Number One choice. To help take the pressure off this day, some clubs will put Saturday at a super-premium rate, while discounting less desirable days in order to make them more attractive. The higher rate translates to gravy on the bottom line, only because there is always someone that will have to have that day for the big event.

• **Brochures.** Sales brochures should be mailed out within 24 hours of a call. Brochures, like menus, need to be proofread for spelling errors and easy to understand.

• **Meeting Space.** The Sales Manager must have an attractive, uncluttered office for meeting with the client. The room that looks like a junkyard sends up a red flag to visitors.
  o If it will fit, a sample table setting with a display of linen selections should be on view.
  o There should be a “Wall of Fame” or nicely framed photographs of past events at the course that give an idea of just how nice the event can be.
  o A scrapbook or album with more of the same can add to the variety and help visualize any type of event. This can include table layouts, food buffet set-ups, people having a great time—the list is endless.

• **F&B Policy.** When selling golf outings, food and drink should not be an option. The nature of the game means that the group will be around for at least one meal period, if not two. The aggressive sales program will pitch the idea of two meals. If a club is generous enough to let a food sales opportunity slip away, at least make the price difference between “golf only” and “with food” be so ridiculously narrow that one would have to be crazy to take “only.” A credit to f/b based on the seemingly cheap food can be adjusted in the Accounting office.
  o The Sales Manager should have a good working relationship with the Chef, one that is informative and educational. If the kitchen has done its homework and knows the COG for all group menu selections, the sales person should know the same numbers, and can perhaps craft a pitch that not only sells selections with friendlier margins, but also is easiest to produce from the kitchen.
  Of course, the customer can choose whatever they want, but there are times when people want input from the coordinator as to what is best. There will also be cases when a group wants to customize or deviate from the standard menu; add-on charges for these requests are not unreasonable. Price quotes in these situations should be delayed until research has been done.
  o Banquet menus have high-end price choices and low-end picks. People choose to take the middle road most of the time. These middlemost menu items are the ones that must be priced to yield the strongest margins and are easy to serve from the kitchen.

• **Facilities.** If a course can swing it, dedicating a dressing room complete with mirrors, comfortable seating and electrical outlets galore for the bride and her entourage can be a savvy sales clincher. Making the bride change in a restroom or locker area is hardly convenient nor a selling point.
• **Ancillary Services.** Weddings and other formal affairs entail more than just food and drink. There is perhaps a need for a photographer, florist, disc jockey and cake provider. It is a lot of work and time for a bride to research. The golf course that bills itself as a “one-stop shop,” can be a very attractive proposition. By aligning itself with a proven stable of service providers, the course may be able to pass on slightly better deals to the client; this price difference should be handled as a courtesy to the client, a thank-you for choosing our club as the place to celebrate.

Finally, a good Banquet Manager not only sells the event, but works it, too. In the world of f/b, a zillion things can go wrong, and it is in the best interest of the course and client if the key event coordinator is on hand to see things through smoothly. As the event comes to an end (say, after the entrée or dessert has been served) it is acceptable for the manager to delegate control to a banquet captain, someone who has been introduced to the client at the beginning of the event.

### Miscellaneous Banquet Information

• **Gratuities.** All clubs add on an automatic gratuity (15-22%) to the price of the meal. What is done with that service charge takes different routes, but the two main schools of thought are: 1. Pay the service staff a minimum wage and distribute the gratuity (the methods again vary) amongst them; or 2. pay higher wages comparable to a tipped rate while allocating the service charge to a line on the P&L as a revenue source. The advantages to paying higher wages but withholding the gratuity are few, but a good argument for adopting the policy:
  - The bookkeeping usually involved in distributing tips to the staff can be a nightmare—pro-rating amounts to hours worked, posting tips earned to payroll for tax purposes, double-checking to make sure all tips are accounted for, and so on.
  - Employees know how much they can expect to make rather than worrying about the distribution. They are less apt to be greedy, by trying to take on the event with fewer servers in order to make a bigger cut.
  - Everyone wants to work the steak and lobster wedding for 250—no one volunteers for a continental breakfast for the Ladies Club Board. The hassle of getting staff to work the smaller, less tip-worthy events goes away with the flat wage rate system.

• **Remodeling and Expanding Facilities.** Clubs or courses looking to build a new facility or remodel an existing kitchen and/or banquet dining area should consider two key elements for a successful banquet operation:
  - Design the kitchen with a separate cook/prep line for big parties. This allows the a la carte dining to continue uninterrupted and sidesteps the issue of those diners having to wait while a big meal is punched out.
  - Build the dining area to accommodate at least 150 people. More is better, with mobile partitions to handle the smaller groups. Check around and discover from those clubs with undersized rooms how much business they are turning away.
  - In the kitchen, bigger is not necessarily better. There are some 1000 sq ft kitchens that are gems in efficiency; there are also a sizable number of 2500 sq ft turkeys.
Lacking the facilities for larger parties should not be an excuse for a course to stop chasing after "smaller" groups. Business is business. A small meeting room on the premises may be the perfect venue for building corporate outings. It is not uncommon for executives to gather for an informal business session with a round of golf being the highlight of the day.

To prove this point, there is a select group of courses that have purposely chosen not to go after weddings and banquets, but instead have focused on groups of 16, 24 or 48 for golf and f/b revenues. They have realized that their resources are limited and have positioned themselves as more of a "boutique" operation, purposely chasing after and giving attention to groups that have disappeared from the radar of the bigger course operations.

**Service at the Golf Course**

The hospitality business relies on many different positions to execute, but no position has a higher profile than those related to customer service, or the employee-to-guest interaction. For f/b, that includes the cart driver, the person working the turn and the dining room server or waitperson.

One of the advantages for management working within the corporate or chain environment is the depth of administrative support at the main office. There are entire divisions of personnel devoted to creating training manuals for the development of employees. The independent operator of a golf course lacks this advantage, instead relying on the f/b manager or chef to come with procedures for the best practices. If not in place, the position that appears to suffer most is the server.

Good service is truly an art form. A great server, in addition to performing the rote tasks associated with the job, takes pride in his/her knowledge of the menu and the food, which happens to be why people come to eat in the first place. That server can explain as much about a menu item as the chef, the cooking or preparation process, supplementary intelligence (everyone likes a story about the food they have ordered) about the cuisine, even the portion size.

A smart service program is all about ongoing training. Having the following in place is essential to success:

- Daily pre-shift meetings or line-ups that inform the service staff of menu changes and/or descriptions of specials. This includes quizzes from time to time.
- Sampling of the food on the menu. The cost of a meal or two daily is a minor investment compared to the impetus it can provide to the service staff in terms of describing an entrée or to stimulate curiosity and excitement in the fare. The ideal server is a salesperson, not an ordertaker. Nothing is more of a letdown to a guest when they ask a server about an item, and the response is, “I don’t know, I haven’t tried it.”
- A system that limits just how many people one person can wait on at one time; the most successful operations keep that limit at three to four tables to a section for a la carte dining.
• Procedures that measure the entire service experience in steps. It may be five, it may be ten, but every server needs to follow a specific routine that ensures nothing will be forgotten during the dining event. A sample list of steps:
  1. Greeting the guest with menus, taking drink orders and reciting specials for the day.
  2. Take the meal order, refill beverages.
  3. Deliver salads, soups and appetizers.
  4. Deliver entrée.
  5. Check back within two minutes of meal delivery to confirm all is ok and that nothing has been forgotten. Refill beverages.
  6. Pre-buss dirty plates, remind guest of dessert selections. Offer after-dinner beverages (coffee, spirits, etc.)
  7. Present check and thank guest for visiting.

The steps above may seem obvious, but it should not come as a surprise that many are forgotten or compressed when a server becomes overwhelmed or distracted. The most important step above is usually the one that gets lost first—checking back.

One of the dividends of a good server training program is the ongoing practice of "up-selling," or the ability of any employee to generate more revenue from one or more customers by persuading them to spend more. The concept exists in a variety of ways:
  • Getting someone to buy a large beverage instead of a small, because the bigger drink has been priced as more value.
  • Selling appetizers and desserts has always been a mainstay for restaurants that are looking for ways to boost the average check. At a time when people may be trying to "cut back," an intuitive server may take the approach of getting a table to share an item rather than hard sell everyone to get his own.
  • "Bundling" has become an f/b industry standard. This is when a beverage, sandwich and chips, for example, have been priced as a package deal, usually with a small discount. The concept functions as up-selling while also speeding up the decision making process for the customer.

Up-selling can be tricky and even offensive if not handled right. The staff needs direction on how to successfully up-sell items. If an employee knows for a fact that a particular menu entree is a huge portion, encouraging someone to get an appetizer, too, may be out of line. The truly enlightened staff will inform a customer (say someone that looks to be a small eater) that he/she might be better off ordering something that is not such a big portion. Salesmanship can work in mysterious ways.

Selling is a form of marketing, and although a course may not realize it, every employee has the potential to be that course’s best marketing tool. When a course explores the idea of an internal marketing program for f/b, the employee should be the first resource to examine. Personality, job knowledge and performance are the vehicles for executing a grand marketing scheme; they can also destroy the effort if the employee has been left out of the equation.
Beware of the fact that many f/b managers seek out only seasoned waitstaff when searching for help, resulting in bringing on people that have ingrained bad habits or have come from an environment that did things differently—experience is often overrated. A manager should not be afraid to take on the person that has little to no idea of how best to take care of hungry people. That manager realizes that this individual comes with no preconceived ideas how to best do the job; the person is trainable.

There are many nuances to doing a good job of dining service. The subject of service is worthy of a thesis by itself. Putting aside the most subtle of topics (from which sides of the guest to serve or clear, napkin placement that signals when a guest has left a table temporarily or will not be returning, the positioning of flatware on the plates that says whether the guest has finished or is just resting, whether plates should be cleared when everyone has finished or one by one,) there are a handful of issues that continue to surface at many courses that signal a need for better awareness. In times where sanitation and health awareness are more topical than ever before, certain actions can easily be perceived by the guest as less than acceptable, perhaps alarming:

- Beverage glasses should be handled as close to the base as possible; a server’s fingers should be nowhere close to the rim of a vessel, where someone’s lips are soon to be touching. Yet bar personnel and dining room servers don’t think twice about picking up a glass with the palm covering the entire opening or finger and thumb gripped firmly at the top. No wonder the world is switching to straws.
- Speaking of which, a straw should not be placed into a beverage by putting the index finger over the hole and then inserting.
- Good hygiene practice dictates that no employee should be touching his/her hair or face while on the dining room floor or in the act of service or food preparation in the back. Hair nets and caps are more evident than ever, perhaps because standards have slipped so far that sloppy hair goes unnoticed by management.
- Employees should not be allowed to “graze” in the kitchen or service stations. Nor should they be allowed to eat at a workstation, especially in view of a guest. However, the most offensive action is for a server to be seen by a guest chewing, smacking or wiping the lips or mouth while returning to the dining room with fresh plates, etc., in hand.
- Allowing hospitality staff to smoke on break is understandable, but is it affecting the business? The chef and manager must ask these questions:
  - Are smoke breaks (usually “urgent” or “must have”) interfering with the flow of service and the attention the guest deserves? Smoke breaks should be staggered (one at a time) to ensure the act does not turn into a social event and stretched out longer than necessary.
  - Are personnel washing their hands upon return? The answer is not as predictable as one would think.
  - Are the servers aware of the odor that clings to their clothing upon returning to a table, even when the break area is outside? They do not smell it, but the non-smoking guest can be clubbed by it.
  - Are smokers respectful of the break area, that is, is the outside spot where they smoke littered with butts, wrappers and empty packs? If so, it may be a microcosm of the type of service being given in the dining room.
Basic Rules for Proper Serving:
- All food is served from the guest’s left side with the server’s left hand (the thumb plays a key part, and should be as unobtrusive as possible, not hooked way over the edge of the plate like a “C” clamp.)
- All beverages are served from the guest’s right side with the server’s right hand (see above.)
- Serve ladies, older persons and then children first. In a group of all ladies or men, begin with the person to the right of the host and proceed counter-clockwise.
- Clear dishes from the guest’s right side with the server’s right hand.
- Do not stack dishes or scrape them in front of a guest.

Trays and jackstands are crucial tools for serving:
- Every little thing that comes out to a guest at the table should be brought on a tray—nothing is to be carried in-hand. The trick to carrying any size tray is to use the fingertips—using the palm of the hand is awkward. Part of the service training should include practicing the act.
- The stacking of dirty dishes on a jackstand should be temporary only. Letting a pile of soiled plates sit near tables or in a high-traffic area for any length of time is unappetizing. Imagine being led to a table in anticipation of a special meal and getting a glimpse of half-eaten food as the first impression.

Complaints and Unhappy Customers

There is no shortage of problems with customers when the topic is f/b at the golf course. Everyone is an expert when it comes to food, drink and service. Too bad there isn’t a law that dictates all human beings must work in the hospitality business for at least a year before they are allowed to eat out.

Learning to calm upset people is not easy. There is no single technique that works with every person that has a complaint. But there are skills that can be learned with a positive attitude and practice. Not only is this skill a necessity of management, but one that should be a prerequisite for any person that is a part of a team in a hospitality environment.

If the manager or chef were to spend more time in a course’s dining room (out on the front lines) there would be less problems. Things tend to go wrong when management hides in the office or the chef isn’t around for peak dining periods and working the line or expediting meals where he/she should be.

All staff should be aware that their positions exist because of the customer. It is clear that people want and expect good service, and when they are not treated well they do not come back. The success of a restaurant/food operation rarely is based on one-time customers. Repeat business is the foundation for increased volume and profits. You want customers to complain (!), because if they do not, research has shown that they will take the business elsewhere and probably pass the bad word on to friends. How one handles a complaint can be instrumental in increasing customer loyalty.
Three areas of interaction need to be addressed to avoid turning a dissatisfied customer into an angry one:

1. **Personal presentation:** If someone feels your grooming and dress are unprofessional or inappropriate, he/she is more likely to be difficult. As a manager, if you do not look the part, you are not likely to be taken seriously and may find the person wants to speak with a higher authority.

2. **Non-verbal communication:** Body language is powerful and influential.
   - Be aware of your facial expression. You want to appear calm, concerned and sincere: no scowls, rolling of eyes, or inappropriate smiles. You want to show that you care, and smiling while someone is expressing anger might be interpreted as not being taken seriously.
   - Show attentiveness by standing up straight. Leaning or slouching communicates disinterest. If you are called to a table where the party is seated, kneel or crouch down rather than stand over the table or with your hands placed palm down on the table. Taking a stance before a seated group might be read as a power trip. Also consider that standing with your arms crossed is classically thought to mean a person is unwilling to listen and has a closed mind.
   - There should be no chewing of gum, traces of eating or sighing, regardless of any abuse you may be taking. Compose yourself as best you can. It is sign of strength, not weakness, to stay calm and respond with patience when someone is cursing and insulting you or the business.

3. **Choice of words makes a big difference.** Avoid statements that are sarcastic, blaming or condescending. Even if the customer is wrong, making it the focus will not help. Keep your comments impersonal, using “I” or “we” (the staff) and not “you.” Take the responsibility by acknowledging the problem and assuring that action is being taken at once. Agreeing with the customer and saying as little as possible is a remarkable tool for diffusing a bad situation. Debating someone only adds fuel to the fire. Agreement takes the energy out the unhappy person’s attack.

An upset customer usually does not want the world when they have been mistreated. Responses to an incident vary but generally include:

- To be taken seriously.
- To be treated with respect.
- To get immediate action.
- To have the party that wronged them get their just discipline.
- To be listened to.

Often times, a quicker solution can be reached by simply directing the customer toward finding a solution: “What do you think is a fair way to settle this?” or “What can I do to make you happy?” have proven to be easy fixes for sticky situations. If the customer’s proposal is within your guidelines, accept it. If not, make a counterproposal.

After a problem has been rectified, a wise move is to follow up at a later point, not only to make sure everything is ok, but also restate your concern and even thank the customer or member for bringing the problem to your attention. It is pretty difficult to overdo it when it comes to showing someone that you value his/her patronage.
When it comes to creating an environment for matchless customer satisfaction, involving your staff is a must. Not only should you be the role model, by practicing good behavior visibly and frequently in front of the staff, but also giving them a certain amount of latitude or empowerment to exhibit positive customer service traits. When a staff member does a good job or gets a compliment from a customer, give that person immediate feedback, to encourage repeat performance. Allow staff members to use their initiative in acting on the customer’s behalf if there is a problem, making sure that you are informed after they have taken action. This creates the opportunity for you to follow up, which implies to the customer that not only did the employee take quick action, but also showed extra concern by informing management.
Sample Job Descriptions
Food & Beverage Director/Manager

Summary: Responsible for all f/b production and service for the club. Directly supervise the Executive Chef, Assistant Manager, Banquet Sales, Beverage Manager and Event Coordinator. Plan and implement budgets; hire, train and supervise all kitchen subordinates. Apply marketing principles to assure satisfaction of customers.

Job Specifics:

- Develops operating budget for each f/b department and venues; monitors and takes corrective action as necessary to assure that budget goals are attained.
- Establish effective orientation and training for any new f/b staff, maintains ongoing development of existing personnel via evaluations, continuing interaction and the setting of goals.
- Ensures that all standard operating procedures for revenue and cost control are in place and consistently utilized.
  - Takes weekly inventories and generates weekly COG for food and beverage.
  - Monitors labor costs daily, weekly and for pay periods.
  - Approves and codes all supplier invoices before submitting to Accounting.
  - Certifies month-end inventory and submits to Accounting by 1st of following month.
  - Responsible for maintaining realistic inventory levels to optimize club cash flow, keep storage orderly and minimize waste.
  - Maintains POS and accurate daily sales reports; reconciles errors.
  - Keeps historical records of special events and day-to-day business for purposes of educated forecasts.
  - Audits payroll at least monthly.
- Inspects to ensure that all safety, sanitation, energy management and preventive maintenance plans are in continual use.
- Helps plan and approves external and internal marketing and sales promotion activities for building f/b business.
- Structures the f/b organizational chart for maximum effectiveness. Maintains balanced staffing and scheduling strategies to meet business needs.
- Defines job descriptions for all subordinate f/b positions.
- Reviews menus and accompanying prices and margins proposed by Executive Chef for all venues and special events.
- Sees that all legal requirements are adhered to including wage and hour issues, federal, state and local laws governing alcoholic beverages, and health department issues.
- Researches new products and works with Chef in developing menu trends and variety to satisfy customer interests in cuisine.
- Maintains current and comprehensive employee files.
- Develops and enforces policies and procedures for f/b department.
- Monitors purchasing and receiving procedures for products and supplies to meet guidelines set for quality and pricing.
- Maintains open communications with above-mentioned subordinates via weekly management meetings and daily conversation.
- Maintains high visibility at the course by greeting and listening to customers’ comments and needs.
- Addresses customer complaints personally while keeping General Manager informed.
• Maintains appearance, upkeep, cleanliness and organization of all f/b facilities.
• Monitors employee dress codes according to Handbook.
• Auditions and approves all course entertainment.

Executive Chef

Summary: Responsible for all food production related to all f/b venues. Develop menus, food purchase specifications and recipes. Supervise production and staff. Develop and monitor food and labor budget for the department. Maintain highest professional food quality and sanitation standards.

Job Specifics:
• Hires, trains and evaluates the work of staff in food production departments.
• Plans menus (with Food and Beverage Director) for all food outlets at the course.
• Schedules and coordinates the work of chefs, cooks and other kitchen employees to assure that food preparation is economical and technically correct and within budgeted labor cost goals.
• Approves the requisition of products and other necessary food supplies.
• Ensures that high standards of sanitation, cleanliness and safety are maintained throughout all kitchen areas at all times.
• Establishes controls to minimize product and supply waste and theft.
• Safeguards all food preparation employees by implementing training to increase their knowledge about safety, sanitation and accident prevention principles.
• Develops standard recipes and techniques for food preparation and presentation which help to assure consistently high quality and to minimize food costs; exercises portion control for all items served and assists in establishing menu selling prices.
• Prepares necessary data for applicable parts of the budget. Projects annual food, labor and other costs and monitors actual financial results. Takes corrective action as necessary to help assure that financial goals are met.
• Attends food and beverage staff and management meetings.
• Consults with the Event Coordinator about food production aspects of special events being planned.
• Cooks or directly supervises the cooking of items that require skillful preparation.
• Evaluates food products to assure that quality standards are consistently attained.
• Interacts with applicable food and beverage managers to assure that food production consistently exceeds customer expectations.
• Plans and manages the employee meal program.
• Evaluates products to assure that quality, price and related goods are consistently met.
• Develops policies and procedures to enhance and measure quality. Continually updates written policies and procedures to reflect state-of-the-art techniques, equipment and terminology.
• Recommends compensation rates/increases for kitchen staff.
• Establishes and maintains a regular cleaning and maintenance schedule for all kitchen areas and equipment.
• Provides training and professional development opportunities for all kitchen staff.
• Ensures that representatives from the kitchen attend service lineups and meetings.
• Motivates and develops staff including cross training and promotion of personnel.
• Periodically visits dining area to interact and listen to members.
• Undertakes special projects as assigned by the Food and Beverage Director.
Incentive Programs

A great deal is expected of F&B employees, as illustrated by the sample job descriptions. Therefore, it is important to have appropriate incentive programs in place. The profitability of an F&B program has been found to be in direct proportion to an incentive program for the key personnel. Every chain operation and all of the independent concepts that make money have their bottom line tied to the compensation plan of at least the F&B manager and chef. Without the carrot, there is rarely enough motivation to keep up with the hundreds of details that, if not watched closely, will seek out cracks and slip by unnoticed. Food and beverage is a nickel-squeezing undertaking that makes its money by counting pennies that quickly add up to big dollars.

Bonus outlines vary. They can be tied to meeting and beating the budget, wherein the participant is paid a cut of the profit dollars or earns an additional percentage of the base salary. Goals should be realistic and attainable. If possible, the recipients should take part in setting the budgets and/or goals. A smart bonus or incentive program should be a blend or balance of issues, not completely driven by numbers. A short list of topics, maybe defined by the criteria of a job description, will include:

- Administration: Meeting food, labor and other areas of the budget that can be controlled by a manager’s involvement. A good set of books should be kept to parallel Accounting’s. Recipes and updated plate costs should be handy. The POS system should be used to its complete advantage.
- Personnel management; creating an environment where people are learning and have joined in to help the course reach its financial targets. Orientation and training programs are in place; staff is evaluated in a timely manner.
- Customer satisfaction: Increased customer counts and/or average checks/per cap; interaction with guests (the manager or chef that spends little to no time in the dining room either doesn’t care or lacks the confidence that all is under control.)
- Cleanliness and organization: There should be a cleaning program in place that makes sure everything is cleaned on a schedule that prevents it from getting dirty in the first place. Health Dept inspections should be incident-free.

Incentive plans may be more effective if they are paid out monthly, as opposed to quarterly or annually. People in these salaried positions have mortgages and other financial responsibilities, too. Knowing that a monthly boost can ease the household cash flow or allow for a click up in life-style makes sense in these hurried times.
Communication And Management Style
Chances are that at any golf course where f/b is having problems, there is a lack of communication at all levels among personnel. That includes general management with f/b management, f/b management with each other (e.g. the chef and the front-of-house manager) and f/b management with hourly staff.

Because general management lacks f/b knowledge, they defer to the experts or experienced people hired to run hospitality. This turns out to be a double-edged sword; The GM or owner is reluctant to challenge the f/b people, which supposedly know everything about food and drink. The f/b people become insulated, even untouchable, which often turns to complacency and diminished initiative for correcting things that have taken the wrong direction. There are advantages to having to be accountable to someone else other than one’s self.

No f/b manager can run the show alone. Administrative and personnel issues need to be shared among the f/b management team. The f/b manager that chooses to do it all alone (either because he/she does not have the ability to confront subordinates or does not have the patience or skills to teach) will not be successful. It is the job of any manager to teach those subordinates more about the business, i.e., educate and make them more participative in the course’s goals.

The classic scenario at a course is an f/b manager with an assistant manager and a chef, who may also have an assistant, or sous chef. These four people can easily divide up the duties for managing the numbers and personnel. Any chef that cannot be bothered with the numbers has no sense of ownership and demonstrates a profound lack of concern for the course’s financial health.

The rank-and-file also deserve some attention via communications and participation in helping a course reach its goals. The simplest and most efficient way to get staff to participate in the course’s goals is to share information with them:

- Post the results of the weekly numbers analysis, including:
  - Actual COG versus theoretical COG for both food and drink.
  - Inventory usages matched against sales mix reports.
  - Record sales days in terms of dollars, head counts, or per caps.
  - Appetizer and dessert sales (add-ons or upselling) compared to goals.
  - Plate costs for all menu items.
  - Costs and expenses related to smallwares, stemware, flatware, equipment repairs, etc.

- Meet with individuals one-on-one for quick, pre- or post-shift meetings to make that person aware that the manager is aware of their performance on the job.

- Golf courses with limited playing seasons rely almost entirely on part-time staff. Returning employees can be given a real boost in their self-esteem by helping in the interviewing process for new staff. They can give an honest account to a prospective applicant of what’s to be expected on the job.
• The importance of a decent orientation program is a given. Where seasonal golf operations make the biggest goof in developing their new hires is by not having a timely, formal evaluation plan in place. The new f/b hire may be around for only five months; the intent of management is to give that person a performance review by the end of the season, probably wishful thinking. There is a good chance the person will not return anyway. That makes two good arguments for giving the evaluation on the front end. The employee gets more attention and a real sense that the employer takes the job seriously and wants results. A sit-down, documented performance review 30 days after hire is a great investment.

• Believe it or not, the course with a more progressive approach to personnel management will allow a peer group committee to evaluate its own. This team of fellow staff is more senior in experience, more in touch than a manager and more objective (translation: more apt to really tell it like it is) in critiquing the team members. The system may be radical, but it works.

**Staffing**

Selection of the right people to staff course f/b will not only help to generate a satisfied and returning customer base, but also reduce employee turnover and the long-term costs associated with poor hiring practices. The saying that management is only as good as the people that surround them is true for any business; but once the manager has gone the lengths to get the best people, there is work in holding onto them.

There are many ways to seek out people you want. The “NOW HIRING” sign is the most obvious and probably the easiest way to take care of the need. However, it has its drawbacks; first, it advertises to the outside world that the golf course has trouble holding onto its help. Secondly, it is an invitation to anyone, often including undesirable prospects. It is saying that the ownership or management is at a loss for trying to find someone to fill a position.

Placing an ad in the local newspaper is the next logical move. Sunday ads cost more but will bring the strongest response. When placing ads, be specific about the time, date and place to apply. Also include a brief job description, hours desired and any other information you feel might attract the best choice. List your openings with the student employment offices at the local colleges or high schools nearby. Establishing a solid relationship with a school or church counselor who is familiar with your standards might just be the pipeline to satisfying any future needs, making the process easy. Tell them exactly what you want and why. Establishing a continuous source for good people can eliminate a lot of guessing and extra administrative work.

Another source are the people that currently work for you. Inform your best people that you are looking for someone just like them and do they know anyone looking for work. Perhaps an incentive can be attached to a successful reference.
A general rule-of-thumb in staffing a new restaurant or facility is that once it has been determined how many employees it will take to run the place, plan on hiring an extra 25%. Although hiring the right people should be a very deliberate approach, things can and will go awry. Protection in the form of some extra employees is a standard practice for the industry.

**Interviewing**

The excuse that the job market is grim is getting old. In truth, most courses do not have a strict procedure in place that keeps a pipeline open for prospective applicants. Nobody knows what happens to applications when they get turned in, no one is around to greet or talk with a prospect; if the f/b department has even a semblance of a full staff, the idea of looking for more help is light years away.

Looking for the right people to come work for you should be an ongoing process. There has never been an organization that had too many sharp employees. A certain amount of time should be set aside every week for talking to prospective applicants whether you need people or not. And if you should by happenstance discover a “nugget,” it makes sense to make room for that individual, because in the hospitality business, usually populated with part-time and seasonal people, nothing is permanent. The most spectacular of f/b teams has at least one or two people “sitting on the bubble.”

Applications should always be available to prospects, that is, they should be somewhere handy when asked for by someone interested. Ideally, management should be the one to hand out the application, but that is unrealistic, and good prospects do come when management is unavailable, so employees (receptionists, or anyone working the front desk or main office) should be trained how to handle distribution.

The manager should be contacted that someone has come in. When a manager is present, an initial screening process or “two-minute interview” should take place. This helps to eliminate applicants that do not have the proper experience, appearance and/or qualifications that are desired, thus eliminating further loss of time by scheduling a full interview with the wrong person. On the other hand, if it is initially determined in this screening process that you have a potentially good prospect, the interviewing process must be accelerated. Do not allow the potentially good candidate to get hired away by a competitor or the next place on his/her list to apply.

It is a sound practice to never declare that you are hiring to an applicant, even if it is so. Best to say that the course is “always looking and accepting applications.” Also, keep in mind that all applicants are potential customers, and the style and grace by which they are treated will certainly determine the prospect of repeat business.

The following interview notes are not only appropriate for hiring hourly f/b staff, but are crucial when searching for a chef or f/b manager:
To prepare for an interview:
• Take time to study the application and determine what information or clarification is needed. In addition to neatness and thoroughness, learning to read between the lines often yields additional information.
• Keep a standard list of revealing questions (appropriate to the position) handy so that all is asked and nothing forgotten.
• Arrange for a setting that has the minimum amount of distractions. Remember that a good interview also reflects on you and your organization. A prospective applicant is likely evaluating you, too.
• Treat all applicants the same and show respect by paying attention and asking some questions. It is acceptable to talk of mutual interests, but that should not overshadow the business purpose of the interview.
• Be prepared to provide information about your organization, including compensation, benefits, working atmosphere, your expectations, etc.
• Explain the placement process. Do not leave them up in the air. Let them know how and when decisions will be made. This can help to avoid uncomfortable confrontations later.
• Questions should be short and open-ended, i.e., designed to get the applicant to say more than "yes" or "no." Questions should include those that probe the range of expertise or experience with the position. Questions should include those that stimulate value judgments, including, e.g., work attendance, handling difficult situations, and so on.

Sample Questions: Work experience
1. Would you tell me about your last (or current) job?
2. How did you find your last job?
3. What was a typical workday?
4. What did you like least/most about your work?
5. What makes someone successful in your work?
6. How did you deal with a (specific) problem?
7. What would your supervisor say were your strong/weak points? Did you agree?

Sample Questions: People relationships
8. How would you describe your supervisor?
9. What did you like/dislike about your co-workers?
10. What did you like/dislike about the customers?
11. How do you feel about teamwork vs. individual productivity?

Sample Questions: Aspirations
12. What are you looking for in this job to make it a satisfactory experience?
13. What are your wage expectations and how far do you expect to go with us?
14. What are your school interests and how are your grades?
15. What outside interests do you have away from work and school?
16. Although there is no right or wrong answer, in your opinion, what do you think makes you the best choice apart from other candidates for this position?
In the interview it is helpful to explain the structure of your interview process, including identifying yourself and whom you represent, what you are looking for, that the interview will be a two-way exchange, etc. Play down any unfavorable information provided by the applicant, at least by acknowledging your appreciation of the candidate’s frankness. Do not bring it up later. It is best discussed at the time it occurs in the conversation. If at all possible during the interview, compliment a person’s accomplishments.

Interviewing f/b management (including chefs) entails getting into technical issues, mainly related to the numbers and cuisine. Any candidate worth his salt should be able to explain the principles (portion control, inventory, menu selection, pricing, etc.) discussed throughout this book.

On the subject of cuisine, asking someone a series of questions related to explaining the difference between hollandaise and béarnaise (sauces) or how to make a roux is taking a trip into a minefield. A chef prospect should be asked to audition by perhaps supplying or re-creating a sample menu and preparing it for a small group of decision-makers. If the chef candidate is employed elsewhere, it certainly makes good sense to pay a series of unannounced to see how this person performs.

The same applies to an f/b manager candidate. For example, if in the interview the person claims to always be in the dining room (a popular statement is “I don’t like to be in the office. I’m known for interacting with guests.” Ha!) Wouldn’t it be nice to see it in action, as well as an overview of how the place runs?

Evaluation of the candidate after the interview is a combination of information gathered throughout and gut feel. If you are uncertain, have another person do a second interview for another opinion, perhaps an expert in the hospitality field.

Nothing is wrong in being critical when evaluating. It is usually easier to hire than it is to fire. Remember that the person being interviewed is giving their best side ever. It likely will not get any better.

Confirm your evaluation by doing at least one or two reference checks. Employers are more desirable than personal references, but in today’s business climate, fear of retaliation often means an ex-employer may only furnish you with dates of hire and termination and eligibility for re-hire. During the interview, get permission for reference checks, particularly of those still employed. Have they made their current employer aware that they are looking for other work?

In reading an application, consider the following:

- Is it filled out neatly, completely and reflective of communication skills?
- Does work history show gaps or short terms of employment?
- Does length of residence reflect a history of moving often?
- Are references and former employers accompanied with phone numbers for ease of contact?
- Is the application signed and dated?
Do not write on the application. Any comments or notes should be made on a separate paper. Avoid negative remarks that may come back to work against you. Keep comments objective and clear should someone else later wish to review. If the candidate appears to be a fit, confirm the following:

- Availability of hours, how many hours and start date
- Position and wage
- Things the employee needs to furnish at the beginning of employment, including any type of documentation, uniform or appearance requirements, etc.

**Employee Motivation**

Motivated staff members are likely to be better employees. For example, it is generally believed that a staff that is motivated has fewer accidents (a real concern in a kitchen environment) and less unexcused absenteeism than people not motivated. Lower turnover rates are also likely.

Unfortunately, it is difficult for a manager to motivate employees. Motivation is a state of mind, an internal drive within an individual to meet a need or want, an avenue for reaching a goal. Many f/b employees take on a full or part-time job with a golf course because of opportunity to play golf for free. If f/b management is understaffed or plans poorly, that person may never get the chance to play. Small wonder people quit when they are told one thing but get something else.

What a manager can do is to create an environment in which the facility’s concerns are addressed as each employee strives to attain self-directed and internally developed personal goals. There are many simple ways in which management style can simultaneously benefit both employees and the company.

Since a manager cannot order employees to have specific personal goals or to change them, it is best to determine exactly what their goals are (learn to play golf, for example) and then let them meet those goals on the job. If management is doing a basic part of their job, that is constantly interacting with their people throughout the workday, that should make the task of understanding the wants and needs of their people easier. That might include scheduling an employee for a complimentary lesson.

Studies have shown that there is often a wide difference between what managers believe employees desire from their jobs and what the subordinates actually do want. Three factors that show up on employees’ “wish list” are (1) full appreciation for the work that they have done, (2) feeling of being in on things and (3) help with personal problems.

Yet supervisors have often rated these three wants at the bottom of what they thought employees desired. Instead, supervisors think their employees most want higher wages, job security and promotion in the organization.
Rather than debate these findings, the point is that you, the manager, may not know exactly what your own people desire from their jobs. Perhaps your leadership style discounts an interest in that concern. Maybe there is a high turnover rate, and there is little opportunity to begin to understand the staff (a problem in itself and a vicious circle.)

All managers say they are aware that employees are the single most important resource towards the success of the operation, yet too often the employee is taken for granted. Addressing employee-related wants and needs might be one instance where a “back to the basics” approach rather than a search for high technology and new-age solutions might be in order. In other words, try using some empathy, common sense and rational analysis in your relationship with your employees.

**Employee Orientation**

An effective new employee orientation program will accomplish the following objectives:

- Provide a genuine welcome; you never get a second chance to make a good first impression. Orientation is the time to roll out the red carpet. This simple act is often overlooked when the employee arrives for work. Treating the orientation as an anti-“going away” party might be going a long way, but it should be thought of as a celebration of sort. This is a time for a new hire to become the center of attention and get a chance to meet key people in a relaxed setting. All members of the new employee’s team should be coached to go out of their way to make the new hire feel welcome. It takes the edge off the first day nervousness. The nature of a golf course setting might be the perfect excuse to invite a few new employees to play a round together.

- Develop positive perceptions; orientation is a time when a new employee develops perceptions about the organization, other employees, and you as a manager. A well planned orientation will communicate you are in control of the situation. New hires are highly aware of the environment. They notice how well things are organized, whether a business-like atmosphere exists and whether it will be an enjoyable place to work. Initial opinions are hard to change. Perceptions are particularly critical to part-time workers. These employees understand that if the job does not measure up they can move on to another job.

- Supply as much key information as possible; at the minimum, a handout with the following data should be made available for the new hire:
  - Name, address and phone number of the organization
  - Names and titles of key people (organization chart, if applicable)
  - A brief history of the organization
  - Normal working hours
  - Pay periods and paydays
  - Vacation and time off policies
  - Medical and other benefits, if applicable
  - Type of new hire probation period
  - Performance review and evaluation process
  - Dress and appearance codes
• Telephone procedures
• Include a tour of the workplace. Take time to introduce the new hire as a way of breaking the ice. The tour should include the entire facility. Briefly visit each major area and explain how to gain access to the area when necessary. A person that has been hired to work the cart or snack bar out on the course should get a complete tour of the 18 holes.

The way the first day ends is just as important as the way it began. On the way home the employee will reflect on what took place. Closing on a positive note will give the employee a good feeling. The objective is to do everything possible to make sure the new hire looks forward to the next day of work. Before leaving the first day, a manager should spend some private time with the employee. Assuming that the employee put forth a good effort, communicate directly that you noticed what was accomplished. Find something positive to say about it.

Simple Training

Every employee you have taken the trouble to hire should now be considered an investment in the business. An employee is at least as valuable as a repeat customer or a piece of equipment. An employee requires attention and should be maintained and looked after like any other part of the operation. Too often it is the one thing taken most for granted. The truly good managers value their people for what they can do for the continued success of the business.

The first phase of hiring someone should be an orientation; usually the first day of work, it should be a meeting designed to welcome, including a review of the employee handbook or general rules and regulations, a tour of the facility and a beginning assignment that should include the pairing up with a designated member of the staff that knows exactly what management expectations are. As the new hire has probably had some time to think about this new job, this is the opportunity for that person to ask questions about anything that may have not been covered in the interview or in the orientation itself.

An orientation for someone new to a system is an adjustment or adaptation to a new environment, situation or set of ideas. Therefore, it is important that it be handled by management or other proven person, so that any questions can be answered competently and that all concerns of the business are communicated in the spirit the company has set down.

A new hire/trainee’s first days on the job are the most critical and influential with respect to formation of desirable habits. How this person is handled early on will lay the groundwork for ease and quickness in development. Even during the first few hours of work the trainee is most vulnerable to guidance and the need to feel a part of the team. Assigning an already competently trained person one-on-one to the new hire nurtures a successful training environment. Putting someone into a sink-or-swim situation without aid will surely lead to future error and frustration for the trainee and all others involved. This would most likely lead to some sort of customer dissatisfaction.
A simple and recommended sequencing for training anyone to do anything follows:

1. Explain the task. The trainer takes the time to verbally review what will happen to the trainee for a specific lesson.
2. Trainer does the task. As the trainee watches, the trainer follows the same steps that were just talked about, confirming the previous step.
3. Trainee explains the task. After listening to and watching the process, the trainee is allowed to explain to the trainer what the task is about.
4. Trainee does the task. Under the eye of the trainer, the trainee is allowed to perform the work based on the previous three steps.
5. Trainer critiques the trainee’s work. Repeat if necessary.

Performance Appraisals

One particular management tool that is often misused or avoided is employee evaluations. A performance appraisal provides a periodic opportunity for communication between the person who assigns the work, and the person who performs it, to discuss what they expect from the other and how well those expectations are being met.

The appraisal should not be an adversarial meeting, nor wasted on small talk. It is an essential communication link between two people with a common purpose. A good performance appraisal leaves both parties feeling they have gained something. An appraisal is often mischaracterized by the notion that a wage increase should be involved. Not necessarily. If a new hire is informed in the orientation process that reviews will happen from time to time and do not mean an automatic salary review, then that hurdle will be eliminated.

Too often performance appraisals are left until the last minute and then done in a hurried manner. When this occurs, the results are usually poor. The supervisor feels guilty, and the employee unimportant and let down. An appraisal also has an air of dread about it, though it shouldn’t be the case—if a manager has done a good job of communicating day-to-day with an employee, the actual appraisal should be nothing more than a formality; there will be no surprises.

If your employees do not understand how their work is evaluated, it is management’s responsibility to familiarize them with the process in advance, especially new hires. Performance appraisal discussions are normally initiated by the supervisor, but are also appropriate when employees request a meeting to determine how well you think they are doing.

Appraisal discussions should be scheduled on a regular basis by either company policy or the supervisor. Less formal discussions may be conducted whenever the nature of the work makes it meaningful to do so. Appraisal activities handled at any other moment may
be recalled later during a more formal, scheduled review for reinforcement.

Preparation by an employee for the appraisal discussion is as important as that of the manager. Giving advance notice to the employee creates a climate of participation. The discussion should be a structured and planned interpersonal meeting, not a casual conversation. A specific time, agreeable to both parties should be reserved. Topics for discussion should be known in advance so the participants can prepare accordingly. The manager can help employees prepare by providing a copy of the format along with a list of thought stimulators:

- To what extent do I fulfill my job requirements?
- What do I like best about my job? Least?
- What did I accomplish during this appraisal period? Where did I fall short?
- How can my supervisor help me do a better job?
- Where can I go from here, and how do I prepare for that responsibility?

It takes solid preparation on the manager’s part for a thorough appraisal. Identify and develop items to be covered. Since employee performance in the current job is the central issue, gather data concerning those job requirements; review the job requirements yourself to make sure you are fully conversant with them.

Evaluate job performance versus job expectations for the period being appraised, and rate it from unacceptable to outstanding (or whatever the range established). Variances that need to be discussed should be backed up with specific examples. Consider career opportunities or limitations for this person and be prepared to discuss them.

Factors that mislead in an appraisal must be avoided. Be on guard for anything that might distort reality. Things that one might react to yet have nothing to do with performance include the following:

- Over-emphasis on favorable or unfavorable performance of a fractional nature, which could lead to an unbalanced evaluation of the overall contribution.
- Relying on impressions rather than facts.
- Holding the employee responsible for the impact of factors beyond his/her control
- Failure to provide each employee with an opportunity for advance preparation.
- Do not allow issues relating to race, religion, age, sex, etc. to bias.

Managers have the responsibility to initiate appraisal discussions. Although individual personalities will influence the flow, begin the talk on a positive and friendly note by highlighting something positive or asking the employee to review his or her accomplishments for the appraisal period. This allows the employee to select where to begin and can lead to a candid assessment of actual performance. While the employee is talking, the manager should be an interested listener.

If variances between expectations and results are evident, it is important both parties try to determine what they are and why they occurred. This helps the discussion become a joint problem solving session, which can lead to the implementation of effective solutions.

The employee should be encouraged to identify as many reasons for variances as possible. None should be rejected even if they seem to be excuses. Both sides should agree on the
causes. This sharing allows for an exchange of viewpoints.

On the topic of unsatisfactory performance, employees who work in a non-threatening environment are more apt to discuss their shortcomings in the appraisal setting. When this occurs, the supervisor can be supportive by saying, “That is very perceptive. What can we do to correct this situation?”

However, if the employee has been unsatisfactory in an aspect of his or her job, and does not bring up areas of weak performance, the supervisor must do so. It helps to be able to describe the impact of the poor performance on the company. Some employees may not realize they are falling short of expectations. Perhaps no one has ever discussed the problem with him or her.

If the employee is unaware that expectations are not being met, they must be clarified, and a commitment made that they will be met. Agreement on a corrective action plan is made, regardless of reason.

The most successful and satisfying evaluation is when the employee is comfortable talking freely. Reluctance to talk can be attributed to one of the following:

- The employee does not understand the purpose of the appraisal, and is afraid to express an opinion.
- The employee is not given an opportunity to express an opinion.
- The employee was not given time to prepare for the discussion.
- The employee is made to feel that his or her thoughts are discounted or glossed over quickly, resulting in a retreat.
- The employee is disinterested, and the process is meaningless.

As it is suggested that a supervisor can learn more by listening than talking, using proven communication skills can enhance the dialogue. Listening permits a climate where disagreement is not only acceptable, but also invited. Employees appreciate a leader who shares information, asks for opinions and listens to ideas. A supervisor who accepts employees’ input recognizes their value, capitalizes on their knowledge and builds confidence in the group.

There are three types of questions that can be used to help the supervisor and employee better understand each other’s point of view.

1. OPEN QUESTIONS: Those, which cannot be answered with a yes or no. These questions require an opinion or expression of feelings. For example: “What is your opinion of. . . ?” “How do you feel about. . . ?” “What do you think caused. . . ?” Open questions can show that management is interested in other points of view and values the other person’s ideas and feelings.

2. REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS: Those, which repeat a statement, the other person has made in the form of a question. Employee: “We could serve a better product if we changed the sequence of preparation.” Manager: “You really think we can improve on that product?” The reflective question sidesteps an argument without
accepting or rejecting an idea. The other person is encouraged to clarify or expand upon what has been said.

3. DIRECTIVE QUESTIONS: These are used solicit information about a specific point. They are usually used once the other person has finished talking on the subject. Manager: “If you are sure we can make that product better, what steps would you recommend?” This is a friendly challenge for the other person to explore ideas, defend statements and contribute suggestions.

Closing the appraisal discussion requires some organization, too. To prevent any differing perceptions as to what has taken place and what is expected in the future, make sure time is allowed for a summarization of what has been agreed upon. Express appreciation for the employee’s participation and commitment to the future plans. A written record of key issues should be included in the employee’s file and signed by the employee.

**Discipline and Terminations**

All courses hopefully have policies and procedures for dealing with employees that are struggling with performance. The problem is that the managers don’t use the guidelines to their advantage. Food and beverage doesn’t necessarily have the lion’s share of no-goodniks, but if the chef or f/b manager forgets or chooses to ignore bad behavior, the stage is set for worse things to happen. Consider the next paragraphs a reminder of how to deal with personnel problems.

At some time during most employees’ tenure, some sort of offense is committed in contradiction to company policy, be it minor or major. Effective management dictates the issue should be addressed immediately, not “saved” for another time when not only has the incident diminished in severity, so has clarity as to exactly what happened.

The stages of disciplinary action must be a written code to make sure fair treatment of the workers exists and to protect them from impulsive or unduly harsh punishment for wrongdoing. Consistency is the key. In the world of reprimands, the manager must avoid sarcasm, loss of temper, humiliating remarks, profanity, threats, bluffs, favoritism, inconsistent enforcement or delaying tactics.

Following are four typical stages of disciplinary action. The severity of the offense would most likely influence at what stage the disciplinary action would start:

1. First offense: oral warning. Workers must understand what has gone wrong and be told of the stages of disciplinary action. Management should make a note of the time, place and circumstances of the warning.
2. Second offense: informing workers in writing that the error is a violation of rules or standards and that another infraction will result in loss of time/pay or job. A copy of the warning is given to the worker, a copy is put in the employee’s file, and if a higher authority warrants, a copy forwarded.
3. Third offense: disciplinary layoff. Workers are suspended without pay for a
period of time consistent with the seriousness of the offense. Written
documentation is included.

4. Fourth offense: termination. Whenever termination is evident, the manager should check off on the following points:
   • What is the past record of the worker?
   • Are all the facts “in” that apply to the situation?
   • Has the worker been given a reasonable chance to improve?
   • Has fair warning been given?
   • Are actions consistent in similar cases?
   • Should anyone else be consulted on the termination?

Firing someone may be the most unpleasant task for a manager. Of the thousands of books about management techniques and style, the topic of firing is rarely discussed. Those rare books that do touch on the topic offer little to make the task easier. The act of firing for some managers is so traumatic they lose sleep; some have to take time off from work after the deed; some need a drink to pull it off. It is doubtful any of these actions or reactions will soften the blow for either party.

If you decide to fire for poor performance, you should be convinced or fortified by the correctness of your action. Do not keep ineffective workers. It demoralizes the rest of the staff and lowers the productivity levels you seek. Just because you feel sorry for someone that cannot meet expectations is not a good reason to keep them on the job. You can try to help your less effective workers by giving them extra training, by trying to look for ways they can improve and by finding out if they can fit anywhere else better; but after you have attempted everything, there is only dismissal as a choice. Take into account how you yourself would want to be treated in a firing. Choose a place with privacy and where interruptions are limited. If the firing is potentially volatile or involves delicate handling, consider having a witness present in case of future repercussions.

Some workers will be angry and vent their frustrations towards you. There is no need for you to answer back—listen and acknowledge that this is very difficult for all involved but this is what the situation has come to. The worker must be told very clearly the reason they are being fired so that it can be a learning experience. If you cannot give a good reference, this person should know not to use your name and be warned that, if called, you will state the facts (if this is allowed by company policy).

Not all dismissals are traumatic. Some workers are even relieved, especially if you have put off doing the firing and the situation has deteriorated. The worker usually knows it is coming and agrees that the behavior warrants this move.
Managing Upset Employees

Whether right or wrong, it is important not to make your employee look foolish or incompetent in front of a customer. It is also advisable not to make the incident a three-party affair; the employee should stay away from immediate area. If it appears the employee is in fact wrong, it adds little to the conversation to degrade the person in front of the customer. The focus should be on righting the wrong, with an assurance to the customer that you will follow up with the employee and take what you consider to be appropriate action.

At the right time, perhaps after the customer has left, the employee should be confronted. He/she may be shaken, angry or even on the verge of tears. Do not try to sort out the problem in front of peers or other customers. Review the incident in private by getting the employee’s version before making any quick decisions. It is not uncommon for an employee to admit that he/she had not done their job correctly. In these cases a personal apology from the employee to the customer (on the pretext the employee agrees this is appropriate) usually works wonders; in cases where the two sides of the story do not agree, the manager must rely on his/her wisdom and experience to consider what action to take.
End Note
In the final analysis, no food and beverage operation will ever run on autopilot. In a business world that lately has condemned the concept of “micro”-managing, f/b is the perfect counter-statement for what can go wrong if the “micro” is separated and deleted from the art of management. The profits from f/b are built entirely on pennies at a time. An acute sense of awareness is required to keep an eye on several targets; and unfortunately, the targets are moving.

By having the systems and procedures in place that have been discussed in this manual, golf courses will have more than enough mechanisms in place to trip an alarm warning managers that their f/b operation has a problem. Until these tools are used, pinning a reason on why or whether a problem exists is strictly speculation.

Putting these signposts in place is the challenge, and the responsibility falls directly on the people that have been hired to manage the f/b department. Any chef and/or f/b manager worthy of their titles should admit to a shortcoming if there are no programs in place to better monitor f/b results. But the admission is at least a starting point for making the necessary changes.
About the Authors
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Profitable Food Facilities: In business since 1991, PFF has been working with clients to build and establish successful food and beverage operations. Whether PFF is involved at the inception of a project, the opening of a new facility, or evaluating an existing operation, our team has the advantage of having worked hands-on in a wide variety of food environments, encompassing over 80 years of collective operational experience.