

## **How a Smartguy and a Sharpcookie Solved Their Service Problems.**

Johnny Smartguy, the General Manager of Longknockers Country Club understands how to handle the problem of finding good service staff. He realizes that, in his marketplace, there just aren't a lot of good people to choose from. Being the smart guy he is, he, like so many other good managers, has begun hiring inexperienced people with good personalities and then training them in-house for wait staff positions in the dining rooms. Yes, this takes time and effort. However, Johnny believes that this is the only alternative to the scarcity of available people.

He also believes that serving people is not rocket science. You can train technique but it is difficult to develop a personality in someone that is somewhat of a dead fish. Therefore Mr. Smartguy looks for personality when hiring. He looks for vibrant and outgoing individuals. Johnny realizes that every business is looking for vibrant and outgoing individuals as well. Therefore Johnny has to, as they say, sort through the chaff to get to the wheat. Some people hide their personality in the interview process. Johnny has a wonderful ability to bring out the positives in people and he has a good nose for selecting fresh talent that has the potential for success.

The best thing Johnny has going for him is that he has Jim Sharpcookie as his dining room manager. Jim has been around the block a few times with this training thing. Sharpcookie has perfected a two-phased plan of orientation and training of new employees that has paid big benefits at Longknockers CC. In fact Jim has probably trained many of the good servers in their town.

What is the secret of Jim's success? Joe Wana-know, the manager of the Grass Is Always Greener Club, wanted to know.

To find out the secret, Joe had to identify what it is NOT. The secret doesn't appear to be orientation. Several of the clubs in the area do a good job of orientating their new employees. These clubs also provide good technical training. There also have some relatively competent supervisors in those clubs. Joe had all of the above; good orientation, technical training and supervisors. So why does a Sharpcookie trained person normally outperform a Wana-know person.

Was it pay? Joe wasn't sure. Both clubs pay a competitive rate. However, Johnny Smartguy had a different way that employees earned their income. A Grass Is Always Greener employee made on average \$12 per hour. The same was true with a Longknockers server. But, with Johnny's blessing, Jim Sharpcookie had loaded the pay opportunities with performance incentives. Slowly the amount of money each person at Longknockers made per hour had

increased past the \$12 average. However, the total payroll as a percentage of sales was equal to that paid by Joe at Grass Is Always Greener.

Joe made a life changing decision. He would tuck his tail between his legs, put his ego in his back pocket and call Johnny. And what was Johnny's response? "Come on over Joe. I will buy you lunch and get Jim to join us." See Johnny was the senior manager in the area and like all good managers (Smartguys) he wanted to help the younger Joe succeed.

"What is your secret Johnny?" Joe said. "Why does everyone say the service is always better at Longknockers?" "I will let Jim answer that question" said Johnny. "Jim has an interesting focus to his orientation and training. He teaches that the key to great service is to understand the sense of urgency. In essence Jim teaches the concept time management as the foundation to great service. Jim, give Joe an overview of what you do."

"Service is not great unless it is timely. Yes, servers must be technically competent. They must be friendly. However, unless we can meet the member expectation of time, the service will never be considered great. Therefore, we lay the foundation at the outset of orientation, reinforce it continually and make it a key benchmark indicator of performance for incentive compensation."

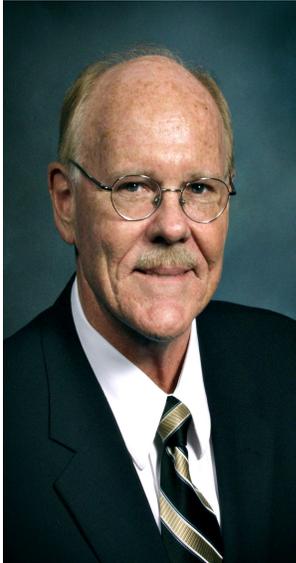
"Let me explain it this way. Joe, think about going out to dinner. When you walk into a restaurant you have an expectation of the time it takes for you to be greeted and seated. A little clock goes off in your head. If you are not seated within a reasonable amount of time based on your initial expectations then you are not happy. The same is true once you are seated. A new clock starts regarding how long it will take your server to come to the table. Once your drink order has been taken a new clock starts. How long will it take to bring the drinks?"

"Each person in the restaurant has different expectations when it comes to time. There are clocks starting and stopping continuously in each person's mind. Multiply that by the number of guests and you can see that, no matter what a server has completed, there is always someone's clock ticking on the next expectation. Basically, we teach our people that, no matter what, there is always something to be done for someone. When you mix in all the other back of the house responsibilities of a service person they begin to understand that there is no time for rest during the meal period."

"It is simple really. We develop a high energy staff that just keeps on going like the Energizer Bunny. The harder they work the more money they make. Everybody handles their fair share of the load. We do not pamper slackers. Each person has a solid respect for the other. All our people are self-starters that need little supervision because each person is watching out for the total organization. Older employees help train newer employees about time

management. The supervisors monitor this performance and assist in evaluating performance incentive compensation.”

What is the moral of this story? If a Wana-know listens to a Sharpcookie they can be a Smartguy too.



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