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Running a Successful Bar

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Running a Successful Bar

By: foodservicewarehouse.com

The following tips offer a few fundamental suggestions for those looking to run an efficient, profitable bar business:

Be responsible

Running a bar operation is a risky business, not only because of the nature of the business but due to the potentially dangerous product.

Alcohol affects all people differently, and all bar staff should be aware of how to serve it responsibly, as well as how to cut someone off when needed.

Take time to learn the local laws and licensing requirements as well to keep your operation legally sound.

Caring for customers, following the law and being responsible with product are important, not only for your reputation but for your customers' health and safety.

Train your staff

A well-trained staff is essential to your business.

Bartenders who know their craft inside and out will be more likely to help your bar stand out above the rest.

Beyond training them to be skilled behind the bar, your bartending staff must be personable, friendly and generally able to converse with customers.

Use a POS system

Few contemporary bar businesses can run successfully without an electronic point of sale (POS) system.

Busy nights with lots of people require a system to help organize orders and account for transactions.

A POS system is ideal for keeping track of transactions as well as analyzing sales.

Create a signature drink

Creating a signature drink is important to developing a unique vibe and identity for your bar.

Putting your own spin on your drink menu gives customers a special reason to visit your bar instead of the one down the street.

Organize the back bar

Unless your bartenders' work space is well organized, bartenders will be bumping into each other and wasting time running back and forth to fulfill orders.

Organize your back bar area so that the major drink-making stations are in the same areas.

For instance, group your beer taps together so that a bartender filling an order of beer will not have to run from one end of the bar to another to pour two different brews.

Market your drink specials

Marketing can be as simple as word-of-mouth, or you may have a strong, financially-backed campaign to reach more people in the area.

Even a well-constructed happy hour menu and a few table tents can provide some good marketing for your bar.

Run a clean operation

Many bars claim to want to achieve the atmosphere and vibe of a neighborhood dive bar, but dive bar and dirty bar are not necessarily the same thing.

Customers notice things like dirty restrooms and a sticky bar top, which would turn anyone off.

Make it a priority with your staff to keep the place clean so your customers feel comfortable.

Keep an eye on pour levels

One of the quickest ways to lose inventory in the bar is inaccurate pouring.

When bartenders pour improper amounts, not only does it affect the inventory you have on hand, but the customer receives an inconsistent product from day to day or from bartender to bartender.

Train thoroughly, test frequently and use jiggers or measuring pourers for less experienced bartenders.

Keep bar equipment in working order

When your bar equipment is not working correctly, chances are that your entire operation is thrown off track.

Be sure that you maintain and update your beer draft system, dishwashing set-up, back bar coolers and ice machine in order to keep your business running smoothly.

Change the drink menu periodically

This is generally true of most restaurants, but offering a variety is especially important for a bar.

Try switching up the draft beer you provide every few months, and bring in new wines from different wineries to offer your guests something new.

You may even offer a new cocktail with the seasons, offering your staff a chance to be creative and mix something new.

Changing your menu, or at least parts of it, keeps customers interested and gives you the opportunity to do away with items that are not selling.

So, You Think You Need a New Store?

By Richard Hardine
Infinity Development

It's no big deal? Everybody already knows it's too cramped in your current facility. Your aisles are too narrow; you don't have enough shelf or storage space. The building is just too old, the lighting is bad and you're always having plumbing and electrical problems.

All you have to do, then, is convince the city council and get a contractor to do a major remodel,or build a new facility. BUT, where do you start this process, and just what all is involved? The answers can be found in a simple three-step process: 1) Plan, 2) Plan, and 3) Plan.

1) Plan all the things that have to be done before you start the construction process.
2) Plan all the things that have to be done during the construction process.
3) Plan all the things that have to be done after the construction process.

1. PRE-CONSTRUCTION PLAN

This is the most important stage of the whole project. It's this stage that can provide you with the proper direction with which to proceed.

It should start with the "Pre-design Phase." This is where you'll identify your goals and objectives, gather information, determine strategies, develop a project schedule, and determine real estate options.

Next, the Before Construction Plan will address the elements of the "Schematic Design Phase." This consists of site analysis and selection, site master planning, and design team formation.Here you will address workplace design standards, adjacency studies, stacking diagrams, blocking diagrams, schematic space planning, a preliminary budget, the identification of areaswhere consultants will be needed, and the identification of potential consultants.

Then, you should move on to the "Design Development Phase." Here is where you'll present your final space planning, furniture and equipment layout, a technical plan review, the selection of finishes and materials, furniture selections, development of the architectural plan, and a statement of probable costs.

Now it's time for the "Construction Documentation Phase." In this section of your plan, you'll prepare the architectural drawings and specifications, coordinate engineering services, address fire protection and acoustical needs, identify existing usable equipment, coordinate with communication consultants, and prepare furniture specifications.

And, finally, before you start the construction stage of your plan, you should include the "Bid/Negotiation Phase." It's at this point that you're concerned with setting up a pre-bid conference, issuing addenda, obtaining bids or negotiation proposals, assisting in the preparation of the contracts, and finally awarding the contracts.

2. CONSTRUCTION STAGE

Now, at last, it's time to move into the Construction Stage. Actually, this is a single-phase stage, the "Construction Administration Phase." This is where all the physical work gets done. It's here that you must plan on how you'll address the interpretation of construction documents; conduct construction site visits; review and approve shop drawings; review and approve finish and material proposals; approve certificates of payment; coordinate the final walk-through with contractors, consultants and other approving bodies; prepare punch lists; and expedite furnishings.

3. POST-CONSTRUCTION STAGE

Now it's time to plan on what has to be done after the constrution is complete. This is done in two phases. First is the "Move-In Phase." There you'll conduct the final inspection; approve final payments; coordinate equipment warranties and maintenance manuals; coordinate the moving of owner-furnished items; and coordinate the delivery of furniture, fixtures and equipment.

And lastly, comes the planning for the "Post-Occupancy Phase." This is where you address conducting an end-user survey, a human resource survey, an executive management survey, a customer survey, addressing any needed additions or renovations.

Easy, isn't it? Well, not very. There aren't many owners or managers who are capable of preparing a plan of this magnitude, much less being able to carry it out. That's why I suggest you get help with all the parts of the plan with which you don't feel comfortable. In some cases, that's everything, and in others it's only a few sections. Most good consultants and developers will conduct an initial interview and discussion with you at no charge. Do it! It could save you not only a bucket of money, but also save you a great deal of time, problems, and worse yet, potential embarrassment.

Real knowledge is to know the extent of one's ignorance.

Olivia Liquor Makes Huge Revenue Swing

Olivia Liquor made a huge revenue swing in 12 months, (2013-2014), following years of financial challenges.

City Administrator Dan Coughlin offers the following takeaways from the experience:

To thine self be true. You have to be able to honestly assess the shortcomings and weaknesses of your organization and then be willing to make the necessary changes to chart a new course; even when local politics makes that an uncomfortable proposition.

Those changes might include ceasing parts of your operation, personnel changes, investing in updates, etc.

All which can be scary, politically controversial actions - but might be a necessity if one wants to have your store thrive instead of just survive.

Be willing to try new things knowing full well that you will fail in some attempts. Don't box your manager into a play-it-safe mindset by expecting everything that is tried will succeed.

Good communication between the manager, administration and elected officials is the best salve for minor bumps and bruises along the way.

Take the time to find the best employees you can - then treat them well, pay them well and then get out of their way and let them be the professionals you hired them to be.

Never stop learning. Continuing education, seminars, networking opportunities and professional support systems are all key to keeping your finger on the pulse of the industry and learning from the wisdom of others.

The MMBA Board & Staff are an amazing resource for local managers, administrators or elected officials. We truly would not have found ourselves where we are right now if it weren't for a handful of MMBA members donating their time to work with us on options to take a struggling enterprise and turn it around.

They are only an email or phone call away - so avail yourselves of their assistance and then heed their advice.

They know what they are talking about!

And finally, on a personal note... Our new manager Nanette Serbus is truly an outstanding business professional who, along with her staff, has made this turnaround possible.

Without a key leader such as Nanette helping guide our store in a new direction, all the plans and programs in the world wouldn't have brought us the kind of success we now enjoy.

(And to think she was with us for a decade and a half as a part-time clerk & bartender before she was given the opportunity to bring her true talents to the forefront in the organization!)

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Joint Purchases of Spirits & Wine Are Legal

With many of the smaller stores trying to stay viable for our cities and competing against the bigger box stores or even the competition down the road, now is the time to look at your purchasing power and smarter buying options from your vendors.

I recently teamed up with another municipal liquor store and have started to group purchase alcohol.

Together we are doing the 25 case buys on the "staple" items we know we will go through: Captain, Bacardi, Mac, Windsor, etc...

It is perfectly legal to do so, despite what some of your salespeople will tell you.

See MN State Statute 340A.312 :

340A.312 JOINT PURCHASES; VOLUME PRICES.

Subdivision 1.Joint purchases.

The joint purchase by two or more licensed retailers of up to 300, 1.75 liter or smaller, bottles of distilled spirits or wine for resale to the public is lawful.

Subd. 2.Volume prices.

A variable volume price offered by a wholesaler to a licensed retailer on sales of distilled spirits or wine may not be for a quantity of more than 25 cases.

Getting the salesmen on board was the biggest challenge.

It requires a little more paperwork on your salesman's side and some are not willing to work with you on it.

We had one salesman that was not as willing to work with us, so I made a phone call to the Single Point of Contact from the MMBA magazine to discuss the issue we were having and it was resolved.

Your salesmen should be appreciative for whatever business you are giving them, big or small.

When we place an order we decide how we are going to separate out the 25 case deal.

To make it easier and less confusing for us and our salesmen, one of us puts the entire order in.

Our group purchases are invoiced separately with the 25 case pricing and delivered to each location.

By group purchasing with another facility it helps you be more competitive in pricing, increases your Gross Profit, and generates more money for your city.

Cheers!

Karissa Kurth
Buffalo Lake

2015 MMBA Boot Camp Reflections

Another very successful MMBA Boot Camp was held earlier this year..

Here are some random event takeaways:

• Your humble executive director continuously talked about the "The Age of Aquarius."

After the *darkness* of Total Wine & More's arrival in Minnesota, a new *enlightenment* has emerged impacting all areas and tiers of the alcohol beverage industry.

In other words, the competitive world has changed and there is an entirely new way of succeeding in today's marketplace.

This applies to licensees, wholesalers and suppliers.

• The Boot Camp theme continues to be "Urgency & Confidence."

The time to act and make necessary changes to an operation do not need to be delayed --- especially since confidence was gained the changes will be successful.

• Unfortunately, as in any retail business, crime and robberies sometimes occur.

There is a strong need to prepare employees for the various possibilities and support them after an occurrence.

• A good place to find part time employees is other area municipal liquor operations, who are cutting staff hours due to the federal health care program.

• Liquor mangers should meet with new council members and provide them with an operational overview.

The knowledge will help them better understand issues and respond to constituent questions.

• Profitable and effective wine events can be held in large cities and small towns.

• Great customer service experiences are remembered for years.

Let me know if you have questions on the above topics or any other matter.

Paul Kaspszak
Executive Director

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– Spirit Journal, December 2014

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2015 Minnesota Omnibus Liquor Bill

By MMBA Lobbyist Sarah Psick

The 2015 omnibus liquor bill has been signed by the Governor

Following are the provisions included in the bill:

Article 1: Recodification of Minnesota Statutes Chapter 340A. This is a technical "re-writing" of the liquor laws, no changes to the current law.

Article 2, Sections 1 & 5: Microdistillery off-sale license. This section provides that a microdistillery may be issued an off-sale license from a local government.

Microdistillery off-sale is limited to one 375 milliliter bottler per customer per day of product manufactured on-site.

Off-sale hours must comply with hours for liquor stores and no brand may be sold unless it is also available for distribution by wholesalers.

Article 2, Sections 2 & 3 Growler Sales. Allows for the sale of growlers on Sundays at small breweries and brewpubs.

Article 2, Sections 4, 8, 9, 10, 11, and 12 Special Licenses. These sections provide for special licenses to be issued to (1) the Norway House in the city of Minneapolis, (2) a golf course in the city of Becker, (3) the Lester Park golf course in the city of Duluth, (4) the lnver Wood golf course in lnver Grove Heights, (5) the Municipal Athletic Complex in the city of St. Cloud, and (6) a wedding and event center in the city of Brooklyn Park.

Each of these sections requires approval of the local governing body before going into effect.

Becker, Duluth, Inver Grove Heights and St. Cloud are now cities with municipal liquor operations!

Article 2, Section 6 Proof of Age. This section provides that a valid instructional permit issued to a person of legal age to purchase alcohol and including a photograph and the date of birth of the person is a valid form of identification for the purchase or consumption of alcohol.

This section is effective July 1, 2015.

Article 2, Section 7 "Bloody Mary bill". This section moves the hours for on-sale of liquor up to 8:00 a.m. on Sundays, from the current law of 10:00 a.m. on Sunday.

Article 2, Section 13 Powdered Alcohol. This section prohibits the manufacture, distribution, importation, or sale of powdered alcohol until June 1, 2016.

The director of the Division of Alcohol and Gambling Enforcement must prepare testimony for the commerce committees about whether current laws could be adequately enforced with regard to powdered alcohol.

The commissioner of health must also prepare testimony to address whether there is a potential for greater abuse of and addiction to powdered alcohol relative to malt liquor, wine and distilled spirits.

This testimony must be prepared by December 7, 2015.

Article 2, Section 14 State Fair Beer Sales. This section allows brewpubs to sell beer at the Minnesota State Fair at one location, the Minnesota Craft Brewers Build exhibit, during the duration of the annual Fair.

Not Included

Provisions/bills which were not included in the omnibus tax bill include the issuance of multiple licenses, wine transfers between stores, urban wineries, abolishment of 3.2% beer, abolishment of municipal liquor stores, and changes to the cash beer laws.

Sunday Sales:

More than sixteen bills were introduced in the House and Senate this year to allow the liquor stores to be open on Sundays. We worked with a coalition — Minnesota Licensed Beverage Association, Minnesota Municipal Beverage Association, Minnesota Beer Wholesalers Association and the Minnesota Teamsters, to meet with legislators and staff, hired experts to organize a grass roots effort to generate local opposition to a change in law, and generate letters to the editor and guest columns.

After the policy committee deadline, the House Commerce committee held an informational hearing on the bills to allow Sunday sales.

Several liquor store owners testified against the bills and were present in the audience, along with the Edina city manager, and the Teamsters.

Testifying in support of the of the proposals were some liquor stores, the Minnesota Beer Activists, the Minnesota Liberty Caucus, DISCUS, and a member of the public.

No votes were taken in the committee and the Senate did not hold a hearing on the bills.

As the omnibus liquor bills were debated in the House and Senate, amendments were offered on each Floor to allow Sunday sales; each amendment was defeated. Senate: Amendment offered by Senator Susan Kent (DFL, Woodbury) to allow sales of liquor on Sunday, but prohibit delivery of products on Sunday — defeated 28-35.

House: Two amendments were offered in the House. The first was offered by Representative Jenifer Loon (Republican, Eden Prairie), to allow municipalities (cities) to authorize Sunday sales, also prohibits the delivery of liquor on Sunday and prohibits liquor stores from accepting deliveries on Sundays.

The amendment was defeated by a vote of 57-75.

The second amendment was offered by Representative Steve Drazkowski (Repub|ican, Mazeppa) to allow municipalities (cities) to authorize Sunday Sales, but did not include a prohibition on deliveries.

The amendment was defeated, 48-84

$9.00 Bloody Mary a Hit in Nevis!

It is a topic that comes up often for those of us who have an on sale and was discussed this year at Boot Camp.

It is the question everyone fears to change....

Drink prices!
First off, let me ask this question?

How many people including yourself, walk into an establishment and ask how much they want their drink to cost?

Hardly no one - and the ones who do are not there to make you profits.

There is a reason you often see menus that do not list prices on their wines, beers or liquors at your favorite restaurants or drinking establishments.

It is because the people are there for the idea of being out, the atmosphere of your establishment and the fun and enjoyment they want to experience.

At our on sale, I took an idea I had experienced during a girls weekend. It has become a famous drink that puts us on the map to newcomers because they heard from a friend that you have to stop and have their "Special Bloody Mary".

What makes it special is not only what's in it, but the story behind it.

We had stopped at a small bar in northern Minnesota waiting for another friend to meet up with us and the owner sat down and ordered a Bloody Mary.

We chatted amongst ourselves and since we were all bartenders we watched as the bartender mixed her this awful concoction.

My friend said he must really not like his boss,...did you see what he just put in that!

Well he heard us and so did she and so he had us all try it.

It was the Best Bloody Mary we had all ever had!

I learned the recipe and started to make them at my bar.

It took a few try's with the friends as guinea pigs, but I mastered the specialty!

It started as those friends ordering it when they would come in.

Others became curious, so they had to have one and it grew from there!

We now have people come in who have never even stopped in Nevis along their way, because they have to try what they heard someone else rave about!

The bottom line is we charge $7.00 for our house Bloody Mary and $9.00 for a "special" Bloody Mary.

We sell roughly 10 special ones to the regular!

People don't care what it costs, they will pay because that's what they want!

They care about the excitement of something new.

I don't think it is fair to overcharge and you have to base your prices on costs and overhead, but just because the competition is cheaper, doesn't make them better!

Don't be afraid to charge what you need to be charging.

The few who complain will be back tomorrow and will pay the price.

Lisa Kamrowski
Nevis Liquor

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Municipal Marijuana Store Opens in Washington

From: Bloomberg
North Bonneville, Washington, has become the first US town to open its own recreational marijuana store, in an experiment that could serve as a model for cash-strapped cities looking for ways to generate revenue.

The city of almost 1,000 on the Oregon border opened Cannabis Corner on Saturday to a line of about 30 people.

Officials estimate the store will produce about $3.5 million in revenue in the first year, some of which will be steered to police and public-health expenses.

"This city has a hard time paying its bills and so this, if it turns out to be a good operation, will be a financial boon to our community," said Steven Hasson, the city administrator.

"If we're successful, other cities here in Washington and around the country will look at it as a possible option."

North Bonneville, about 56km east of Portland, Oregon, opened the store three years after residents in Washington and Colorado voted to legalize recreational marijuana use. Oregon and Alaska followed last year.

The city, nestled in a gorge surrounded by evergreen-lined cliffs, had a budget of $1.2m last year and ran a shortfall ranging from $30,000 to $60,000, Hasson said.

Profits

The city used about $280,000 in private loans to renovate and stock the store without dipping into taxpayer dollars, said Tim Dudley, the president and chairman of the five-member North Bonneville Public Development Authority, created by the city to run the business.

Initial profits would go towards repaying the loans, with an estimated $100 000 in revenue steered to the city in its first year and double that in the second year, he said.

Statewide, recreational marijuana stores generated $108m in marijuana sales and $27m in taxes since they began operating in July, according to data from the Washington State Liquor Control Board, which regulates the industry.

North Bonneville was the only city in Washington to apply for an application to run its own store, according to board spokesman Mikhail Carpenter.

The liquor board had issued 124 other licenses for privately run stores in Washington, he said.

The store, housed in a renovated concrete company maintenance shop, had 11 employees who qualify for state retirement benefits, Dudley said.

About 60 percent of customers were locals and the rest tourists, Dudley said.

If all goes as planned, marijuana-derived funds would pay for animal control and turning on street lights that were dimmed for budget reasons, said Hasson, the city administrator.

Bob Bianchi, a North Bonneville city council member, said he opposed the store because it would encourage drug use.

The five-member city council agreed, on a 3-1 vote, to create the Public Development Authority, with Bianchi on vacation and Mike Hamilton voting against it.

"I don't believe we need another habitual drug added to society," Bianchi said.

"We already have alcohol, tobacco, cigarettes."

Mayor Don Stevens backed the store and was met with applause when he became the first to buy marijuana there on Saturday.

The publicly run store was not subject to federal income taxes and Washington was an income tax-free state, allowing the store to charge less for marijuana, Hasson said.

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Credit Cards with a "Chip"

From: creditcards.com

Q: *Do I need to accept credit cards with a "chip" at my stores?*

I've been told there will be a deadline to do this. My equipment only accepts the magnetic swipe cards and I don't see many "chip" cards.

A: Great question-there's a lot of confusion about this.

There's a big shift in the payment space in the works called EMV (Europay/ MasterCard/Visa), and it will be soon firmly hitting home.

Commonly known as chip and pin cards, the chip refers to the integrated circuit built into the card, and the pin is familiar ability to input a pin number to secure the transaction.

All merchants in the U.S. will have to be very familiar with the impact of chip and pin or face consequences.

Visa, for instance, has imposed a deadline of Oct. 1, 2015 (except for fuel-selling merchants, who have until Oct. 1, 2017).

After that, the liability for point-of-sale fraud at terminals that do not support EMV will shift from Visa to the party that doesn't enable chip technology to be used -- that could be the merchant, the acquirer/processor if it hasn't offered an EMV-capable solution to merchants, or the issuer if it has not issued
EMV-capable cards to its cardholders.

MasterCard, American Express and Discover all share those 2015 and 2017 deadlines, but each has its own specific rules on liability shift.

Say "Bubbles" Without a Smile

Every year at the MMBA Boot Camp I learn something new to bring back to my store.

I'm also reminded that some managers and city officials have not been given, or more importantly have not asked, for the tools to succeed.

The ability to share ideas with other store managers throughout the state is an incredible resource that we must utilize.

I recently purchased some (well 5000) 50ml bottle piggyback hang tags for creating added value to products we are featuring in our store.

One item is Casamigo's tequila.

The programming for 50ml's allows us to create additional value on our 750's by offering a 50ml of another type of Casamigo's as an added value.

We will also be creating added value on Veil vodka 1.75L by hanging a 50ml of the Veil Citrus.

When I received the piggyback tags from American Retail Supply there was a book included - Out Nordstrom - Nordstrom by Keith Lee.

The book outlines 59 secrets to creating a better customer service environment.

He stated #58 and #59 were not included in his first edition because he "didn't want the book filled with obvious no brainer information"

Can you guess what obvious no brainer rules are??

#58 - Greet Customers Warmly with a Smile.

#59 - Say "Thank You"

This includes thanking the client who doesn't buy.

I found another quick way to put a smile on your face.

Try to say "Bubbles" without a smile...

Michael Friesen
Hawley Liquors

Sunday Sales Needed to Feed Her Children??

Erin Rykken, of Richfield, recently testified at a Minnesota House Commerce Committee.

Ms. Rykken, avoids feeding her children processed foods and preservatives, sometimes requiring her to cook with liquor.

It became a problem on a recent Sunday when her son wanted lava cake for his birthday party - a recipe that required orange liqueur.

"I literally had to drive to Wisconsin to go buy orange liqueur," she said.

"I just wish we could extend this (Sunday Growler) bill a little further to cover all Sunday sales.

It would make my life a little bit easier and other people's lives a little bit easier."

Source:Abby Simmons, Star Tribune, March 4, 2015, 9:27 PM

MMBA Commercial Members Are Available to You! Contact Them!

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Midwest Hospitality Solutions
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Pabst Brewing Company
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Web: www.pabst.com

Silver Plus

August Schells Brewing Company
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