

Does the required skill set of a Food & Beverage employee change, based on the type of business and the type of service that the food and beverage operation utilize.

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Hospitality businesses across the world recognise the importance of customer service and are investing considerable time and effort into shaping training programs that would help employees deliver improved customer service (Cousins et al., 2014). In this context, a match between how both customer and employees define service quality is vital (Buzzell and Gale, 1987). From my experience, I have noticed that no matter the type of business, whether a 3-star or a 5-star, customers consciously or unconsciously have certain standards and expectations for how their needs should be fulfilled. By working in various restaurants, I have noticed key differences. For instance, a company such as a fast-food establishment that offers standard services promises to match the expectations of the customer. By comparison, a high-end restaurant is looking to exceed the expectations of the customers. In this context, I believe that a standard employee skillset is essential when working in any of these establishments, although in certain cases elevation and improvements are required.

From my personal experience in the workplace, I have noticed that to be a reliable employee you need a mixture of both hard and soft skills. My hard skills are the specific skills that I can prove through diplomas or degrees, and they tend to be technical in nature (Anthonius, 2021). For instance, on a daily shift it would be required of me to perform a lot of practical tasks such as setting up a table, cleaning the bar and setting up according to a standard operating procedure. Comparatively, the soft skills involve emotional and social aspects that I developed through experience and training. For instance, I would have to communicate with team members and resolve conflict with customers when mistakes would happen.

Having worked in multiple F&B business over the years, I have noticed that luxury restaurants demand more from their employees. Whilst in a budget or a fast-food restaurant customers come and go at a fast pace; they look for quick delivery of food and less attention is given to the delivery of the service. Service time is usually within minutes, the quality is in rapport with the price and customers do not have a lengthy interaction with the employees. Because luxury restaurants are considered the top tier of the market (Kiatkawsin et al., 2020), not only the price and the quality of the foods and beverages served increases, but also the quality of the customer service increases. Therefore, a combination of attributes such as attentive listening, awareness, manners, problem solving, excellent communication is essential to succussed in this type of business (Lucas, 2012).

In their findings, Kiatkawsin et al. (2020) argue that luxury restaurants need to train employees in noticing tiny but important details about their customers. Whilst working in a five-star luxurious bar, the focus falls upon giving a completely customized service to the guest. The interaction with the guest increases to augment

the significance of the occasion that can help lead to an engineered customer experience. For instance, when working in a luxurious restaurant it was required of me to offer complementary drinks or desserts for special occasions, to be attentive and knowledgeable about the menu and careful with allergies and dietary requirements. The hard skill set was also integral to this business. Firstly, depth of knowledge about food and wine was required, menu knowledge, and being able to describe, sell and alert of any ingredients was equally important. Moreover, knowing how to serve the table, pour drinks with perfection, and present the bill politely further complimented the service experience (Subakti, 2013).

As a reflection, mastering the hard skill set was the most daunting at first due to being afraid of making errors. However, with time I have learnt to perform polished movements, to have an eye for detail and to use my knowledge of the menu and social etiquette. However, I feel that there is still room for improvement in the soft skill portfolio as dealing diplomatically with challenging guests can be very hard and requires a lot of emotional intelligence (Cornell, 2019). In the future, I plan to work on improving my problem solving and conflict management skills by taking further courses and training. As I am looking to advance in my career towards a managerial position, I plan to make use of all the skills I have developed over time, but I also plan to improve on my soft skills set in order to deal with difficult situations better.

To conclude, I believe that certain aspects of the skill set remain the same whereas other aspects call for improvement depending on the type of establishment you work for. Whether it be a fast-food or luxurious establishment, good manners, technical skills, and good personal hygiene are essential. However, when it comes to luxurious establishments, the skills set required often expands to provide a truly outstanding experience because of the premium price. This means that employees should show extensive knowledge and enhanced emotional intelligence.

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