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Placement: Restaurant Management

I am writing a reflective account of the placement I am in. It has helped me get an insight into how things run all round when it comes to managing a business. At Bilash restaurant, I have been carrying out the duty of an all-round managers assistant and shadowing the manager.

At the front of the house there are different members of staff working on different days as well as myself and the manager. There is a head waiter and 2 other waiters. At the kitchen there is the chef de cuisine, who is the main chef at the top of the hierarchy who oversees the kitchen. Under the main chef is the sous chef who is the tandoori chef, who would step up if the main chef were not there. Working under them is the fry and rice chef. At the bottom of the hierarchy is the dishwasher and the assistant or junior chef.

The front of house waiters works as a team from when guests walk in, they get greeted, sat down and then orders of drinks and food are taken and ensuring that their experience is a pleasant one.

A good manager can effectively manage the place to ensure that the service flows smoothly from the kitchen team cooking according to when the food in each department should be ready so it can be served at the same time, to the serving staff to effectively communicating to the kitchen staff of the needs of the customers such as if they have allergies or other certain requirements.

The financial managing is dealing with expenses and profitability. The goal is to maximise profit and minimise costs. There are ethical issues such as should diners be served drinks after they seem like they have had too many. Is it ok to allow the rowdiness when they are drunk and may harm others or allow them to leave in a state that might not be safe or should profit be the most important factor. (Kirkcaldy, 2019-07-03)

At my placement the customers are refused service, and we would offer to call a taxi for them. Although some may not be happy at the time, but most come back and appreciate the decision.

Democratic management is used in my work where staff have a right to discuss and suggest things. (Fenton, Traci. The Christian Science Publishing Society 14.11.23)

There was an incident when a customer came in to pick up an order that was placed over the phone. The waiter who took his name to inform the kitchen, should have taken the payment at that point but he did not as he had made a few mistakes on the card machine and wanted the head waiter to do it when he brought the food out. He quickly told the head

waiter just as he was about to hand the bag over that it was not paid for. He said it in Bengali as his English was not good.

The customer heard him say the word payment and got angry and started to get aggressive saying that he was going to pay. The head waiter who was still holding onto the bag said that it was okay, and he can make the payment now, but the customer was not calming down and started swearing and disrupting the pleasant ambience of the restaurant. The manager came up to speak to him, but it only got worse as he started swearing at him as well as the rest of us. Then he said the waiter was saying things to him in Bengali.

The manager realised it was impossible to reason with him and told him to leave at once and he took the bag off the head waiter and took it straight back into the kitchen. He explained to the staff and politely to the rest of the customers that he would not tolerate abuse towards his staff. They were extremely understanding and agreed it was the absolute right thing to do. I still apologised about it to the table I was serving.

I believe the manager did the right thing. But if the waiter did follow the SOP of the business in taking the payment before the food came maybe this could have been avoided. Another issue was that the language barrier made it worse as it may have seemed like the waiter was accusing him of wanting to walk away without paying, although the behaviour of the customer cannot be justified.

Sometimes diversity could be good as well as have disadvantages. According to esports data, not having diversity reduces performances by 30% but experience and language diversity has a negative effect. (Esports data 14.11.23).

This was the case when the waiter was not experienced enough to take the payment and when he could not communicate to the customer resulted in the situation quickly getting out of hand and the loss of a customer means loss of business and if a bad revenge review follows then even more loss. (Daily telegraph, revenge reviews 14.11.23)

In this reflective account I have applied Gibbs reflection model which is well known and very widely used for reflection. (Nicole-brown.co.uk 9.11.23). When these are applied then it makes more sense to me. The stages are: - what happened, feelings, evaluations, analysis, conclusion and personal action plan.

I have witnessed conflicts at the placement which has not always been so straight forward to handle but not all the time do they require intervention from the manager as that could escalate the matter. Some conflicts blow over without any further action or staff may be better able to solve conflict amongst themselves. I have found that in the absence of the manager, the assistant manager is not taken as seriously. You must pick your battles, as sometimes it can make the situation worst but another time if you ignore something then it will fall on yourself for not dealing with it. (Kurter, H L 11.11.23)

This is an example of Gibbs reflection which helps me.

What happened

The main chef does the presentation of his dishes and of the chef de parties. As the hospitality industry is extremely competitive and continuous innovation is required to stay on trend. It is not just the quality of the food that is extremely important, but also the presentation. The guests should feel that it would taste as good as it looks to the eye. It has scientifically been proven that food tastes better when the presentation looks superb and attractive. (Chefsvisionknives.com 8.11.23).

This business receives a lot of compliments on the presentation. Guests are likely to take pictures for the purpose of social media if it looks outstandingly good, which will influence more business. (Tripadvisor.co.uk 9.11.23).

On one instance I and the manager, who I shadow, caught the chef de cuisine telling a new member of the waiter staff to do the presentation. By seeing his body language, he did not look comfortable enough to stop the busy chef to ask how to do it, who had already turned around to continue with other work. The waiter picked up a slight amount of coriander that was near the dishes and put on the side of the plates and was about to take them out to serve.

Feelings

I felt annoyed at the chef. I told him he must ask the chef to complete the presentation. The chef snapped at me telling me to ask the other chefs. The manager told him that he must not delegate any of his duties to any other staff that have not been trained to do the job. The chef replied saying it was a ridiculously small task he asked for and it was not a big of a deal to send the plates back to him.

Evaluation

Something that is on the SOP of the place must be followed. (Brampton small business 9.11.23). If the manager had not stepped in, then the chef may not have decided to do the presentations. The chef reacted in a way as if he was not at fault.

Analysis

The atmosphere in the kitchen was unpleasant. The waiter was nervous, and I explained it was not his fault. Rest of the night the chef made it uncomfortable for the waiter by leaving the dishes on the collecting area without calling out the name of the dishes. He struggled with it and was asking the other chefs for the name of the dishes. The other chefs seemed on edge too. It may be that the chef was unhappy about something or feels unheard.

The manager wanted to talk to the chef after work. The attempt to solve this issue was unsuccessful due to the chef refusing to talk about it. (Rewardsnetwork.com 10.11.23)

Conclusion

The chef de cuisine may have felt insulted in the presence of the whole team he was managing. He is at the top of the Brigade system and has authority over all the kitchen staff and did not like it when a member of the front of house pointed out a mistake. However, it is my job to raise a concern if there is reason.

Personal action plan

It would be a good plan of action to speak to the chef in private away from his team. He should be given the opportunity to bring up anything he wants to talk about at this point so we can try and find the underlying cause or any other issues there may be.

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Is diversity good or bad? Evidence from eSports teams analysis

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Drunk knife man fought staff in McDonald's kitchen

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(Fenton, Traci 14.11.23)

Even big companies are embracing a democratic style

Honesty-bar abuse, revenge reviews and pre-departure pat downs: As the cost of living crisis bites, hoteliers and restaurateurs are reporting a rise in thefts and bad behaviour from patrons, says Sally Howard