



FOOD AND BEVERAGE: THE HEAD CHEF

Steven Brown, Inn-Formation, highlights the key roles and responsibilities of the Head Chef.

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The food and beverage (F&B) seminars that we held around the UK in April and May threw up the usual range of diverse yet fascinating questions, together with highlighting the secretary's / manager's more usual concerns regarding margins, wages, yields and 'losses'!

However, one topic that was being raised to a higher profile was that of the roles of those of you charged with the day to day management of your F&B operations.

With that in mind, I thought it might be beneficial to focus on the job roles and key responsibilities of both your head bar person and head chef. Now, before launching into this, please allow me to clarify one thing. The following guidelines do not only relate to a newly-created position or role in either of these positions, but to the tasks currently being undertaken by your personnel that already occupy these lofty perches and, by so doing, we can clearly provide you with a form of measurement by which you can assess their current performance against ideal industry guidelines.

In essence, what follows is an identification of the key performance indicators (KPIs) and tasks for these people. We must also bear in mind the club manager's role in all of this, and indeed, I shall return to that later in the piece.

No matter what size of F&B operation you have, you need experienced, strong, dedicated and astute individuals to control these key services.

In my considerable experience of dealing with F&B managers in golf clubs, I have found, on many, many occasions, that, whilst bar managers and chefs are undoubtedly great practitioners of the art of day to day management of bars and kitchens, they can be somewhat lacking in the other half of the job – namely the management skills incorporating the roles of administration, people management, cost control, profit protection and product promotion. This is not true of all such personnel and indeed I have, through my on-site consultancies with clients, encountered and sung the praises of those individuals who successfully manage to complete both parts of these challenging roles.

What should the busy manager of a golf club be looking for from their incumbent managers or the new person they are seeking to fill these key roles?

In my view there are certain key criteria that are essential to the roles and, once they are satisfactorily identified and achieved, then the rest should present no major problem.

HEAD CHEF

What about the head chef? This rare and exotic species can be found lurking in the dark and impenetrable recesses of the unit known as the kitchen, or the ‘keep out’ area!

Chefs can often provide me with my greatest challenge in the F&B cycle, not because I get a nose bleed in the kitchen or because I burn water, but because some, but not all of them, can get very defensive about any intrusions made into their empire! Neither they nor we must forget that they are employees of the club and are accountable for their actions, as are all employees!

The vast majority of chefs I encounter are decent chaps and chapesses, who are greatly misunderstood and heavily over worked!

The demands of the job, in its many facets, are great. The complexities of the role are many and, while many managers would be able, if pushed, to handle a stint at pulling pints if pressed into urgent action, many of them would be very reluctant to don the chef’s whites and cook the meal for the captain’s function when chef is ill!

So let me pay respect and homage to these dedicated individuals, but let us also better understand what it is that we require of them in their job in order to appreciate the job role and provide us, in so doing, with a yardstick to use in judging their performance.

Here is a resume of the KPIs for the head chef (many of the points already illustrated regarding the bar manager will of course also apply to the role of head chef and are therefore not repeated here – see library document 1218):

Here are my top ten list of essentials:

1. To be responsible for the purchasing, at both local and national levels, of all food supplies, obtaining the best price, quality and terms and conditions available to the club.
2. To maintain all records of wholesale price increases, amending retail prices as required or alternatively recommending the de-listing of products where necessary in order to maintain the required margins.
3. To obtain and maintain all such statutory qualifications for themselves and staff as may be required relating to the job role.
4. To maintain all stock levels to industry standards and reduce any waste levels to a minimum.
5. To work with set and agreed targets relating to gross margins, waste, staffing levels and yields, as required.
6. To set up a food dish costing regime for the entire range of products provided for sale in order to achieve the required overall gross margin.

7. To comply with all food safety and HASAWA regulations as required, reporting any deficits or shortfalls in systems directly to their line manager.
8. To help promote (where club rules allow) any function activity thereby opening up the possibility of additional profit streams for the club's funds.
9. To make recommendations to the club on how greater efficiencies can be achieved through food purchasing options, utilities' options and equipment purchase.
10. To conduct themselves and their staff in a professional manner that reflect the club's aims and ambitions

As with the bar manager, there are other no less important but very specific tasks to achieve:

- a) To install a strict stock rotation and draw down system detailing identified staff access.
- b) To maintain a high standard of cleanliness ensuring that all preparation areas are scrupulously cleaned during and after service.
- c) To set up cleaning schedules and records for quarterly inspection by their line managers.
- d) To create menus in conjunction with their line manager and other 'clients'.
- e) To record all food losses for inspection by the line manager and stock takers.
- f) To establish 'specification cards' for all main food dishes detailing portions and ingredients for controlling stock levels and quality.
- g) To ensure that all staff employed are conversant with current HASAWA regulations and that they are meticulously complied with.
- h) To maintain the kitchen inventory, reporting any breakages or equipment failure as required.
- i) To ensure all annual servicing of equipment is complied with.
- j) To carry out risk assessment and COSHH inspections and to keep records.
- k) To be responsible for the interview, selection and dismissal of all staff directly under their control.
- l) To ensure that correct guidance is given to all staff in the use of all equipment.
- m) To accompany stock takers (if used) on all stock takes, obtain a copy of the report and take appropriate and remedial action if required.
- n) To record all product 'used' by committees or staff for personal consumption as allowed by the club.
- o) To ensure that all condiments, menus, cutlery and so on are available for customer use prior to service.
- p) To provide the correct level of table service and clearing personnel as required.
- q) To promote, through menus, chalk boards and staff, all saleable products.
- r) To engage with customers regarding customer satisfaction and trends.
- s) To hold team meetings regarding results and what improvements are required.
- t) To assist in the set-up of functions, meetings and so on.
- u) To ensure the unit is secure after service and that all main food storage areas are locked.

- v) To liaise with the club's administration department with regard to all relevant paperwork.
- w) To be flexible in shift patterns or to arrange appropriate cover.
- x) To lead such training programmes for their staff as may be required to advance their understanding.
- y) To be creative in their menu offer and design.
- z) To comply with all the club's aims in promoting a professional image at all times.

How well do you think you are doing with this list and your current incumbents?

Have I described how your head chef is currently performing for you, or might you need to make a few adjustments to their role in the coming months?

This key role demands the attention to detail I have listed, and, whilst for some clubs, the task responsibilities I have highlighted may be somewhat of a hammer to crack a nut, the same rules will apply albeit at a watered down level to reflect the role.

For the busy manager, you need this level of guidance as much as they need it. By better understanding the complexities of the roles, you will better be able to assess whether or not the performance of the individuals is up to the mark or not, and in so doing, it will enable you to mentor, guide or, in extreme circumstances, remove them from the role based on written evidence.

The roles of head bar manager and head chef are not requiring a first class honours degree in F&B management (although that would be nice) but it can never hurt to clearly identify the key roles and responsibilities for both them and the club manager.

Why not revisit your current job descriptions and sex then up a little to better reflect their current roles and, more importantly, your reasonable level of expectations, by putting round pegs in round holes without using a mallet!

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This document complements library document: 1218 The Bar Manager

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