Hello to Thank You

Hospitality-Driven Education for Your Taproom

BEER WORTH FINDING
VERMONT CRAFT BREWERS CONFERENCE
VERMONT BREWERS ASSOCIATION



Questions?











HI! I'M JULIE

not your hobby
MARKETING SOLUTIONS

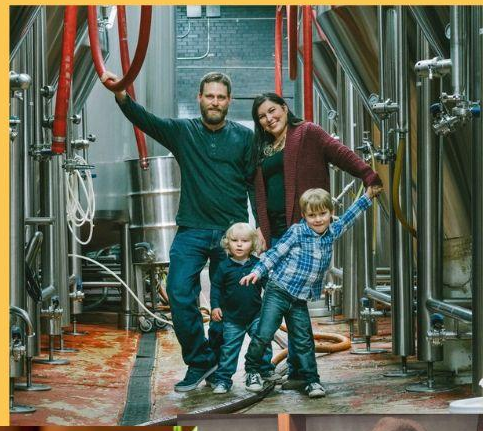
KICK FIZZ

20+ years in the beverage trenches. Former sales rep turned strategist for the independent brands that actually make this industry interesting. **I teach brands how to work smarter, not harder.** I also have a podcast!

Named 2023 Brewers Association Mentor of the Year, I sit on the Biz Development Committee and belong to a bunch of state trade guilds. Also a business journalist, university instructor, sci-fi nerd, ex-billiards shark, and a lover of donuts.

Married a beer delivery guy who became a sales rep, then a head brewer, then a packaging manager, then a canning line fabricator, and now... my CFO. We've got two teenagers who (for now) still like us and won't wreck your taproom.

We live in Broomfield, Colorado—close enough to the mountains for skiing, but far enough from Denver to not have to watch the Rockies lose in person too often.









Same Beer, Different Night

Most taproom training covers the tap list, the POS login, and where the spare couplers live

Hospitality gets one line: "be friendly"

So the visit depends on who's behind the bar

Your beer is fine. The hello and the thank you is the problem.

A Pretend Taproom Visit

1. A guest walks in. The staff doesn't budge.
2. Nobody says hello
3. The guest doesn't know how ordering works or what to order, stalls at the board, and orders the most familiar word on it
4. Nobody suggests a flight
5. Nobody mentions food
6. Nobody asks about a second round or mentions the four-packs in the cooler
7. They pay, nobody says thank you, and nobody gives them a reason to come back

None of these fixes cost a dime. Each one is a single sentence from whoever's behind the bar.

Service vs. Hospitality

Danny Meyer: "Service is the technical delivery of a product. Hospitality is how the delivery of that product makes its recipient feel."

- **32%** of customers would walk away from a brand they love after one bad experience
- **73%** say a good experience is key to their loyalty, and **42%** would pay more for a friendly, welcoming one

Source: PwC, "Experience Is Everything" (15,000 consumers)

Service	Hospitality
"What can I get you?"	"What do you usually drink?"
Pours it right	Pours it right and tells you why it's their favorite
Rings up the pint	Asks if you want a four-pack of it to go
Takes the order	Notices it's your birthday
Runs the card	Tells you trivia is on Thursday

Will Guidara: "Service is black and white. Hospitality is color."

Counter Service Still Counts

Most taprooms run on counter service. The crew stays behind the bar, guests order at the bar or on an app, and food is a truck, a snack shelf, or nothing.

Your beertenders can't walk anyone to a table or hold up a line of twelve to chat. They still own every minute across the bar top.

The market's crowded and wallets are tight. When people go out now, it's a special occasion, and they expect it to feel like one.

You don't need table service to make somebody's night. You need a crew that's trained to make it the best counter service they've ever had.



Four Places That Don't Pour Beer That Can Teach Us

Disney: earn your name tag

Chick-fil-A: the second mile

Trader Joe's: ring the bell

The Bear (the TV show): read the room

All four are famous for how guests feel, and all four got there with a training program, not a hiring lottery.

Three of the four run on a counter and a line, just like most taprooms.

If great service depends on who's working, it walks out the door with your best bartender.





The Theme Park: Earn Your Name Tag

Program lesson: everybody starts the same way

Disney's first day is the same class for every new hire, executive to line cook: the history, the standards, the language, a backstage tour

The name tag comes at the end of training, not the start

The standards are taught ranked: Safety, Courtesy, Inclusion, Show, Efficiency. When two collide, the higher one wins, so nobody has to go find a manager.

Steal this: set the standards from day one. Earn the shirt. People take care of what they had to earn.

The Chicken Chain: The Second Mile

Program lesson: roll it out in layers, then reinforce it for months

Chick-fil-A scores the basics first (accuracy, cleanliness, taste, speed, courtesy), then trains second-mile service on top: carry the tray, check in, walk them to the car

That rollout took months of training and reinforcement, not one meeting

The payoff: last on drive-thru speed, first on friendliness and satisfaction. Across every chain studied, a friendly interaction scored 97% satisfaction and an unfriendly one 22%.

Source: QSR Magazine 2025 drive-thru study

Taproom version: nobody's walking anyone to their car. Your second mile happens across the bar top.

One training meeting is an announcement. Months of reinforcement is a program.



The Chicken Chain: One Recovery Routine

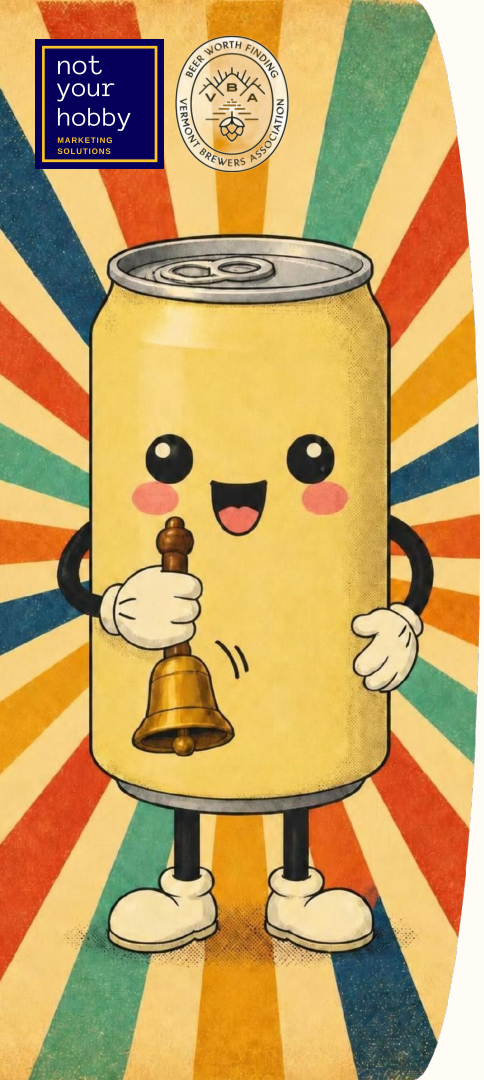
Everyone learns the same recovery routine, HEARD:

Hear | **Empathize** | **Apologize** | **Resolve** | **Delight**

Skip the scripted "my pleasure." Train the behavior and let your crew pick the words.

Steal this: one layer at a time, reinforced until it sticks

For taproom staff, HEARD means you handle a problem at the bar the same way every time: listen first, own the miss, fix it, then give the guest a reason to come back.



The Grocery Store: Ring the Bell

Program lesson: give the whole crew a shared language

Trader Joe's: one bell opens another register, two means a question, three calls a manager

Everyone learns the signals, so backup shows up without anyone leaving a guest

Walk, don't point, and restocking during the rush counts as guest time, not a chore for close

Taproom version: your own bell, hand signal, or code word, taught on day one. "Two" means somebody's standing at the board alone.

Steal this: a signal system every new hire learns in week one

Nobody should stand at the board alone.

The TV Kitchen: Read the Room

Program lesson: reading guests is a skill, so train it like one

The Bear, "Forks": the pre-service briefing flags a guest bummed about leaving Chicago without deep dish. Richie goes and gets one.

Richie learns it by working next to people who already do it well, then trains the floor himself: "Listen. Watch. Execute."

Steal this: train your crew to read guests, and pair new hires with the people who already can



What Your Guests Are Telling You

Your guests tell you things all night: the anniversary, the first visit, the weekend in town, "she's never had a sour"

They show you things too: scanning the board, hunting for the bathroom, a glass a third full

Practice it at pre-shift: what did we hear last night, and what did we do about it?

Somebody at your bar just told you how to make their night. Make sure somebody on your crew heard it.



What You're Teaching: Six Moments

Moment	What the crew does
The door	Hello within 30 seconds, from whoever sees them first, even from behind the bar. The ID check is a welcome.
The order	Explain how ordering works before they have to ask: order at the bar, tabs, the app. "What do you usually drink?" Two picks, not eight. A flight for every first-timer.
The first pour	Your name, one story about what's in the glass, clean glass, proper pour
The second round	When they come back up: "Same again, or want to try the one I mentioned?" The second round is a recommendation.
The extras	One add-on tied to what they like: to-go, food, merch. Upselling that doesn't get weird.
The close	Thank the person, then a reason to come back: the email list, the loyalty club, the app, the next event, a Google review ("we're a small business, it really helps")

The Extras: Upsells That Fit a Counter

To-go is the sale most crews forget. Ask before every tab closes: "Want a four-pack of that for home?"

Merch lives on a wall across the room. Put a few pieces where people order and close out: what's on sale, one hat, stickers by the register.

No kitchen? Know the food truck's menu and hours, point people to the snacks, and pair a pour with them.

Got a kitchen? Food gets mentioned at the order, every time, with one pick.

Check your state's rules on to-go and growler sales.

Put the upsell where the wallet already is.

The Close: Book the Next Visit

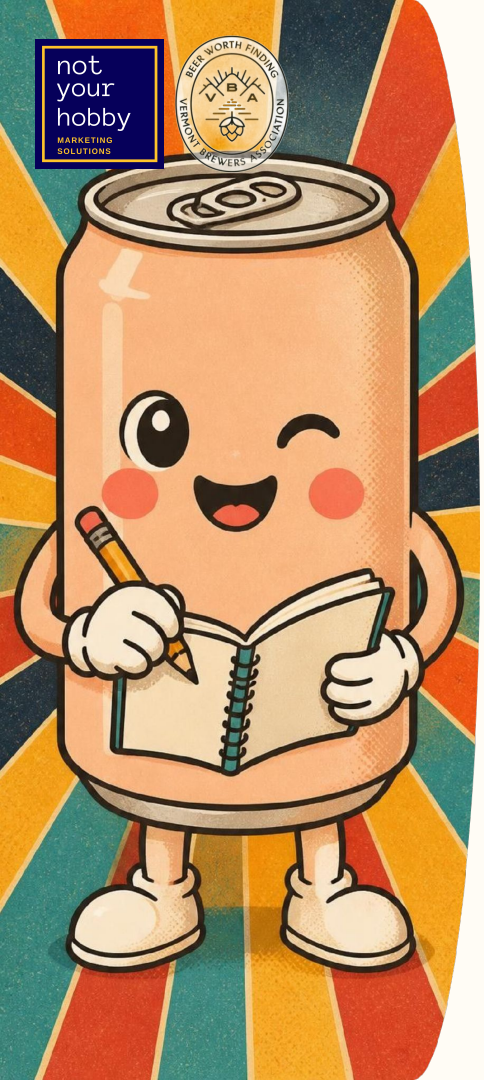
Ask the happy ones for a Google review, in person: "We're a small business, it really helps." A QR code at the register makes it easy.

The email list: "Want to stay in the loop?" Put the sign-up QR or a tablet right where tabs close.

Give them a date: trivia Thursday, the release on Saturday. "Come back sometime" doesn't bring anybody back.

Got an app? Tell them at the close. Next time they skip the line.

Every tab close is a shot at the next visit.



Remember Your Regulars

Learn their name and their usual. Greet them with both.

Write it down: customer notes in your POS if it has them, or a shared note the whole crew can see.

Tell them what's coming that they'll like: "That hazy you loved is back Friday."

Share it at pre-shift: who's likely in tonight and what they drink.

Know their name and their usual. That's your loyalty program.



Behind Every Moment

- Product knowledge runs through every moment. You can't recommend what you can't describe, and the story at the first pour is product education delivered as hospitality.
- Every behavior in the six moments goes on the Staff Scorecard
- Knowing how ordering works, the app, the to-go prices, the food truck's hours, and next week's event takes training. Then it takes holding everyone to it, every shift.

Line: the second-round ask stops at visible intoxication, and nobody trades anything for a review

KIT: STAFF SCORECARD

This is what you teach. The rest of this talk is how.

Your Training Program on One Page

- **Who owns it?** One person, usually the taproom manager
- **What's taught?** The six moments, your standards, product knowledge, responsible service
- **Who teaches it?** Your leads, your A players, and your brewers
- **How?** Formats short enough to fit a shift
- **When?** Day one, about two weeks of training, then continuing education for as long as they work there
- **Where does it live?** One folder everybody can find
- **How do you know it's working?** The scorecard and the numbers

KIT: TRAINING PROGRAM BLUEPRINT

If nobody owns it, nobody's doing it.



One Standard, the Same for Everyone

- One page, your words: what a visit is supposed to look like in your room
- Rank your standards: safety first (that's the law), then courtesy, then the look of the room, then speed
- Add three house rules your crew writes in their own words: "Nobody stands at the board alone." "The designated driver drinks free."
- State the expectations in the interview, on day one, and at every pre-shift
- Same standard for the five-year veteran, the new hire, and the owner's buddy

Bend the rules for one person and you just changed them for everybody. Then you wonder why nothing's working.





Who Teaches It

Your A players. Your best bartender already nails all six moments. Shadow them for a shift and write it down, then make them your trainers: new-hire shadowing, pre-shift, role-plays. Pay them for it.

Your leads and managers. They coach on the floor and run the scorecard.

Your brewers. They own the product facts. Ten minutes at pre-shift when something new taps, and the crew turns it into guest language.

Keep Your A Players

Give your A players somewhere to go: a lead title, a raise, a real say in how the room runs

Ignore them and they leave. Full-service hourly turnover ran about **92%** in 2025, replacing one hourly employee costs about **$2,706**, and lack of training is one of the main reasons hourly staff quit.

Source: Black Box Intelligence, 2025

Your A players are your training program. Treat them like it, or they'll take it to the brewery down the street.

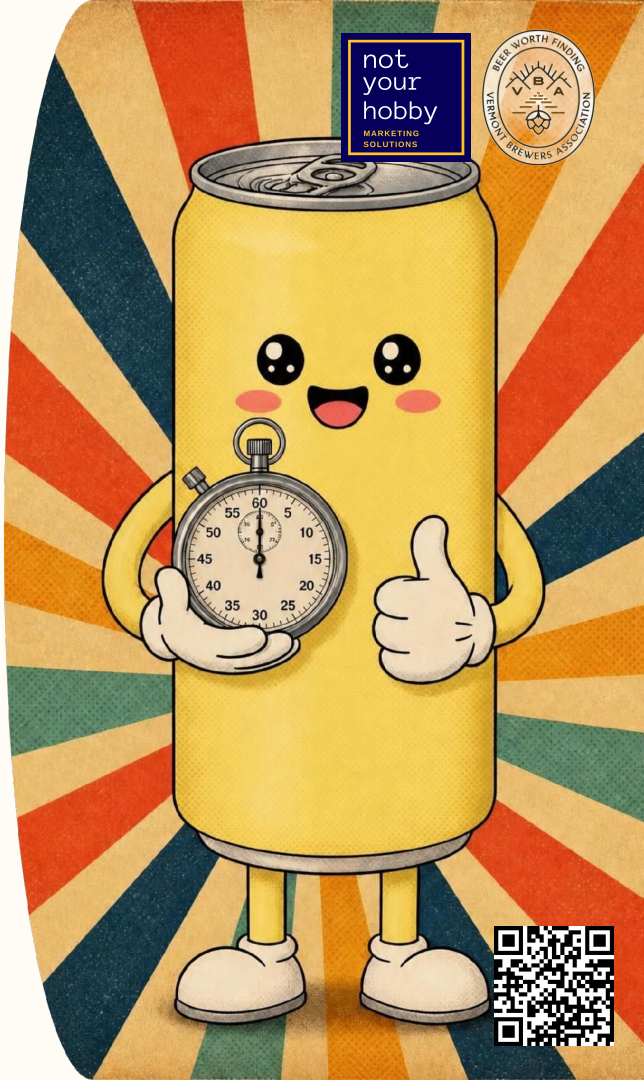


Formats That Fit a Shift

- Shadowing with a checklist, not just "follow Kyle around"
- Five-minute micro-lessons at pre-shift: one moment at a time
- Role-play the guests your room sees every week: the designated driver, the first-timer who "doesn't like beer," the regular who brought a friend, the kicked keg, the slow food truck
- A staff tasting with the brewer whenever something new taps

KIT: YOUR FIVE WORKSHEET

Rehearse the tough guest before the tough guest walks in.



Keep Every Piece Short

A five-question quiz on a Google Form, new releases included

HEARD on a card behind the bar for when it goes sideways

Past about an hour, training turns into overtime, so keep every piece short

Training is never one and done: keep it continuous, one short piece at a time.



Where Training Lives

One shared folder: Google Drive, Notion, or a training app like Trainual

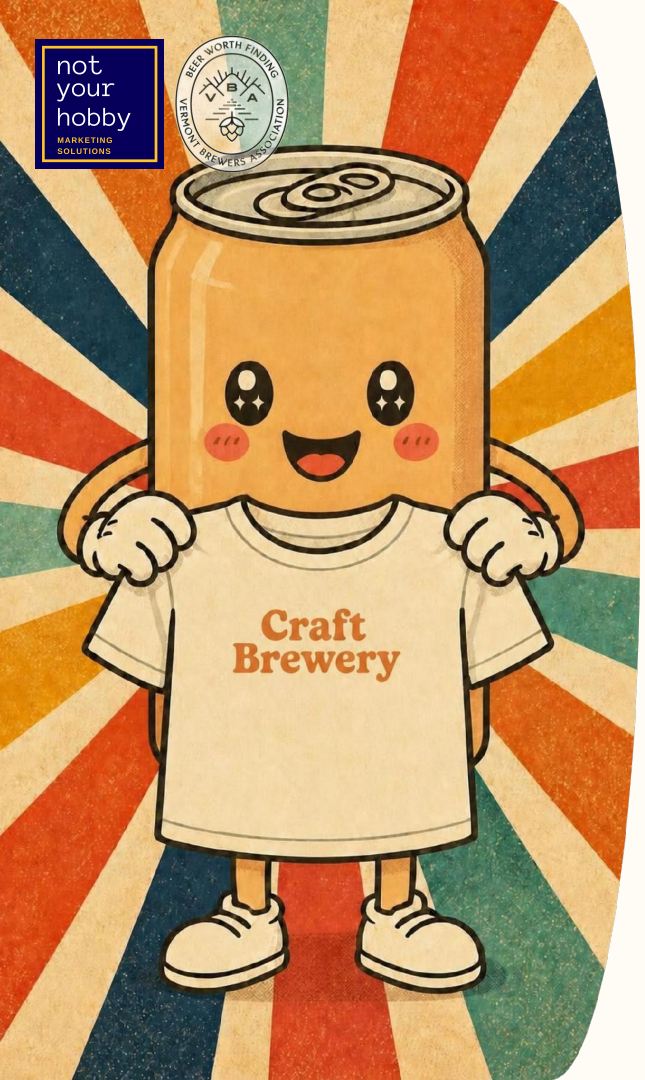
One page per standard and per moment, in your words

A product sheet for every beer, written with the brewers: what it is, one story, who'll like it

Update it with every seasonal release, menu change, and new event

If the training lives in one person's head, it clocks out when they do.

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Week One: Earn the Shirt

One afternoon, the same for everyone

Why the place exists, the six moments, the ranked standards, the house rules

Walk the room from the parking lot to the tab close as a guest

The shirt or name tag comes at the end, not the start

A POS login and a veteran to shadow is orientation. It's also why your standards vary by shift.

Start everyone the same way, or don't be surprised when every shift runs differently.

The First Two Weeks

1. Week 1: the door, the order, and the first pour
2. Week 2: the second round, the extras, and the close
3. End of week 2: their first scored shift on the Staff Scorecard, by a manager or lead watching a real shift
4. Then check-ins at 30, 60, and 90 days, and an annual review for everyone

Every session stays short and paid, inside the shift. After week 2, the scorecard is the standard.

KIT: 30-60-90 + ANNUAL

If it isn't scored, it's a suggestion.

After Two Weeks: Continuing Education

Every shift: the pre-shift

Every month: one focus, plus a 10-minute scorecard review with each person

Every new release or menu change: a product session with the brewer, an updated product sheet, a new quiz question

Every season: refresh the role-plays and retire what isn't working

Every new hire: check-ins at 30, 60, and 90 days, then an annual review like everyone else

KIT: TRAINING CALENDAR

Put training on the calendar the same way you put brew days on it.

Make It Fun

One focus a month, run as a contest

Team goal or individual: most email sign-ups, most to-go sales, most flights to first-timers, most guests who mention a crew member by name in a review

Score the behavior, not the pint count

Make the reward worth working for: cash, first pick of next month's schedule, a brew day with the brewers, their name on a beer

Announce the standings at pre-shift every week

Not a pizza party.



Get the Crew Bought In

Pay for training time. Required training is generally paid work time anyway, and unpaid training tells people it doesn't matter.

Let the crew write the house rules and the moves for the guests you see every week

Explain the why: how the guest feels, and what it does to tips

Back the people who go learn more on their own: help pay for a certification, send them on a brewery visit, have them teach it at pre-shift

Make training other people the path to a lead role

People back the rules they helped write.

How I Learned It: The Ginger Man

- A multi-location craft beer bar: beer, wine, and NA only, light food, a neighborhood pub feel. Still open today, in fewer locations.
- One of the early bars with a 75+ tap wall: beers from around the world, with the emphasis on local craft
- My training: 10 full shifts, and every one was shadowing plus product knowledge
- Five of those shifts ended with a product test
- The final: a blind tasting and 15 pages of product notes
- It's why I was good at the job, why I got promoted to manager, and why I ended up in supplier-side sales. It's a big part of why I stayed in craft beer.
- You don't need anything this extensive. You do need something written down that everybody goes through.

Nobody needs a 15-page final. Everybody needs a program.



The Pre-Shift, However Your Crew Gets It

- A five-minute huddle at the bar before doors open
- Shifts staggered? Send it as a message in your scheduling app (7shifts, Homebase, When I Work) or Slack, or do a quick one-on-one huddle with each beertender as they clock in
- Same four things every time: tonight's product story, the moment to focus on, last week's number, a shout-out
- Rotate who runs it, all the way down to the newest hire
- Repeat the house rules until everyone's sick of hearing them

KIT: PRE-SHIFT TEMPLATE

The day you stop saying it is the day it stops happening.

Train Your Managers and Leads First

Managers and leads need their own training: how to coach, how to score, how to correct

Peak hours are coaching hours. Be on the floor, not hiding in the office.

The loop: expect it, watch for it, say something every time, follow the same ladder for everyone, recognize it when it lands

The paperwork will still be in the office at close.



How Managers Coach

Praise in public, correct in private, and correct the behavior, not the person

Keep a record. The Staff Scorecard is it. Coaching from memory means coaching whatever problem was loudest.

Managers leave when they stop growing, so train them and give them somewhere to grow

Incentivizing Management

Reward managers who coach consistently so they stay consistent and have something to work towards.





Is the Training Working?

- The Staff Scorecard trend: each person, month over month
- Quick knowledge checks: the five-question quiz, new releases included
- Ask the crew what's working and what's a waste of their time, with an anonymous form once a quarter
- Time to first solo shift for new hires
- Who's staying: turnover among the people you trained

KIT: STAFF SCORECARD

Ask your crew. They'll tell you which training they're ignoring.

The Numbers That Prove It

What to track	Where it lives	Which moment moves it
Number of checks	POS	The door and the close (reasons to come back)
Average check	POS	The order, the second round, the extras
Items per check	POS	The flight and the second round
Merch and to-go sales	POS, as a share of sales	The extras
Email sign-ups	Your email tool	The close
Loyalty or club sign-ups	Your POS or loyalty program	The extras and the close
Reviews and sentiment	Google, Yelp, Facebook	Every moment, and it shows up in the words people use

KIT: RESULTS (WEEKLY + MONTHLY)

Your numbers already know whether the training worked.

Read It Like a Trend

- Managers check the numbers weekly. Owners compare each month to the same month last year: beer is seasonal.
- Compare yourself to your own room, not the brewpub with a full kitchen
- One focus, one number, 30 days
- Number didn't move? Check the behavior first. The Staff Scorecard tells you whether it's actually happening.
- Read your reviews, don't just count them. Guests naming your bartender is the best sign there is.
- Reply to every review in your own words: 80% of people are more likely to use a business that replies to all its reviews, and half are put off by canned replies
- AI can sort a month of reviews into themes in minutes. AI on Tap at 11:30 covers more.

Source: BrightLocal Local Consumer Review Survey 2026

When guests start naming your bartender in reviews, it's working.



The $5 Math

- A $5 bump on a $30 check across 10,000 checks a year is **$50,000**
- No new menu, no new taps, no ad budget
- All it takes is a training program you actually built, and education that keeps going after day one

Training doesn't end at onboarding. It runs for as long as that person works for you.

The fastest growth you've got is already sitting at your bar.





Thanks!

Reach out anytime

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Digital Swag Bag!