

Determinants of Successful Outdoor Catering Operations

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Abstract – A professional caterer is the one who helps the customer in planning a unique and unforgettable event. Especially, themed events require a lot of thinking and outstanding ideas to make it successful.

Therefore, a caterer should come up with brilliant unique ideas to make any event stand out. Thus, customer look for outdoor caterers who can offer something extraordinary to their event, unlike common food menus and decorations or ideas that they might have seen at every other occasions.

Another quality of good food caterers is that they can work according to small to large guest lists. Depending on the location of the venue and type of party, the caterers ensure that the food is served to all the guests without any hassle. Be it a traditional, chic or modern theme, professional outdoor caterers are trained to handle any type of situation without panicking. But no matter how carefully an event is planned, it's likely to face any unforeseen crisis. Be it mishap at a buffet table or handling more guests than expectation, a professional outdoor catering company must be on their toes to adapt according to whatever situation comes their way.

The best outdoor caterer usually works with a professional team – from servers to cleaning staff. A caterer should have enough staff members to handle any small to a large event. Moreover, the catering staff must also have a good reputation for professional and friendly service.

Keywords: Outdoor Catering Operations, Determinants, Human Factors, Physical Factors and Natural Factors.

INTRODUCTION

Outdoor catering operations solicit many essentials i.e. experience, attitude, personality, aptitude, creativity and many more each enables the caterer to perform in given situation.

Work Experience: The very first requirement in catering or food service industry is experience. Experience only enables the caterer to perform back-of-the-house or front-of-the-house, from preparation of the food to its service.

Passion: Professionals are passionate, and when it comes about outdoor catering profession caterer need more of perfection and all-around professionalism. Passionate professionals love their work and live their life for profession.

An Entrepreneurial Nature: Entrepreneurial trait is always required being an outdoor caterer. This trait itself describes the nature of a caterer, to be

dedicated to their work and full of energy to spend extraordinary time to make their operations successful

BASIC OPERATION KNOWLEDGE:

- o Bookkeeping skills and accounting
- o Learning is an endless practice
- o Knowledge of legal aspects of catering
- o Requirement of operational staff and knowledge of management of human resource
- o Caterers must be aware to implement their marketing strategies accordingly

Ability to Plan, Organize, Execute, and Control: Four basic functions of management are planning, organizing, executing and controlling, in catering

industry all four plays important role to make an operation successful.

Ability to communicate with customers and staff:

Communication is an ability of caterer to attest the presence in the market. Listening and speaking with attentiveness and confidently respectively is key feature of good communication.

Willingness to take calculated risks: Outdoor catering operations are always known for their risk. This business is not made for feather hearted, who afraid to enter into grey tasks.

Sound body and mind: As discussed earlier outdoor catering operations solicits for long working hours that too without rest. Overburden of operations in seasons, movement from one site to another with heavy equipments and to perform within time creates immense pressure on caterers.

Creativity: Capability of caterer to craft customer's vision into reality is inherent quality what they possess known as creativity. Presenting prophecy of menu, design, décor, look, feel, theme, service and ambiance into the world of recognition is a feature needed indeed in every caterer.

Dependability: Delivering to the extent of expectation is a major requirement of every customer. Caterer has to serve the best, whatever the circumstances are, whether its customer fault, natural calamity or negligence of caterer.

Open – Mindedness: Accepting the trends and incorporating due changes in the working style are always appreciated. Open – minded caterers remain updated and ready to learn about new trends, work styles, trending recipes and menus to prosper their business.

Ability to meet the needs of customers: Its moral responsibility of every caterer to serve the customer as per the needs. Caterers have to identify the needs of the customers so that in their every act they may bestow to customer's preference.

Ability to project a favorable image: Generally caterers are selected by the customers on the basis of their prevailing image and credit value in the market. This states that caterers have to sell them rather than their services.

Sense of humor: Laughter is the remedy of all sorrow. Good humor even at bad times provides relief from stress and tension. Outdoor catering operations are always subjected as stressful industry; long working hours, deadlines, work pressure, magnitude of undertakings put caterer and staff under tremendous trauma.

Other than the above factors outdoor catering operations requires some determinants also that plays an important role in success or failure of any operation.

HUMAN FACTORS:

Command on communication

Lack of communication often reports to misunderstanding and contributes to mismanagement in any of the operations. Outdoor catering is a specialized field which requires proper communication to conduct effective and efficient operations. "Communication refers to the transmitter and the receiver, as well as the method of transmission". Message that has to be transmitted may be unclear or ambiguous. The recipient may understand or vise-e-versa, resulting in assumptions of the instructions, and the sender may be assured that the message delivered has been received and understood. In verbal communication only 30% of messages received are properly understood and rest 70% works on the assumption of the receiver, this is only experienced when the sender receives the feedback or operations are accomplished.

Therefore it becomes an ultimate requirement to pass on detailed information before, during and after any outdoor catering operation, and especially at the time of handover of shifts. To comply with these situations, format is being generally used known as Function Planning. This is to record all the necessary requisite and requirements for the operations. When requirements are complex they should be written down, and caterer or organizations should encourage the deputed staff to make full use of logbooks, worksheets, and checklists etc. Verbal messages are also important but should be kept short, with due emphasis on the requirements at the beginning and should be repeated at the end to avoid any uncertainty. As done in other fields logical questions should be encouraged to evade assumptions and to raise opportunities for better outcomes of outdoor catering operations.

Knowledge

Knowledge is one of the most concerned areas for any of the organization. As one cannot fly an Aircraft without proper training and qualification similarly offering satisfactory services to the guest in outdoor catering operations is not a cup of tea. That is why regularity aspects about the qualification and knowledge are enforced to strictly to meet the requirements. However, lack of knowledge i.e. specific knowledge and on-the-job experience may result in mishandling and

misjudging the available opportunities by taking diverse decisions.

Further it is important for employees to understand that professional development and continuing gaining the experience to update the knowledge is for most as knowledge may become out dated very quickly. Technical aspects and innovations in the industry must be brought into consideration for improved performance. Healthy communication with the experts of the industry could be good source of knowledge and this practice should be encouraged among all the staff members.

Teamwork

Outdoor catering operation is a field that requires constant teamwork among the staff to perform the operations to their utmost. Lack of communication could lead the organization to lack of teamwork too. All the employees and staff should sit at least for once and discuss all the aspects of the operations in deep i.e. who is responsible for what? Allocating the responsibility indirectly enforces the staff to communicate at least for successful organization of any event. This also generates the skills among the staff that are required to prove competence within catering staff.

The key teamwork skills include: effective communication, leadership, trust building, followership, praise giving and motivation of self and others.

An effective team can be created when the following necessary issues, as appropriate, are discussed, clarified, agreed, and understood by all team members:

- o A clearly defined and maintained aim, or goal(s)
- o Each team member's roles and responsibilities
- o Communication messages and methods
- o Limitations and boundaries
- o Emergency procedures
- o Individual expectations and concerns
- o What defines a successful outcome
- o Debriefing arrangements
- o Team dismissal arrangements
- o Opportunities for questions and clarification

To improve the team's effectiveness caterer or the organization should select the team members with

broad range of skill sets and experience, and also by through practicing and rehearsals.

Stress

Long working hours, away from family, no proper rest, sleepless nights and many more there could be many reasons for stress in outdoor catering operations. This all may happen because of lack of communication among employee – employee, employee – employer or employer – employer.

There could be many types of stress. Typically in the outdoor catering business there are two distinct types - acute and chronic.

“Acute stress arises from real-time demands placed on our senses, mental processing and physical body; such as dealing with an emergency or working overtime under pressure with inadequate resources”.

“Chronic stress is accumulated and results from long-term demands placed on the physiology by life's demands, such as family relations, finances, illness, bereavement, divorce, or even winning the lottery”.

Whenever the employer or the employee suffer from stress due to persistent and long-term events, it means the threshold of reaction to demands and to hold work pressure is lowered. Thus at operations, catering staff may overreact, lose their patience inappropriately, too often and too easily.

Visible signs in early stage of stress include some changes in moods and personality, errors in judgment, lack of concentration and poor memory. If it is considered individually staff may notice increase in fatigue and difficulty, as well as digestive problems. That is why, it is important to recognize these signs developing in caterer or its staff whether they are acute or chronic. If the situation is elongated for a longer period may cause low immune and susceptibility to infections, absence from work, illness and depression.

Awareness

Caterer and the staff must be aware of all the recent trends, issues, challenges and should keep their acquaintance up-to-date, a word from wise should always welcomed. Working in this industry with an impression of knowing everything is biggest mistake, as an individual one cannot perform all the activities, one has to develop a belief that others are also has the sense of responsibility and can perform as per the requirement of the situation. Caterer should be aware of the result that may occur due to the course of action taken by the staff or own self.

Learning is a continuous process and help in development over the period of through experiences gained. As experience improves the attitude towards the work, it also lends a hand to build valor to take challenge of being supervised by third person. Better communication, awareness, checklists and workplace procedures would definitely help in efficient and effective outdoor catering operations.

PHYSICAL FACTORS:

Fitness

This factor can be described as a set of attributes and physical abilities that people may have or achieve to perform physical activity in outdoor catering operations.

- **Agility:** This refers to the **ability to change direction** and it falls under the **fitness** category.

The **quicker** and **more controlled** actions that are performed when changing directions, describes the better agility of outdoor caterer and its staff. Agility is needed for a range of different outdoor catering operations activities and situations such as:

- when trying to work in a compact site/place where it is difficult to make space to walk even
- when the single staff is working on different gas ranges
- when the staff is moving towards one corner of the site and immediate call arises from another corner

Consider a chef during operations. Agility is a common theme in invasion outdoor catering, where he has to pay attention on all the announcements and has to respond accordingly. Numerous orders are announced at once, they have to pick there one from the all and has to prepare the food item.

- **Flexibility:** **The range of motions performed at each joint throughout operations.** The greater the range of motion, the better your flexibility.

This can help increase the following:

- your reach
- the way your body moves (e.g. jugglers)
- **Power:** This factor looks at **explosive moments.**

The **combination of authority and delegation** produces a killer forceful factor which is

required by almost every caterer during the entire outdoor catering operations. This can help the caterer in numerous different operations.

One particular moment that requires power is when ever emergent decision has to be taken. The more powers during the operations help the caterer to take the decision on-site and off-site on behalf of host or for own operations.

Skills:

- **Reaction time:** This factor looks at **the body's ability to react to new trends and technology.** The quicker someone reacts, the better their performance.

Below are a few situations in which fast reaction time is required:

- reacting to the immediate orders during operations
- reacting to a newly introduced technology to accomplish operations

In the immediate orders, serving time is lesser as in comparison to regular orders because the preparation time is so short, reacting quickly for a **good start** is vital. There is little time to recover from a slow start.

Reaction time plays a crucial role when new technology is been introduced during the operations, as employees need to learn and work then and there only to get out the best results.

- **Accuracy:** This factor is important for all the outdoor caterers as the main is to achieve the success; it looks at **control over all the movements in outdoor catering operations particularly unidirectional, or at a particular target.**

Accuracy has its biggest impact during the complex unfavorable situations or in challenging operations. If the operation ends well **accurately and correctly hitting its intended target**, the outcome is the greatest achievement for the caterer adding credit points in their profile.

- **Consistency:** This factor looks at **the ability of caterer to execute skills successfully over a period of time i.e. performing as per the standards in different outdoor catering operations.**

The more you progress along the motor stages of learning, the more consistent you will become. This is because you have performed

skills **repetitively** and can now do so **automatically**.

Bringing a high level of consistency to performance will allow for high standards to be achieved throughout a performance. However, if you have a bad day, skill performance can be inconsistent and can lead to simple mistakes occurring.

Tactics:

- **Delay:** This factor is brought into consideration, when we need to involve all the participants into the operations. This is been done by **slowing down the pace** of operations and let **wait for others support and association**.

It is mainly used when operations are been convened in their regular speed and are continuously happening, then there is a need to take a break or slow down the pace so that who all are left behind or tired during the operations may cope-up with the speed and rejuvenate themselves. Delaying the operations can be used in both offensive and defensive situations and is often influenced by being aware of what is around you.

These all things may be managed by the caterer himself or may appoint the counselor to do so.

Here are few points that may be considered

- Slowing down the pace of operations
- Taking a break from operations
- Looking for new dimensions in operations
- What your competitors are offering?
- Plan new offerings
- Understanding the needs of customer
- **Penetration:** This factor is one of the most important factors as this would decide the future prospects of the business. This may even be understood as **how the caterer is creating a niche in customers mind by breaking line of defense of competitors those who are already operating in the industry**.
- **Width:** This factor may be better understood in terms of marketing. As per the **marketing width of operations is described as the expansion and stretching of services in the concerned field or industry**.

For example, stretching and expansion in the outdoor catering operation implies to the range of operations that are performed by the caterer i.e. from small to big and from low budget to higher budget.

Doing this keeps the operations stretched and creates spaces in the central areas of operations. It also helps the caterer's to extend out-reach in all customer segments.

NATURAL FACTORS:

Sewage and waste water

In present scenario, domestic sewage is a basic problem for both from the point of view of ecology and the environment, and economic side. Household domestic waste water is one concern along with the waste water generated during the operations. Waste water from the household may be treated to some extent however the waste water from the outdoor catering operations generally flows into the sewage tanks but at certain places due to unavailability of proper sewage system it flows on the land nearby the operation area. Untreated waste water is more harmful than that of treated waste water to the hydrosphere where organic substances which are decomposed by oxygen-consuming colonies of bacteria. Sewage from outdoor catering operations wastewaters into the water includes pesticides, phenols, surfactants (e.g., detergents) on the higher side. Their decomposition process is slow; some substances do not decompose at all. By the means of food chains these substances enter the human organisms; negatively affect human health, which can further lead to various acute and chronic infectious diseases.

Municipal solid waste

Municipal solid waste creates the environmental pollution. Household waste may affects the human life through air, water, foods of plant grown on the poisoned soil debris. Whereas outdoor catering wastes i.e. disposals cups, plastic glasses and bowls, thermoplastic plates and other similar products don't leave the soil and water of any use. Even on burning they effect the air and the residues when enter the soil, chemical compounds accumulate and leads to a gradual change in the chemical and physical properties of soil and the products grown, it also reduces the number of living organisms and impair fertility along with pollutants, often present in soil bacteria, helminthes eggs and other harmful organisms.

Natural hazards

Natural hazards are naturally occurring physical phenomena caused either by rapid or slow onset events which can be as followed

Geophysical (earthquakes, landslides, tsunamis and volcanic activity)

Hydrological (avalanches and floods)

Climatological (extreme temperatures, drought and wildfires)

Meteorological (cyclones and storms/ wave surges)

Biological (disease epidemics and insect/ animal plagues)

Technological or man-made hazards (complex emergencies/ conflicts, famine, displaced populations, industrial accidents and transport accidents)

These are those events that occur in or close to human settlements. This can include environmental degradation, pollution and accidents. Technological or man-made hazards (complex emergencies/conflicts, famine, displaced populations, industrial accidents and transport accidents)

There are a range of challenges, such as climate change, unplanned-urbanization, under-development/poverty as well as the threat of pandemics, that will shape humanitarian assistance in the future. These aggravating factors will result in increased frequency, complexity and severity of disasters.

CONCLUSION

Outdoor catering operations are full of uncertainties i.e. risk of payments, whether conditions, scarcity of skilled staff, unavailability of resources and many more which always lead to doubtful demonstration of operations and caterer remains off sure of successful ending. Calculated and deliberated risks have to be taken by the caterer to make the operation occur; the rate of succession depends on the customer's acceptability and caterer's experience. It's not simply an issue of food and introduction and topic patterns. Chefs who are not wired to work together online through the Internet and email are passing up immense chances. The internet cooking referral administration, Leading Caterers of America (established by the book's co-writer Bill Hansen), gets 5 to 20 requests for every day from customer searching for providing food administrations across the nation, in Alaska, Hawaii, and incidentally abroad. Individuals do search for providing food on the web, and the organizations that lead the way have top notch sites and determinedly answer to messaged demands in an ideal way. Chefs need to start reacting to email correspondence at the earliest opportunity, just as giving messaged recommendations to those customers who like to work together through their PCs. Occasion organizers who book food providers for their customer love accepting messaged proposition, since they are anything but difficult to reorder into their own recommendations. In case you're not prone to work on the web, you're obsolete.

Working environment and conditions is the mother to stress; overburden with joyful environment would result in different where as no work under pressure and worse environment can make anyone dull and stressed.

Stress can regularly be controlled through:

Day by day exercises, for example, lively strolling, running, or other vigorous interests that expansion the beat rate. A few people deliberately take their psyches off work when they work out; for other people, the everyday walk or run is an opportunity to get their day intellectually sorted out.

Natural hazards may not be in hands of human but human made or produced hazards specially trash can be controlled or recycled. Recycling of trash is a great noble idea and becoming the phenomenon in few countries, but it is important that same should be adopted by the other countries globally and there is need for more active use. Few uses of that can be promoted are trash bricks, plastic bottles bricks, use of trash in road building, extracting fuel from the trash and many more. Some methods such as disposal of waste by placement as landfills and incineration are not innocuous. Landfills emit methane gas, which creates a menacing our planet, the greenhouse effect, trapping heat in the earth's atmosphere.

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