

Turning Service Into Sales

Finding Your Place in the School Meals Marketing Picture

COURSE SYLLABUS

Course Length: Flexible – up to 3.5 hours of teaching time, not including breaks

Instructor: John Bennett, B.A., M.A. (see attached bio)

Course Description: Through various exercises, group activities, discussions, and demonstrations, managers and employees will learn to better understand both the need for effective marketing of child nutrition programs and their own crucial role in assuring the success of any marketing effort. This course has been taught by this instructor for certification credit in more than a dozen states.

Course Outline:

Introduction

In this section, the class first defines the marketing "problem" or "challenge" faced by school meals' programs today. We then examine ways that successful commercial food service operations appeal to their customers. The introduction section concludes with a breakdown of the key tenets of marketing success and an overview of how participants can apply these principles to their own jobs.

Part One – Seeing

This section uses a combination of instructor performance, group exercises, and participant role playing to dramatize the importance of "Seeing" – i.e., the habit of appreciating others' perspectives and points of view that is central to successful marketing. We'll define the various groups that can affect our success and analyze ways to appeal to each of these groups to better assure their support for School Meals.

Part Two -- Exciting

The second section demonstrates that, once we've established who our customers are and begun to understand their perspectives, we need to use that understanding to consciously motivate them to choose our products and services. Participants will first take part in a "motivation exercise" wherein their own behavior (and the prospects of reward) illustrate why customers behave as they do and how we can motivate them to act as we wish them to act. We'll then work to define a list of reasons why we choose to patronize particular restaurants and apply those reasons to our own customers' experience at the school restaurants.

Part Three -- Exchanging

This section shifts the class from the largely theoretical realm to practical applications. First, participants work in pairs to identify and share methods they've used to increase participation in the past, as well as ways (fanciful or otherwise) that they believe participation could be increased in the future. This information is then shared with the entire group, with prizes for the most innovative ideas. The instructor then provides a detailed description of his own experience transforming school *cafeterias* into school *restaurants*, with slides, video, and hands-on examples of materials used in the transformations.

Part Four -- Recognizing

The final section ties the others together and stresses a theme that has been recurrent throughout the seminar: that no matter how good a marketing initiative may be, it will never work without the commitment and enthusiasm of the people on the line. Participants are encouraged to recognize their own centrality to the on-going success of the School Meals programs. Each of the previous sections is recapped and connected to the others; diplomas are awarded; and a final exercise reinforces the need to think differently and act differently to proactively improve the ways that our various customers perceive our products and services.

A Word on Course Pedagogy: Although this syllabus may seem dry and technical, the method of the course is anything but boring or academic. The instructor is an accomplished showman as well as a trained academic, and the course mixes humor, sophisticated AV tools, video, and individual student participation to maintain interest. Most of the lessons are learned transparently; i.e., the students won't consciously think they're sitting in a classroom or "learning," but rather that they're having fun! This approach both makes a class of this length more tolerable and makes the lessons more likely to take root and flourish.