



Targeted Training Tools that Drive Revenue

How to Jumpstart Profits and Performance With Pre-Shift Meetings

by Jim Sullivan, CEO, Sullivision.com.

Can you imagine a sports team at any level--pro, college, high school, middle school, Little League—getting ready for a game without any communication from the coach relative to the game plan? Can you picture the looks on the team's faces if the coach shows up just before the game, strides onto the field or court and says nothing, praises no one, and begins chatting with the fans without any direction for the players? Can you have a winning season with a coach like that? Can you keep and recruit "A" players with that kind of leadership? Many restaurant owners and operators must think so, because they demonstrate a similar absence of leadership when they fail to prepare and execute pre-shift meetings for their staff on a daily basis.

Research reveals a key learning. Our company recently completed a year-long research project that studied the best practices of 278 high-performing foodservice managers in the QSR, Casual Dining, Family, Fine Dining and On-Site segments. Each of the managers we interviewed led units that were among the top 10 highest-grossing restaurants in their companies; these are dream-teams. The one behavior they all shared—bar none—is this: they make daily pre-shift meetings mandatory, not optional for their managers and staff. Daily pre-shift meetings achieve three goals: 1) energize, educate and focus the crew, 2) improve our people, performance and profits, 3) insures that every guest or customer leaves happy. We asked those top GMs to identify the specific elements of effective pre-shift meetings, and here's what they told us:

Relate every Pre-Shift meeting to a bigger goal and strategy. When managers meet each week, they should set specific goals for every pre-shift meeting topics and every Shift for the week. First review your period goals and then align each pre-shift topics to support and execute on those big picture objectives.

Pre-shifts are for everyone. Everyone affects the customer's experience, so everyone benefits from effective pre-shift meetings. Most companies focus on doing pre-shift meetings for servers, but it's just as important to have pre-shift meetings for all of your team members and departments; kitchen crew, bussers, greeters, and bar staff. They all impact the guest, so why shouldn't they all be informed and energized before each shift?

One meeting, one topic. Focus is key. Pick one key tactical area of operations to spotlight during each shift: service, selling, cost control, promotions, safety, recipes, marketing, teamwork, portion control, whatever. But don't cover them all at any one shift. If you try to explain everything you end up explaining nothing.

Be prepared and eliminate distractions. Turn off pagers and cellphones, hold the calls, and make sure you the team's attention. Premeal meetings should be upbeat and full of energy, but there also has to be discipline. Allowing co-workers to eat, drink, smoke or have side bar conversations during premeals creates an atmosphere of apathy which blocks both listening and learning. Managers must keep the team focused and enforce standards where everyone is paying attention.



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Bring energy, don't take it away. An effective pre-shift is part pep rally, part information, part training, all energy. Don't focus on the negatives. Bring energy to every shift, don't take it away. Charge them up, don't bring them down.

Keep it interactive. Effective pre-shift meetings are not long-winded Manager Monologues or boring Data Dumps. The agenda for revenue-generating pre-shifts include energy transfer, recognizing yesterday's performers, an overview of anticipated volume, goal-setting (and how we'll attain them), and then asking the team to review what you just told them. Perhaps offer small team or individual rewards if the goals are accomplished. The key here is perfect practice with spaced repetition.

Keep it short and sweet. You know how long the pre-shift meetings of our high-performing full-service GMs lasted? An average of three minutes. And at QSR operations the top performers executed their pre-shift meetings in under two minutes. Get to the point and do it interactively.

Don't neglect team members who come in later. Most operators don't have their whole staff in together before the shift at the same time. To minimize labor costs, we stagger their arrival. So do these team members miss the pre-shift meeting? Absolutely not! The best managers do thirty-second one-on-one meetings with every staggered-shift crew member as they arrive. Write down your shift goals and post them in a common area; the same place every day. Have team members who come in at staggered times review the shift objectives and add their initials and/or goals to the sheet. Now have them find the manager who does a 30 second one-on-one Shift Goal Review with the crew member.

Coach during—and follow up after--each shift. Don't set shift goals if you aren't coaching performance during the shift to help the team achieve those goals. And after the shift, keep the energy high, thank each crew member for their efforts, and write down what you learned in your manager log book.

Don't just tell them why, show them how. Don't expect your managers to "magically" master the art of pre-shift meetings. Invest both time and money in training resources that show them how to effectively transfer energy and focus everyday to your team. Every dollar invested in this skill will generate ten more back in higher sales, happier guests, and an energized team. Go to Sullivision.com's home page for a free downloadable pre-shift meeting planning template, and check out the 60 minute long *Jumpstart!* DVD while you're there.

The food may be different, the crew may be different, the décor may be different, the theme may be different, the execution may be different, even the customers may be different, but the one thing that all successful operators have in common is making pre-shift meetings mandatory, not optional, every day with their entire team. You can achieve a lot by training a little in short chunks, every day.

Jim Sullivan is the CEO of Sullivision.com. Get his free monthly e-newsletter or order the best-selling DVD "JUMPSTART! The Art of Effective Pre-Shift Meetings" exclusively at www.sullivision.com or call 920.830.3915.