

Tandoori Teamwork 2

Some 18 months ago I wrote that if you wanted to see real teamwork in action, you should forget Manchester United or Chelsea, you should try your local Tandoori restaurant. My 'local' (I argued) demonstrates why business leaders and managers can learn as much, if not more, from their local Tandoori than from the highly paid stars of Old Trafford and Stamford Bridge! I recently was invited back to the second anniversary of their opening (or should I say re-launch as they had moved into new premises) and I'm delighted to say that I have no reason to change my opinion.

So what is it that makes my local so impressive? Well the Rajpoot restaurant in Taunton (www.rajpoottaunton.com) still focuses around four elements: the product; customer service; teamwork; and finally leadership. The product remains of high standard for a high street restaurant. You may not see them on Gordon Ramsay's programmes, but for an evening in town, with a few friends, just as a couple, or for a social gathering, they are hard to beat.

Being a waiter carries no kudos in this country, and yet it is a skill and art in itself. Each different group of customers (from the couple wanting a quiet evening at the end of a hard week to an office party) require a different approach by the waiters, who need to be able to assess their customers' requirements. How do you provide that for each? There are some fundamentals - service that is friendly, attentive but unobtrusive, and efficient – but there is more to it than that. It is about making a judgement on the spot and providing it. No checking with the management, just the freedom and the courage to treat every group according to their needs. Which group wants to be left alone, and which group will welcome a chat and friendly banter? The same applies to call centres, but how many have we spoken to that simply read off an autocue?

Shazz, the front of house manager, remains the leader both in terms of customer service and in setting the tone for the restaurant. Continually and consistently cheerful, he is aware of what is going on despite constantly dealing with customers' bills, and he's certainly not too aloof to 'roll up his sleeves' and help. In fact all the team, individually and collectively (and there have been a number of changes in staff over the last couple of years) take responsibility for ensuring that every customer has an outstanding experience. Apparently without being told they seek out what needs to be done. When there is a momentary respite, the waiters check to see if glasses and plates need to be cleared, or customers want another drink or their bill. The significant customer and task awareness amongst all the staff remains and they all work together to ensure that the service is superb. I wonder how many business managers would like to be able to say that of their staff?

But the main attraction to me is still the teamwork. The front of house and the kitchen staff still work together impressively and the communication and co-operation between the two different teams is superb. From the taking of

orders, the production of the food, the serving and the clearing up at the end of the evening, teamwork, co-operation and communication between the two teams is to the fore. It seems to me that every time Gordon Ramsay goes into a failing restaurant, the front of house and kitchen staff are poles apart. In the Rajpoot, the two are in harmony, each supporting the other.

So other businesses can still learn from the Rajpoot – and probably other restaurants too. Get your product and production system right and ensure it is right every time; ensure that **everyone** recognises that they are all part of the customer service team; ensure that leadership is vested in everyone and that they all have a responsibility for decision making; and finally, get your teams working together. Ensure that there are no barriers between them and they all recognise that what one does has an impact on the others – positively or negatively.