

The Art of Upselling: Techniques for Hospitality Sales Professionals - Complete Hospitality Training

Canonical: <https://cht.edu.au/news/art-of-upselling-techniques-for-hospitality-sales-professionals/>

Details:

The most useful thing on this page is the limit. You cannot upsell alcohol to a patron who is already intoxicated. Supplying liquor to an unduly intoxicated person is an offence under state liquor law, and the duty falls on the individual serving as well as on the licensee. Everything else here is technique; that part is law.

Start with the limit

Suggesting another round, a larger pour, a jug or a spirit upgrade to someone showing signs of intoxication is not a sales decision. It is supply to an intoxicated person. No sales target, promotion or instruction from a manager changes that, and penalties can attach to you personally. Where venue upselling expectations run into this line, the law wins.

The training that carries this is RSA , required before you serve. It is one unit, SITHFAB021 , also available as the standalone SITSS00071 Responsible service of alcohol skill set, but it is regulated separately by eight jurisdictions and there is no single national credential:

Jurisdiction	The position
Victoria	Use a current Victorian RSA certificate. Eligible interstate holders can apply for free bridging: approved original training within three years, with the online-course residence condition. Specific exemptions apply at qualifying producer events. Victorian RSA Refresher every three years.
New South Wales	Eligible temporary interstate workers can use approved interstate RSA. Permanent movers and security or RSA marshal roles must meet NSW training and competency-card requirements; eligible holders can use bridging instead of the full NSW RSA course. NSW competency card: five years. Interstate concessions have separate eligibility and certificate-age requirements.
South Australia	Check provider approval and training date. Training from 1 November 2020 must be through a Commissioner-approved RTO. Earlier RSA training need not be repeated solely because of that approval change. No routine RSA renewal period stated in the cited CBS guidance; check applicable licence conditions.

Queensland	Accepted where the evidence is a Statement of Attainment for the nationally accredited Provide Responsible Service of Alcohol course. An attendance certificate is insufficient. Valid RSA training generally has no expiry; training completed before 2002 must be replaced.
Western Australia	Provide the RSA certificate showing completion of the nationally accredited course. An interstate RSA card alone is not accepted as evidence. Keep the RSA certificate as training evidence; approved-manager cards have separate renewal requirements.
Northern Territory	Certificates from an RTO registered to deliver RSA are accepted, including interstate certificates. Check certificate age and the NT refresher requirements. NT guidance gives a three-year limit for interstate certificates and directs holders to a refresher; check current renewal guidance.
Australian Capital Territory	Valid interstate RSA certificates are recognised, subject to the ACT's three-year currency limit and ACT-approved refresher requirements. Three years from course completion, then an ACT-approved refresher.
Tasmania	Interstate certificates can be accepted under the Commissioner's conditions. Requirements differ for employees and liquor licence holders; check the appropriate role. No RSA expiry date in the regulator's FAQ; an employer may request updated training.

Current regulator guidance: NSW , VIC , SA , QLD , WA , NT , ACT , TAS .

For what refusal looks like in practice, see managing intoxicated patrons and how long does an RSA last . If a provider's claims sound too good, beware of RSA training course scams .

What this looks like in different venues

The original guide starts with good service: listen before recommending anything, and make the suggestion useful to the guest. In a restaurant or cafe, that might mean explaining a signature dish, a suitable side or a premium option on the actual menu. In a bar, a product recommendation still has to stop at the responsible-service boundary above. In a hotel, the relevant offer might be an available room option or an additional service such as breakfast or a spa booking. State the price and conditions clearly and give the guest space to decline. The point is a better fit for the guest, with revenue as a possible result rather than a promise.

Upselling is product knowledge, not pressure

The version that works answers a question the guest already has: what should I order, do those go together, is that enough food for two. That takes knowing portion sizes, which dishes are rich, what is coming off the same section and will therefore arrive slowly, and which wine genuinely suits the dish.

The scripted version, an add-on offered at every touchpoint, reads as a transaction and slows service down.

Pressure version	Useful version
Would you like to make that a large?	That size is generous, the regular is usually plenty with an entree
Can I get you another? (to a guest who has had several)	Water, food, and a check on how they are travelling
The special is the most expensive dish on the menu	Two dishes are cooking well tonight; which do you feel like?

Read down the right column and the pattern is that the staff member knows something the guest does not. That is the whole method.

The training package agrees, and it can prove it

This is not a matter of opinion. The unit that covers table service at à la carte and fine-dining standard is SITHFAB034 Provide table service of food and beverage , and its assessment requirement is the clearest statement of the argument on this page.

A candidate must prepare for and provide table service over a minimum of 12 service periods , and give full explanations and advice on food and beverage menu options during each one of them . Across those service periods they must handle:

information on beverages and food

location of customer facilities

menu choices and availability

recommendations for food and beverage

specials

And they must do all of that while working with speed and efficiency , dealing with numerous service and operational tasks simultaneously , and working cooperatively as part of the service team.

Read that as a definition of upselling and the picture changes. There is no scripted prompt anywhere in it. What is assessed is menu advice , delivered twelve times over, at speed, without dropping the rest of the section. The unit's prerequisites are SITHFAB021 RSA and SITXFSA005 hygienic practices, which is the training package quietly making the same point this page opened with: you learn the legal limit before you learn the sales technique.

The entry-level counterpart, SITHFAB027 Serve food and beverage , covers casual dining and applies to operational attendants working with very little independence and under close supervision .

SITHFAB034 applies to attendants working with some independence and under limited supervision .

The step between the two is precisely the step from taking an order to advising on one.

The decisive detail: the advice units assess price preference

If you want one piece of evidence that the national standard treats product advice as service rather than as selling, it is in the three product-advice units. Each of them requires advice on the customer's selection to meet different taste and price preferences .

Unit	What must be demonstrated	Minimum customers
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SITHFAB031 Provide advice on beers, spirits and liqueurs	Accurate advice on Australian and imported beers, spirits and liqueurs; discussion of styles and features taking account of the customer's level of knowledge ; assistance with selections according to taste, price preferences and other specific customer needs	3 different customers
SITHFAB036 Provide advice on food	Discussion of the characteristics of major food types; current, accurate and relevant advice to each customer on their selection to meet different taste and price preferences	3 different customers
SITHFAB037 Provide advice on food and beverage matching	Explanation of how aroma, taste or flavour, temperature, texture and cookery method affect compatible matches; advice on selection to meet different taste and price preferences	3 different customers

The phrase to notice is "price preferences". The competency is not assessed on whether the guest spent more. It is assessed on whether the advice met the preference the guest actually had, including a preference to spend less. A venue whose upselling training conflicts with that is training its staff away from the national standard, not towards it.

Two more details in those units are worth having. SITHFAB031 requires business considerations to be taken into account when providing advice, with adjustments made accordingly — so the commercial interest is acknowledged in the unit, not pretended away; it simply sits after the customer's stated preference rather than ahead of it. And SITHFAB036 requires sensory evaluation techniques on at least one occasion , naming smell or nose appraisal, taste appraisal and visual appraisal , plus the maintenance and continuous extension of personal knowledge of major food types . You cannot give the advice in the right-hand column of the table above without having tasted the menu, and the unit says so.

Product knowledge in the other service units

The same pattern runs through the specialist food and beverage units, and each one is a repetition requirement rather than a single demonstration:

Unit	What it requires
SITHFAB034 Provide table service of food and beverage	12 service periods , full menu advice in every one
SITHFAB030 Prepare and serve cocktails	3 service periods , and two cocktails by each of six methods, so a minimum of 12 preparations
SITHFAB025 Prepare and serve espresso coffee	Ten specified beverages on three occasions each , a minimum of 30 preparations , within commercial timeframes

SITHFAB031 , SITHFAB036 , SITHFAB037	3 different customers each, with advice meeting taste and price preferences
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Nobody advises confidently on a product they have made twice. That is why these units count occasions rather than hours. See the bartending course and the barista course .

There are skill sets built specifically for product advice

This is the part most venues do not know exists. Alongside the full qualifications, our scope of registration carries 81 current skill sets , and four of them are aimed squarely at the capability this page is about:

Skill set	What it is for
SITSS00083 Food Advice	Advising customers on food
SITSS00075 Beverage Advice	Advising customers on beverages
SITSS00094 Sommelier	Wine, at specialist depth
SITSS00090 Product Sales for International Visitor Markets	Selling to inbound visitors

Also relevant: SITSS00080 Espresso Machine Operation, SITSS00078 Customer Service, SITSS00077 Customer Service Management, and SITSS00091 Service for International Visitors. A skill set is a defined group of units rather than a short course, so each unit completed still produces a Statement of Attainment on the national record. Ask us which are currently scheduled.

Where the core service unit puts it

SITXCCS014 Provide service to customers , core in both Certificate III in Hospitality qualifications, contains the upselling criterion without using the word. Criterion 3.5 requires staff to recognise and act upon opportunities to deliver additional levels of service beyond the customer's immediate request .

Note the framing: levels of service , not additional spend. Criterion 3.3 immediately before it requires promptly meeting all reasonable needs and requests, and 3.4 requires identifying and anticipating operational problems. In that sequence, 3.5 is plainly about generosity of attention rather than basket size.

If a venue wants the sales side taught explicitly, the Group B electives of SIT30622 Certificate III in Hospitality include retail-package units on selling and on advising on products and services, which can be selected where the job outcome genuinely calls for them. Elective choice has to be guided by the job outcome sought, local industry requirements and complexity appropriate to the AQF level, so that is a decision to make deliberately rather than by default.

The unit that comes closest to naming it

The closest thing in the hospitality package to an accredited upselling competency is SITXCCS015 Enhance customer service experiences , core in the Certificate IV in Hospitality and part of the SITSS00077 Customer Service Management skill set. It applies to people dealing directly with customers daily who operate independently or with limited guidance, including senior frontline sales personnel, supervisors and managers. Its performance criteria include:

offering extras and add-ons , and providing tailored and additional products and services
checking that special requests have been actioned before delivery to the customer

promoting repeat business by offering promotional services according to individual empowerment and organisational policy

maintaining customer profiles to enhance service delivery, and providing tailored products and services based on that profile and history

sharing customer information with team members so quality service is consistent

liaising with team members and suppliers to keep delivery efficient

The phrase according to individual empowerment and organisational policy is the one to take away. The unit does not assume every staff member may offer every promotion. It expects the venue to have decided what each person is empowered to offer, which is exactly the authority-level question that SITXCCS016 Develop and manage quality customer service practices requires a manager to write into policy alongside refunds, pricing and service guarantees. An upselling programme without that decision made is asking staff to improvise on the venue's behalf.

The unit's foundation skills add one more specific: problem-solving skills to determine adequate and appropriate compensation for service difficulties. Deciding in advance what a fair remedy looks like is the same discipline as deciding in advance what a fair recommendation looks like.

Where the sell becomes a regulated representation

One more limit, and it is not about alcohol. The management unit SITXCCS016 names the consumer protection matters it expects a hospitality manager to understand, and two of them are upselling matters: price increases and product substitution, alongside refunds and cancellation fees.

Both feel like operational calls and both are regulated. Repricing a set menu after a booking is taken is a price increase. Swapping a listed product for a different one, whether it is a gin, a cut of meat or a milk, is a product substitution. Recommending the substitute as though it were the listed product is a misrepresentation, not an upsell. The safe practice is the one already in the advice units: say what the thing actually is, then let the guest choose. Government consumer protection regulators publish plain-English material on all four matters, and the unit's assessment conditions require a candidate to have access to it.

Where it genuinely helps the guest

Preventing under-ordering at a shared table. Flagging that a dish takes twenty-five minutes before it is ordered. Matching a wine by the glass instead of pushing a bottle. Saying honestly when the cheaper option is better. Guests remember being talked out of spending more.

All four of those are menu advice. None of them is a script. And all four are the kind of advice SITHFAB036 and SITHFAB037 would mark as competent, because all four meet a stated price preference.

Where the skill is taught

Sales and service technique sits inside hospitality qualifications, but coaching a team to do it without turning it into pressure is a supervision skill.

Qualification	Size	What it adds here
SIT30722 Certificate III in Hospitality (Restaurant Front of House)	20 units, 9 core	RSA and processing financial transactions are core, not elective. The closest match for a table-service floor

SIT40422 Certificate IV in Hospitality	21 units, 9 core	Three of the nine core units are HR units. This is the supervision qualification: coaching others in job skills, rostering, leading and managing people, plus monitoring work operations and managing finances within a budget. SITXCCS015 is core here
BSB40520 Certificate IV in Leadership and Management	12 units, 5 core	The generic management side: demonstrating leadership, leading effective workplace relationships, coordinating business operational plans, applying communication strategies, and leading and facilitating a team
BSB50120 Diploma of Business	On our scope	The step up into operational planning and business strategy, for an owner-operator or a venue manager with a commercial brief

The Certificate IV in Hospitality is the one most directly on point, because SITXHRM007 Coach others in job skills is one of its core units. Teaching menu advice to a floor is a coaching task, and the qualification treats it as one. Full list at courses , and confirm current fees and intakes with us directly.

About us

We are Complete Hospitality Training , RTO 3722, CRICOS 04242E. Level 3, 28 Elizabeth Street, Melbourne VIC 3000, and 410 Elizabeth Street, Surry Hills NSW 2010. Contact melbourne@cht.edu.au or +61 3 9654 1554 .

We link to the relevant course and regulatory sources in this guide. Check those sources for current requirements, and confirm course availability, delivery, fees and entry requirements with us before enrolling.

Source records and further guidance

We link the unit records and regulator guidance relevant to this page below. Check the current source before making an enrolment, licensing or employment decision.

SITHFAB034 Provide table service of food and beverage

SITHFAB021 Provide responsible service of alcohol

SITHFAB036 Provide advice on food

SITHFAB031 Provide advice on beers, spirits and liqueurs

SITHFAB037 Provide advice on food and beverage matching

Responsible Service of Alcohol training requirements (Victoria)

Responsible Service of Alcohol training requirements (Queensland)

Responsible Service of Alcohol training requirements (Western Australia)

Responsible Service of Alcohol training requirements (South Australia)

Responsible Service of Alcohol training requirements (Tasmania)

Responsible Service of Alcohol training requirements (Northern Territory)

Responsible Service of Alcohol training requirements (Australian Capital Territory)

Can staff be given sales targets on alcohol?

A venue can set commercial targets, but no target overrides the duty to refuse. A target that pressures staff into serving intoxicated patrons creates legal exposure for the individual and the venue both.

Is upselling appropriate everywhere?

No. In a quick-service or counter setting it mostly slows the queue. It earns its place where the staff member knows the menu well enough to be genuinely useful.

Can you upsell food to an intoxicated guest?

Yes, and it is often the right move. Food and water are part of managing the situation.

Which unit actually teaches menu advice?

SITHFAB034 Provide table service of food and beverage. Its assessment requires full explanations and advice on food and beverage menu options across a minimum of 12 service periods. For product-specific advice the units are SITHFAB031 on beers, spirits and liqueurs, SITHFAB036 on food, and SITHFAB037 on food and beverage matching.

Do the advice units expect me to recommend the expensive option?

No, and this is the clearest answer on the page. All three product-advice units require advice on the customer's selection to meet different taste and price preferences. Meeting a preference to spend less is competent performance, not a missed sale.

How many customers do the advice units assess?

Three different customers each, for SITHFAB031, SITHFAB036 and SITHFAB037.

Do I have to have tasted the menu?

SITHFAB036 requires sensory evaluation techniques on at least one occasion, naming smell or nose appraisal, taste appraisal and visual appraisal, and requires personal knowledge of major food types to be maintained and continuously extended. So in substance, yes.

Does the training package acknowledge the venue's commercial interest at all?

Yes. SITHFAB031 requires business considerations to be taken into account and adjustments made accordingly. The commercial interest is in the unit; it just sits after the customer's stated preference rather than ahead of it.

Which unit is closest to an accredited upselling competency?

SITXCCS015 Enhance customer service experiences. It names offering extras and add-ons, providing tailored and additional products and services, maintaining customer profiles, and promoting repeat business according to individual empowerment and organisational policy.

Why twelve service periods?

Because advising confidently requires repetition across real service, not a single demonstration. The unit counts occasions rather than hours for the same reason the cocktail unit requires a minimum of twelve preparations and the espresso unit requires ten beverages on three occasions each.

What are SITHFAB034's prerequisites?

SITHFAB021 Provide responsible service of alcohol and SITXFSA005 Use hygienic practices for food safety. You cover the legal limit before you cover the sales technique. Four units in the food and beverage stream carry two or more prerequisites — SITHFAB034 and SITHFAB023 Operate a bar carry that same pair of two, while SITHFAB030 Prepare and serve cocktails carries three (SITHFAB021, SITHFAB023 and SITXFSA005) and SITHFAB039 Manage the sale or service of wine carries three (SITHFAB021, SITHFAB032 and SITHFAB033).

What is the difference between SITHFAB027 and SITHFAB034?

SITHFAB027 is casual dining, for attendants working with very little independence under close supervision. SITHFAB034 is à la carte and fine dining, for attendants working with some independence under limited supervision, and it is the one carrying the menu advice requirement.

Is there a short course just for wine or beverage knowledge?

There are skill sets. Our scope carries SITSS00075 Beverage Advice, SITSS00094 Sommelier and SITSS00083 Food Advice, plus SITSS00080 Espresso Machine Operation. Each unit within a skill set still produces a Statement of Attainment. Ask us what is currently scheduled. If wine is the direction, note the chain the register creates: SITHFAB021 RSA, then SITHFAB032 Australian wines and SITHFAB033 imported wines, then SITHFAB039 Manage the sale or service of wine — a sommelier path four units deep.

Is there an upselling criterion in the core customer service unit?

Effectively yes. Criterion 3.5 of SITXCCS014 requires staff to recognise and act upon opportunities to deliver additional levels of service beyond the customer's immediate request. It is about attention, not spend.

Is substituting a product for a dearer one an upsell?

Only if the guest is told. SITXCCS016 lists product substitution and price increases among the consumer protection matters a hospitality manager is expected to understand, alongside refunds and cancellation fees. Presenting a substitute as the listed product is a misrepresentation.

Who decides what a staff member is allowed to offer?

The venue. SITXCCS015 ties promotional offers to individual empowerment and organisational policy, and SITXCCS016 requires authority levels for resolving complaints and providing compensation to be

written into the service policies. Without that decision, an upselling programme asks staff to improvise on the venue's behalf.

Does my RSA work in another state?

An RSA Statement of Attainment is a national training record, but permission to serve alcohol depends on the destination's rules. NSW permits eligible temporary interstate workers; permanent movers and security or RSA marshal roles must meet NSW training and competency-card requirements, using bridging where eligible. Victoria offers bridging to eligible interstate holders. SA applies approved-provider rules to training from 1 November 2020, with earlier training not required to be repeated solely for that change. QLD and WA require suitable national RSA evidence. Tasmania distinguishes staff from licence holders; the ACT and NT have local currency and refresher requirements. Check the regulator before your first shift. See RSA recognition by jurisdiction ([/rsa/](#)), NSW's rules (<https://www.nsw.gov.au/business-and-economy/liquor-and-gaming/training/rsa-bridging>) and SA's rules (<https://www.cbs.sa.gov.au/sections/LGL/RSA-approved-providers>).

Does my RSA expire?

Queensland and Western Australia impose no expiry. The Northern Territory and the ACT expire at three years. In Victoria, the free RSA Refresher must be completed every 3 years to keep the certificate current, and that applies to anyone holding a Victorian RSA certificate — not only to licence holders. Licensees carry a separate three-yearly obligation under s 108AA of the Liquor Control Reform Act 1998; the two are different rules.

I am a bartender, not a licensee. Do I still need the Victorian refresher?

Yes. The three-yearly RSA Refresher attaches to the certificate, not to a licence, so it binds every Victorian certificate holder. If yours is more than three years old it is not current, and you should complete the free refresher before your next shift.

Is the Victorian RSA finished once I complete the unit?

No. Victoria requires an LCV approved provider and a second stage after the unit: the Learning Hub pre-training survey, the SHARPR module and a post-training survey. The certificate does not exist until those are done.

Can I be disciplined for refusing a sale?

Refusing to supply an unduly intoxicated person is compliance with state liquor law, and the duty sits on you personally as well as on the licensee. A venue instruction cannot displace it.

Which qualification should a supervisor do to coach this properly?

SIT40422 Certificate IV in Hospitality, where SITXHRM007 Coach others in job skills is a core unit and three of the nine core units are HR units. BSB40520 Certificate IV in Leadership and Management covers the generic management side in 12 units, and BSB50120 Diploma of Business is the step beyond that.