

Key to Building a Loyal Customer Base – Complete Hospitality Training

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Details:

Repeat custom is produced by four things a venue controls: the same experience on the second visit as on the first, being recognised, being looked after when something goes wrong, and seeing the same faces behind the counter. Specials and loyalty cards sit on top of these; they do not replace them. This post first appeared on our news page in June 2022, and the argument has not changed.

It is worth knowing that the training package treats the regular or repeat customer as a distinct customer type in its own right. The core unit SITXCCS014 Provide service to customers lists five: external, internal, new, regular or repeat, and visitors. A regular is not just a frequent new customer. They are being served differently, and the unit expects staff to know that.

And repeat business is not only a customer type. It is an entire element of a second unit, SITXCCS015, set out below, which is the accredited home of everything on this page.

What brings a guest back

The original loyalty guide starts with regular guests: remember what they enjoy, make them feel welcome and serve food and drinks consistently well. Listen when something goes wrong and fix the problem with care. Those everyday touches can earn repeat visits and recommendations; the staffing and service systems below help a venue deliver them reliably.

Building repeat business is an assessed element

SITXCCS015 Enhance customer service experiences is core in the Certificate IV in Hospitality, and its fourth element is developing customer relationships and building repeat business. That is not a paraphrase; it is the element. The unit applies to people who deal directly with customers daily and operate independently or with limited guidance, including senior frontline sales personnel, supervisors and managers.

What the element requires is more specific than most loyalty advice:

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

Maintain customer profiles to enhance service delivery and track preferences

Provide personalised service in a professional manner that builds repeat business

Provide tailored products and services based on the customer's profile and history

And the rest of the unit supplies the mechanism. Its earlier elements require the candidate to determine and confirm customer preferences, needs and expectations, to anticipate customer preferences and needs throughout the service experience, to offer extras and add-ons and tailored additional products, to check that special requests have been actioned before delivery to the customer, to liaise with team members and suppliers so delivery stays efficient, and — the one that matters most for a page about regulars — to share customer information with team members to ensure quality service.

Its knowledge requirements name customer loyalty programs and customer databases explicitly, and its foundation skills include writing skills to record entries in customer service records and technology skills to use computers and databases that manage customer profiles and promotional activities .

That last set changes one of the conclusions people usually draw from a page like this. Recognition does depend on the same people working the same days, as the section below says. But the unit's answer to staff churn is not to hope the same person is rostered; it is to write the profile down and share it with the team . A regular's usual order held only in one barista's head is a single point of failure, and it walks out when they resign. The competency treats the record as part of the service, not as an administrative afterthought.

The practical version: a short, factual note against a name — usual order, allergy, table preference, the fact they come in on Thursdays with their father — maintained by whoever serves them and readable by whoever is on next. That is what "maintain customer profiles" and "share customer information with team members" mean at the scale of a single venue, and it does not require a platform.

If you want this as a credential rather than a habit, the skill set is SITSS00077 Customer Service Management , which contains exactly three units: SITXCCS015 Enhance customer service experiences, SITXCCS016 Develop and manage quality customer service practices and SITXCOM010 Manage conflict. It assumes frontline service skills already in place, so it is aimed at a supervisor rather than a new starter.

Consistency between visits

A regular is someone who has stopped evaluating. They order without reading the menu because they already know what the coffee, the parma or the Friday cocktail will be like. Every variance, a different pour, a slower kitchen, a table that was not wiped, restarts that evaluation. Consistency is not about brilliance on a good night; it is about the floor never dropping.

That makes it a training and systems problem rather than a personality one: written recipes and pour specifications, a service sequence every shift follows, and hygiene practices that do not depend on which supervisor is rostered. Accredited units are built around exactly this kind of repeatable standard, which is one reason employers use them. Two examples of how literally the training package means "repeatable":

SITHFAB034 Provide table service of food and beverage requires the candidate to prepare for and provide table service over a minimum of 12 service periods , giving full explanations and advice on food and beverage menu options in every one of them , while working with speed and efficiency and handling numerous service and operational tasks simultaneously. It has prerequisites of SITHFAB021 and SITXFSA005.

SITXCCS014 element 2 requires high standards of personal presentation and hygiene according to organisational requirements, adherence to organisational customer service policies and procedures, and adherence to the professional standards expected of service industry personnel . Service is a standard you meet, not a mood you are in.

Twelve service periods is not a training-hours formality. It is the assessment system's way of saying that doing it once does not count. The same logic runs through the volume requirements elsewhere: SITXCCS014 requires service to three different internal and three different external customers and the resolution of three different complaints , and SITXCCS016 requires service practices implemented and monitored across four service periods . Nothing in this system is assessed on a single good day.

Recognition

Remembering a name and a usual order is the cheapest loyalty tool a venue has, and it cannot be bought from a software vendor. It comes from the same people being present on the same days,

noticing, and being given the small authority to act on it: the coffee started before the customer reaches the counter, the table by the window held on a Thursday. Recognition depends on the retention section below — and on the profile being written down, per SITXCCS015 above, so that it survives a resignation.

The core unit frames this as more than politeness. Element 3 requires staff to establish rapport with the customer to promote goodwill and trust , to identify customer needs and expectations including customers with special needs , and to recognise and act upon opportunities to deliver additional levels of service beyond the customer's immediate request . That last criterion is recognition written as an assessable behaviour.

The unit's knowledge requirements also list what a customer service policy should cover, and loyalty programs appear there alongside acknowledging and greeting customers, complaint management and service guarantees. So a loyalty card is not wrong. It is simply the smallest item on that list, and it is the only one a competitor can copy in an afternoon.

At management level the list gets longer and more useful. SITXCCS016 names ten areas a service policy should cover: acknowledging and greeting customers, complaint and dispute management, authority levels for staff to resolve complaints and provide compensation , loyalty programs , presentation standards, pricing and service guarantees, product quality, refunds and cancellation fees , response times, and staff training requirements. Loyalty programs sit third from the top of that list and are the only line most venues have actually written.

Recognition has a cultural dimension too, and that is a separate core unit. SITXCOM007 Show social and cultural sensitivity is core in both Certificate III in Hospitality qualifications, and its knowledge requirements include the cultural and religious protocols of the main social and cultural groups in Australian society, including Australian Indigenous people , and of the main inbound tourist markets to Australia . Getting a regular's name right, and their dietary or observance requirements right without being reminded, is exactly where that unit earns its place. Its performance evidence requires communication with at least three different colleagues or customers, including representatives of different social groups and different cultural groups .

Recovery when something goes wrong

A wrong order, a long wait, a cold plate. The customer's memory of the visit is formed by what happens next, not by the error itself. The recovery pattern is simple: acknowledge it plainly, fix it fast, make good without being asked, and check back before the bill.

The core unit's fourth element makes two of those points requirements rather than advice. Criterion 4.1 requires staff to proactively recognise customer dissatisfaction and take swift action to avoid escalation to a complaint , and criterion 4.3 requires solutions to be identified in consultation with the customer rather than chosen for them. Criterion 4.4 then limits resolution to the staff member's own level of responsibility and organisational policy , with 4.5 requiring escalation of complex issues.

SITXCCS015 adds the loyalty argument directly: it requires the candidate to turn complaints into opportunities to demonstrate high quality customer service , and its foundation skills include problem-solving skills to determine adequate and appropriate compensation for service difficulties . Deciding in advance what a fair remedy looks like is what turns a failure into a reason to return rather than a reason to stop.

Which brings us to the thing that breaks recovery most often: a floor worker who has to go and find a manager before they can replace a coffee. By the time permission arrives, the moment has passed. SITXCCS014 does not tell you where the limit should sit, but it does require one to exist — and SITXCCS016 puts authority levels for staff to resolve complaints and provide compensation on the list of things a service policy must cover. Set it, write it down, and tell people what it is.

Staff retention, the hidden driver

Regulars return to people. The barista who knows their order, the bartender who remembers their team's round, the waiter who asks about the kids. When that person leaves, the regular's reason for choosing this venue over the one next door weakens, and many drift without ever complaining. Retention is therefore a customer-loyalty lever, not just an HR one.

This is also where the profile requirement earns its keep. A venue that maintains customer profiles and shares them across the team loses less when someone resigns, because what the departing staff member knew is still on the record. Retention reduces the damage; the profile limits it.

What keeps hospitality staff is not complicated: predictable rosters, correct pay under the right award, and a visible path.

Rosters

Rostering is itself a competency with defined requirements. SITXHRM008 Roster staff, core in the Certificate IV in Hospitality and the Diploma of Hospitality Management, requires rosters to be developed according to relevant industrial agreements, other considerations and wage budgets, to maximise operational and customer service efficiency while minimising wage costs, to roster teams with a complementary skills mix, to consult colleagues to obtain their input, and to be communicated within designated timeframes.

Its knowledge requirements name the policies a rosterer is expected to accommodate: family-friendly initiatives and leave provisions for carers, compassion, illness, study, maternity and paternity, and long service. Study is on that list. A venue that rosters over a staff member's class is not just being unhelpful; it is ignoring a consideration the competency expects to be weighed.

There is a loyalty argument hidden in the same unit, too. Rostering the same people on the same days is what makes recognition possible at all, and a roster built only around minimising wage cost will optimise away the thing regulars are actually buying.

Correct pay: first get the award right

Coverage follows the premises, not the job title, and there are four awards in play, each covering its industry to the exclusion of any other modern award:

Award	Code	Premises
Hospitality Industry (General)	MA000009	Hotels, pubs, taverns, motels, resorts, casinos, caterers, accommodation
Registered and Licensed Clubs	MA000058	Not-for-profit registered clubs : RSL, bowls, golf, surf, sporting, community
Restaurant Industry	MA000119	Standalone restaurants, cafes, night clubs, reception centres, roadhouses
Fast Food Industry	MA000003	Food sold primarily to be consumed away from the point of sale, food courts

Two traps worth knowing: clubs are not MA000009 — clause 4.4(d)(i) of the hospitality award expressly excludes "clubs registered or recognised under State or Territory legislation", and a club is MA000058

only if it is both registered and licensed under a relevant statute and operating on a not-for-profit basis for members and the community. And a night club is MA000119, not MA000058 , because it is commercial.

The classification step, and the tradesperson grade

Under MA000009, MA000119 and MA000058, a relevant AQF Certificate III or higher that the employee actually uses at work sets a minimum classification of Level 4. The fast food award, MA000003, has no equivalent provision. So the qualification argument works in a pub, a restaurant, a cafe and a registered club, and fails in a food court.

Award	Clause	What the definition says
MA000009	cl 18.1	AQF Certificate III or higher relevant to the classification, and the employee makes use of the skills and knowledge derived from those Certificate III competencies
MA000119	cl 18.1	Identical wording
MA000058	cl 18.3	"AQF Certificate III qualifications relevant to the classification in which they are employed" — no "or higher", and the Fair Work Commission may require the employee to demonstrate that they utilise the relevant skills
MA000003	—	No equivalent note. No Level 4 floor

If there is a dispute, the route differs: MA000009 clause 40 , MA000119 clause 34 , or for MA000058 referral to the Fair Work Commission for determination.

And here is the part most employers do not know, in the hospitality award specifically. Under MA000009 , Level 4 is the award's reference point: the standard weekly and hourly rate from which that award's apprentice percentages are calculated is the Level 4 rate, and it is attached to cook (tradesperson) grade 3 and food and beverage attendant (tradesperson) grade 4. The cook stream reaches grade 3 by apprenticeship, trade test or "the appropriate level of training" . So a relevant Certificate III, used at work, is a route to a tradesperson grade without serving an apprenticeship . If you are trying to explain to a good employee why finishing the qualification is worth their evenings, that is the sentence.

"The appropriate level of training" is defined in MA000009 clause 2 , and completion is only one of three limbs. The others are being assessed by a qualified skills assessor as having at least equivalent skills, or, as at 30 June 2010 , having been doing the work of that classification for at least 3 months. That third limb is anchored to a closed date — it is not a rolling three-month rule, so it cannot help a recent hire. The skills assessor route is the live one for a long-serving employee without a certificate.

Those grade names and clause 2 limbs are stated of MA000009 . MA000119 and MA000058 have their own classification structures and definitions clauses, so check the award covering your venue rather than assuming they carry across.

Three other award mechanics are worth knowing if you are using training as a retention tool:

Mechanic	The rule
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Introductory level is time-limited	Under MA000009, up to 3 months while the employee is trained and assessed for Level 1, extendable by mutual agreement for one further 3 months. Six months maximum. It is not an indefinite classification
Release for training is paid, not a favour	Clause 12.7(a) of MA000009 and MA000119 requires the employer to release an apprentice for training or assessment without loss of pay or continuity of employment , and clause 12.7(b) makes that time count as time worked . Trainees have the equivalent right under Schedule E clause E.5.2 of the Miscellaneous Award 2020
Fees are reimbursable	Clause 12.7(c) to (d) requires the employer to reimburse an apprentice for all fees paid to an RTO for required courses and for required textbooks the employer did not supply , subject to satisfactory progress

Rates themselves are reset every 1 July, so use the Fair Work Ombudsman's Pay and Conditions Tool rather than any figure in an article. The mechanics above are structural and do not move annually. See working hours, rosters and public holidays and superannuation, tax and payslips .

The path itself

Supporting a staff member through SIT30622 Certificate III in Hospitality or SIT30821 Certificate III in Commercial Cookery is both a skills investment and a pay step they can see coming. SITXHRM007 Coach others in job skills is core in both Certificate III in Hospitality qualifications and in the Certificate IV, which means the training package builds the capacity to train the next person into the qualification itself. That is how a venue stops being dependent on one long-serving employee. How to structure it is covered in creating an effective training plan , and the case for breadth in the benefits of cross-training .

For a supervisor specifically, SITXCCS015 is the unit that names repeat business as an outcome, and SITSS00077 is the short route to it without a whole Certificate IV.

Driver	What it looks like	What breaks it
Consistency	Same product, same sequence, every visit	Unwritten recipes; standards that change with the supervisor
Recognition	Names, usual orders, small unprompted gestures, cultural and dietary observance remembered, and a written profile shared across the team	Constant staff churn; knowledge held only in one person's head
Recovery	Dissatisfaction caught early, solution agreed with the guest, fixed on the spot, followed up, with compensation decided in advance	Staff with no defined authority to act
Retention	Stable rosters that respect study, correct award and classification, paid release for training, a visible	Underpayment; Introductory level used as a parking space; no path past entry level

	next step to a tradesperson grade	
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Measuring whether any of this is working, and what to track, is covered separately in how to measure and improve customer service . The behaviours themselves are set out in how to deliver exceptional customer service , and what to do when the expectations themselves shift in understanding and responding to changing customer expectations .

About us

We are Complete Hospitality Training , RTO 3722, CRICOS 04242E. Legal entity COMPLETE HOSPITALITY TRAINING (VIC.) PTY. LTD. , ABN 27 006 947 262 , ACN 006 947 262 . Registered as RTO 3722 since 1 June 1994 , transferred from the Victorian regulator to the national regulator, ASQA, on 8 September 2017 , with the current registration period running 1 July 2025 to 30 June 2032 . 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.

SITXCCS015 Enhance customer service experiences

SITXCCS014 Provide service to customers

SITXCCS016 Develop and manage quality customer service practices

SITSS00077 Customer Service Management

SITXHRM008 Roster staff

Hospitality Industry (General) Award 2020 (MA000009)

Restaurant Industry Award 2020 (MA000119)

Do specials build loyalty?

They bring people in on a quiet night. Whether those people come back on a full-price night depends on consistency, recognition and recovery. The special only creates the first visit.

Which unit actually covers building repeat business?

SITXCCS015 Enhance customer service experiences. Its fourth element is developing customer relationships and building repeat business, and it requires promoting repeat business through promotional services, maintaining customer profiles, and providing tailored products and services based on profile and history.

Is a loyalty program worth running?

It is one item on the list of things a customer service policy should cover. At Certificate III level SITXCCS014 lists it alongside acknowledging and greeting customers, complaint management and

service guarantees; at Diploma level SITXCCS016 lists it among ten areas. It is also the only one a competitor can copy in an afternoon, so it should not be the whole strategy.

Does the training package actually recognise regulars as different?

Yes. SITXCCS014 names five customer types, and regular or repeat is one of them, distinct from new.

Why does staff turnover affect regulars?

Because regulars attach to people, not to fit-outs. A familiar face is part of the product they are buying.

Do I need software to recognise regulars?

Not software, but you do need a record. SITXCCS015 requires customer profiles to be maintained and customer information to be shared with team members, and its foundation skills name writing entries in customer service records and using databases that manage customer profiles. A usual order held only in one person's head leaves when they do. A shared note achieves the requirement without a platform.

Is a qualification really a retention tool?

Under MA000009, MA000119 and MA000058 it is a pay step written into the award. A relevant Certificate III or higher, used at work, sets a minimum classification of Level 4. The fast food award has no equivalent provision.

Is there a short credential for the supervisor who owns this?

SITSS00077 Customer Service Management, which contains SITXCCS015, SITXCCS016 and SITXCOM010 Manage conflict. It assumes frontline service skills are already held.

Can a Certificate III reach a tradesperson grade?

Under MA000009, yes. Level 4 is that award's reference point and is attached to cook (tradesperson) grade 3, and the cook stream reaches grade 3 by apprenticeship, trade test or the appropriate level of training. So a relevant Certificate III used at work is a route to that grade without serving an apprenticeship. Do not assume the same grade names under MA000119 or MA000058 — each has its own classification structure.

What exactly does the employee have to show?

Under MA000009 and MA000119, that the qualification is relevant to the classification they are employed in and that they make use of the skills and knowledge derived from those Certificate III competencies. Under MA000058 the note omits "or higher" and the Fair Work Commission may require the employee to demonstrate that they utilise the relevant skills.

My best employee has the experience but no certificate. Anything I can use?

Under MA000009 clause 2, being assessed by a qualified skills assessor as having at least equivalent skills. A third limb covers people who, as at 30 June 2010, had been doing the classification's work for at least 3 months, but that date is closed and cannot be newly satisfied, so it is not a rolling three-month rule.

Which award covers my venue?

It depends on the premises. Hotels, pubs, motels, resorts, casinos and caterers are MA000009. Not-for-profit registered clubs are MA000058. Standalone restaurants, cafes, night clubs, reception centres and roadhouses are MA000119. Food sold primarily to be eaten away from the counter, and food courts, are MA000003.

What if we disagree about the classification?

The dispute route depends on the award: MA000009 clause 40, MA000119 clause 34, or for MA000058 referral to the Fair Work Commission for determination.

Can I leave a new employee on Introductory level while they learn?

Under MA000009, for up to 3 months, extendable by mutual agreement for one further 3 months. Six months is the ceiling. It is not an indefinite classification.

Do I have to pay an apprentice for time spent at training?

Yes. Clause 12.7(a) of MA000009 and MA000119 requires release without loss of pay or continuity of employment, and clause 12.7(b) makes that time count as time worked. Trainees have the equivalent right under Schedule E clause E.5.2.

If my apprentice paid their own course fees, do I owe them?

Clause 12.7(c) to (d) requires the employer to reimburse all fees the apprentice paid to an RTO for required courses, and required textbooks the employer did not supply, subject to satisfactory progress. It is due by the later of 6 months after the apprenticeship starts, 6 months after the relevant stage, or 3 months after the RTO's training starts.

How much authority should floor staff have to fix a problem?

Enough to act without fetching a manager for routine failures. SITXCCS014 requires resolution within the staff member's own level of responsibility and escalation beyond it, and SITXCCS016 requires authority levels for resolving complaints and providing compensation to be written into the service policies. Any line, written down, beats no line.

Should promotions be available to every staff member to offer?

That is the venue's decision, and the unit expects it to have been made. SITXCCS015 ties promotional offers to individual empowerment and organisational policy, which assumes someone has decided who may offer what.

Does rostering around someone's study really matter?

SITXHRM008's knowledge requirements list study leave among the organisational policies a rosterer is expected to take into account, alongside carers, illness, compassion, maternity and paternity, and long service. And a staff member who cannot finish a qualification never reaches the Level 4 step.

Where should a venue start if service is inconsistent?

With the written standard, not with a pep talk. Recipes, pour specifications and a service sequence first; then who is trained against them; then how it is measured. To discuss a plan for a specific team, use course enquiry (/contact/) and confirm current fees and intakes directly.