006 The Economy Is Not the Argument

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The economy will give you reasons. It will give you reasons to cut, reasons to wait, reasons to hold off on the hire, reasons to let the standard slide just this quarter. It will also, eventually, give you reasons to expand, reasons to invest, reasons to believe the window is open and the timing is right.

Neither set of reasons is the argument.

If the right thing to do changes every time the economy shifts, it was never the right thing. The fundamentals do not have a market cycle. The Guest who walks into your building during a recession still wants to feel seen. The cast member you put on the stage during a boom still needs to be coached. The standard that holds when margins are fat has to hold when they are thin — or it was never a standard. It was a preference you could afford.

The economy is an input. It is not a compass. Operators who use economic conditions to explain their decisions have handed their Perspective over to something that does not know their operation, does not know their Guest, and does not know their cast. The economy moves on political inputs, credit cycles, and forces no restaurant operator controls. Your fundamentals do not.

Read the economic conditions. Understand what the margin for error looks like this quarter. Then run the fundamentals. The conditions change the degree of difficulty. They do not change the work.

What Changes Tomorrow

Tomorrow, take whatever you've been blaming on the economy and run it through your own fundamentals instead. Labor discipline, Guest experience, food cost control — none of those have a market cycle. Fix what's actually broken inside your four walls before you spend another minute treating the economy as the explanation.