075 The 1980s Mentality

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Too many operators are running a 1980s business in a 2020s market. And I don't mean that as a charming throwback. I mean it as a diagnosis.

The 1980s operator believes the restaurant runs itself if you have a good enough recipe. Believes you can put an ad in the paper and good people will show up. Thinks labor is a line item to minimize, not an investment to maximize. Measures success by how busy Friday and Saturday nights are — and ignores the fact that Monday through Thursday are bleeding money.

If you're waiting for Friday and Saturday to make payroll, you have serious issues. And those issues aren't about cash flow. They're about the fundamental way you think about building a business.

The modern operator understands that every shift is a revenue opportunity. That the cast is the most valuable investment, not the most controllable cost. That marketing isn't something you do when business is slow — it's something you do always. That speed and urgency aren't reckless — they're the only way to stay ahead of an industry that moves faster every year.

Hard work is still required. But hard work alone no longer separates you. Everybody works hard. The differentiator is how well you think. About your business model. About your Guest. About your team. About where you're going and why.

What Changes Tomorrow

Tomorrow, ask honestly whether you're running a 1980s operation in a 2020s market — relying on hard work alone to differentiate you. Hard work no longer sets you apart; thinking does. Name one place where working harder has replaced thinking differently, and flip it.