083 The Read You Are Not Running

Perspective Book · https://kb.jeffreysummers.com/docs/083-the-read-you-are-not-running/

The operator who reads their operation well has one blind spot built into the discipline: they are reading themselves against themselves. Last period's numbers against this period's numbers. Last year's cover count against this year's. Last Saturday against the Saturday before. The inward read is essential. It is also incomplete — because the Guest is not comparing you to yourself. They are comparing you to every alternative they considered before they walked through the door.

The [Competitive Value Read] is the outward read the inward read cannot produce. It answers a different question. Not "how are we performing?" but "how are we performing relative to what the Guest can get elsewhere?" Those two questions have different answers in every market. The operation that is performing well in absolute terms may be performing at parity in relative terms — doing excellent work in a category that has caught up to their standard. The operator who never looks outward does not know which one is true.

The alternative position is that the inward read is sufficient — that the operator who executes well, holds the standard, and compounds the Guest relationship does not need to monitor the competition. That position is [Static Decline] in slow motion. The category moves whether the operator monitors it or not. The competitor who was two steps behind last year may be one step behind this month. The Guest who returns because of [Earned Trust] will eventually run their own comparative read — and if the gap has closed, the trust alone will not hold them forever.

The seeing discipline of this fundamental requires both reads running simultaneously. The inward read tells the operator what they are producing. The [Competitive Value Read] tells them whether what they are producing still matters relative to what the Guest can get without them.

What Changes Tomorrow: Visit one competitor before your next service. Not to copy — to read. Look at their sensory environment, their cast interaction, their sequence, their price signal. Ask one question: what is the Guest getting there that they cannot get here, and what are they getting here that they cannot get there? That gap is your [Competitive Value Read]. It is either holding or it has closed. You need to know which.

What Changes Tomorrow

Before your next service, visit one competitor as a Guest, not as an operator scouting. Read the sensory environment, watch how the cast interacts with Guests, notice the sequence of service and the price signal it sends. You already run the inward read on your own building every shift. Tomorrow, run the outward read you've been skipping — the Competitive Value Read is the one you're not currently making time for.