2095 How I See It PreOpening

Product Book · https://kb.jeffreysummers.com/docs/2095-how-i-see-it-preopening/

The mediocre operator treats pre-opening as a to-do list working toward a target date. The focus is on tasks, not dependencies. They hire their management team late because there was always something more pressing. They finalize menus without fully costing every item. They order smallwares two weeks before opening and discover the lead time is six. They conduct three days of development before the soft opening because that is all the time construction left them, and they call it good.

The building looks right when they open. The operation doesn't. The Guests who come in the first two weeks experience a concept that isn't ready for them, and those first impressions are remarkably durable. Some of them don't come back.

The ideal operator builds the business before they build the restaurant. By month four they have a complete organizational chart, written job descriptions for every position, defined pay scales, an employee benefits structure, and management hiring already underway — all before a single front-of-house cast member has been recruited. By month three they have a fully developed employee handbook, development materials for every position, prep lists with par levels, product specifications, station setup sheets, and a master development schedule that runs from initial hire through opening week. By month two they are in active recruiting with a temporary interview space set up and all hiring infrastructure in place.

When construction runs a week long, they know exactly what the operational impact is because both timelines are on the same chart. They staff heavy during opening week intentionally, expecting turnover and the inevitable no-shows. They have done full mock service — complete with uniforms — before the first paying Guest arrives. They have run practice shifts, found the failure points in their line setup, their sidework rotations, their table management, and their ticketing.

The opening is not perfect. But the cast is developed, the systems are tested, and the management team has the tools to course-correct.