2420 The Menu That Makes The Guest Work

Product Book · https://kb.jeffreysummers.com/docs/2420-the-menu-that-makes-the-guest-work/

Every item added to the menu is a decision the Guest has to make.

Past a threshold, the menu stops serving the Guest and starts serving the operator's reluctance to make hard choices. The operator who keeps adding items — because the kitchen can execute them, because a vendor relationship requires them, because a regular asked for them — is transferring the cognitive burden of curation from themselves onto the Guest.

The Guest who opens a menu with forty-two entrees is not empowered. They are overwhelmed. The brain's working memory hits its limit. Evaluation shifts from genuine preference to simplified heuristics — pick something familiar, ask the server, order what the person across the table ordered. The Guest who says "I don't know, what do you recommend?" is not being deferential. They have handed the decision back because the menu asked more of them than they could process.

The menu engineering discipline is not addition. It is subtraction. The menu that earns its real estate — where every item is there because it belongs, not because it hasn't been removed yet — produces faster decisions, higher satisfaction, and better execution from the kitchen that doesn't have to hold forty-two specs. The operator who is afraid to cut items has confused variety with value.

The Guest doesn't want options. They want the right one. The operator's job is to have already made most of the decisions before the Guest sits down.