3195 The Ceiling on Your Team Is You

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You cannot coach someone beyond your own level of experience. Which means the ceiling on your team's development is you.

If you're not growing, they can't grow past you. If you've stopped learning, they've stopped being developed. Your cast will never outperform your own commitment to getting better.

There's an extension of that principle most operators never follow to its logical end: the Experience Prerequisite. You cannot deliver a level of hospitality you've never experienced yourself. Neither can anyone who works for you. You can't coach it if it's still abstract to you. The desired level of service must be experienced and modeled — — not just described.

Which means one of the most important development investments you can make is sending your leaders and cast to better restaurants than yours. Not as a reward. As a learning tool.

Send them to restaurants that are decidedly better than you — — in your market and in markets you compete in. Seeing the operation that's beating you, from the inside, as a Guest, is the most honest competitive intelligence you'll ever collect. No mystery shop report captures what it feels like to sit in a room that's running better than yours. You have to be in the room.

Your cast also needs to experience your own restaurant as a Guest. How can you create a Guest experience if you've never seen it from the Guest's perspective? The cast member who has only ever seen this restaurant from behind the line or behind the host stand has a fundamentally incomplete picture. They know the operation. They don't know the experience. Those are two different things — — and they require two different vantage points.

This isn't optional. It's a development requirement. Before anyone on your cast is responsible for delivering a Guest experience, they should have sat in one. In your restaurant. With fresh eyes. What they come back with is worth more than any training manual you'll ever write.