3285 If You Have Flies in Your Operation Its Because You Like Flies

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Every standard in your restaurant is a choice. Not the standard you wrote down. Not the standard you described at the last all-hands meeting. The standard that actually exists — the one your cast executes every shift when you're not watching.

UGRs: What Culture Actually Is

Culture is not what is on the values poster. It is what cast members have learned through experience is actually true. Every time an owner walks past a standards violation without addressing it, the unwritten ground rule updates: that standard is optional. Every time a cast member speaks up and gets brushed aside, the rule updates: silence is safer. Every time the owner says Guests first and then snaps at a cast member in front of a table, the rule updates: what the owner says and what the owner does are two different things. The cast are excellent students. They study what leaders do next — not what leaders say — and they adjust accordingly.

Contempt Is the Most Efficient Culture Killer Available

Contempt communicates one thing: who you are doesn't count. It doesn't require repetition to land. A single contemptuous interaction in front of the cast — the eye roll when someone makes a suggestion, the dismissive response when a concern is raised, the tone that communicates the leader's opinion of the person before the conversation starts — sets the unwritten ground rule immediately. This is how people are treated here. The cast members watching calibrate their own behavior accordingly. They stop raising issues. Not because they stopped caring. Because they learned it doesn't help. The operator wonders why they're always the last to know about problems. The answer is in the pattern they created — one interaction at a time — long before the silence became visible.

Thoughts, Words, Actions in Alignment

The operator whose private behavior contradicts their public standards is not building culture. They are undermining it. Cast members see everything. They always do. The manager who talks about accountability and then avoids the hard conversation is teaching the cast that accountability is optional. The owner who posts about Hospitality and then snaps at a cast member in the back of house is teaching the cast that Hospitality is a marketing position, not an operating standard. [By Design Or By Default] applies to character the same way it applies to culture. The operator who is not intentional about alignment defaults to contradiction — and the cast defaults to match them.

The flies are not a maintenance problem. They are a leadership statement. They say: this is acceptable here. The chair that has been broken for three weeks says the same thing. The grease buildup on the hood that nobody has addressed. The server who has been calling Guests "guys" for six months without a correction. Every unaddressed violation of your standard is a signal — to your cast, to your Guests, and to yourself — about what you actually tolerate.

You get what you accept. The standard is not what you say. It is what you allow.

If your operation has flies, it is because somewhere in the chain of leadership, someone decided flies were acceptable. That decision may have been active — a deliberate choice to look the other way. More often it is passive — the distraction of a busy shift, the avoidance of an uncomfortable conversation, the assumption that someone else will handle it.

Your standards don't hold themselves. They exist exactly as long as you keep saying them — and the moment you stop, the cast stops too. The most accurate job title for any operator who wants culture to hold is Chief Reminder Officer. Not because the cast doesn't know the standard. Because under pressure at 7:15 on a Saturday night, people default to the standard they have heard most recently. Your job is to make sure that standard is yours.

Nobody else will handle it. That is the job. Find the flies. Name them. Remove them. Hold the line. The cast is watching what you do with the flies more carefully than they are listening to anything you say about standards.