3315 The No Assholes Rule for Restaurants

People Book · https://kb.jeffreysummers.com/docs/3315-the-no-assholes-rule-for-restaurants/

The No Assholes Rule is not a moral flourish. In restaurants, it is a performance principle.

Your high performers are watching how you handle your worst performer. They already know who it is — they work next to them every shift. When you tolerate a toxic cast member because they are technically competent or because you do not want the conflict of the conversation, you are not avoiding a problem. You are broadcasting a standard. You are telling your best cast members that results matter more than culture, and that working alongside someone who poisons the team is the price they pay for showing up. One person who drains the energy of the floor costs more than their labor rate. They cost you the people who will not work with them.

A single toxic operator, manager, server, cook, vendor, investor, or Guest can increase friction, distort incentives, degrade trust, and quietly push the whole business back toward the transactional road — where people become instruments and relationships are treated as expendable. A relational restaurant cannot be built while tolerated toxicity is allowed to tax everyone else.

Toxic actors increase disorder inside cooperative systems. In a restaurant, that disorder looks like rework, gossip, defensive communication, passive aggression, ticket errors, hidden resentment, and emotional spillover from one station to the next. The rule is therefore an anti-entropy principle: it protects the scarce energy needed for service, recovery, and care.

One persistently selfish or demeaning person can push the system past its tipping point. Distrust reduces communication. Reduced communication increases mistakes. Mistakes increase blame. Blame decreases ownership. Lower ownership produces more selfish behavior. Once that loop starts, the restaurant begins spending more time managing emotional debris than producing hospitality.

The test is one question: what does this person make the system become?

Not what do they produce — what do they make everyone else become? The cast member who makes everyone around them smaller, colder, more guarded, and less generous is not an asset at any volume. Keeping them is not tolerance. It is a design choice with a cost you are choosing to

pay indefinitely.

The same rule extends to Guests. On Road 2, money does not buy the right to mistreat people. The Guest who abuses the cast is costing you more than their check is worth — in morale, in trust, in the cast's ability to produce hospitality for everyone else in the room that night.

The best culture strategy is often subtraction, not addition. That is not softness. That is systems discipline.