3405 The Habits Always Translate

People Book · https://kb.jeffreysummers.com/docs/3405-the-habits-always-translate/

James Clear put it plainly: when you lose a game, the score doesn't transfer to the next contest. But your habits certainly will.

In a restaurant, this cuts both ways.

The cast member who has been developing good habits — in a culture where the standard is real, where the operator models it, where holding the standard is expected and recognized — brings those habits to every shift. They arrive prepared. They see the Guest before the Guest signals a need. They hold the standard when it's inconvenient, when the stage is slammed, when the kitchen is behind. Not because someone is watching. Because the reps built the behavior.

The cast member who has been cutting corners in a permissive environment brings those habits too. They arrive with the minimum. They do what's required to avoid correction. They drift the moment supervision drifts. Not because they're bad at the job — because the reps built that behavior instead.

Every shift is a rep. Every rep either builds the standard or erodes it. The operator who holds the standard consistently gives the cast a different set of reps than the operator who holds it selectively. Over time, those reps produce different cast members — not because the people are different, but because the practice was.

Here is the part that costs operators the most money, and it is the part nobody argues with when you say it out loud and nobody acts on when the shift starts.

A rep does not know what kind of night it was. You let the standard go on a Saturday because the kitchen was buried and you were down two on the stage, and you tell yourself that was a one-time accommodation to a hard night. The night agrees with you. The rep does not. It registers as a repetition, exactly like the ones you meant, and it teaches the same lesson the ones you meant teach: this is what we do here. That is [Practiced Identity] running in the cast instead of in the operator. What gets practiced is what gets kept, and intent is not one of the inputs.

Which raises the question nobody asks about a new hire. When a cast member walks in on day one, the reps have already happened. Somebody else's building ran them. Whatever that operator

tolerated, whatever his managers modeled at 10pm, whatever the standard actually was when the stage got slammed — that is what got practiced, and that is what is stored. Unrehearsed does not mean empty. It means inherited. You are not writing on a blank page, you are writing over somebody else's handwriting, and under pressure the earlier writing is the one that shows through.

This is why a good hire can go bad in a month and a mediocre hire can come good in three, and why the interview told you almost nothing about either. You did not hire a set of attributes. You hired a body of practice built in a building you have never seen, and the only thing that will replace it is a different body of practice built in yours.

It is also why the orientation packet and the first-week training do so little. Both operate on knowing. The reflex underneath them was built somewhere else, over months or years, at volume, and it does not get replaced by being told about a different standard. It gets replaced by reps. Enough of them, close enough to real load, that the new move becomes the accessible one at the exact moment the old one would have fired. Knowing arrives in an afternoon. Reflex takes the number of reps it takes, and the number is not negotiable because you would prefer it lower.

And it is why the moment itself is nearly worthless as a teaching instrument. At 8:15 on a Friday you can read what is stored and you cannot install anything. The operator standing at the pass correcting a cast member mid-rush believes he is training. He is reading a report. The behavior he is watching is the sum of every rep that came before, including all the ones he had nothing to do with, and the correction he is delivering will land on the knowing layer while the reflex underneath it stays exactly where it was. Correcting in the moment still has a real use, and it is not a small one — it tells the cast member the standard is live and somebody is holding it, which is itself a rep. But it does not change what fires next Friday. Nothing installed at peak volume gets kept at peak volume, because at peak volume survival replaces retention. That is the whole argument behind [Controlled-Volume Training], and it is the reason the rehearsal calendar and the training calendar are two different documents. Most operations only have the second one.

This explains the thing that makes operators crazy. The same correction, to the same person, on the same behavior, for two years. The operator concludes the person cannot learn or does not care, and he is usually wrong on both counts. The correction has been aimed at what the cast member knows, which was never the problem, while the reflex that produces the behavior has never been given a single rep of anything different. More explaining is the wrong tool applied harder. The behavior has to be run, under managed volume, until the new move is the one that arrives without being chosen — and until then the operator is paying for the same conversation on

a loop and calling it management.

Then there is your own set. You are running reps on yourself every shift you work, and yours carry further than anybody else's because your leads are watching them and learning the operation from them. What you do at 10pm is the curriculum. Not the handbook, not the pre-shift, not the standard as written. If your leads watch you absorb every friction point yourself because it is faster than holding somebody to it, they are rehearsing absorption, and in two years you will have a lead family that cannot hold a standard and a stack of training material that says they should be able to. Whatever you model, they store. Whatever they store, they teach downward without being asked to.

None of this is a motivation argument and none of it is an accountability argument, which is where the industry always takes it. Motivation explains why somebody would want to hold the standard. Accountability explains what happens to them if they do not. Neither one puts the behavior within reach at 8:15, and reach is the only thing that decides what actually happens. A cast member can want the standard, know the standard, fear the consequence of missing the standard, and still produce the older reflex under load, because under load you do not get what people intend. You get what they have practiced.

The diagnostic is cheap and you can run it this week. Walk a standard with a cast member in a quiet pre-shift and watch them execute it clean. Then watch the same person at the top of the Friday push. Both of those are real. Only one of them is stored. The distance between the two is your rep debt on that behavior, and it is the most honest number you will get about your training all year — more honest than a completion rate, a quiz score, or anybody's opinion of how the team is doing.

What you do with that number is the work. You do not close rep debt on twenty behaviors at once. You pick the two or three moments that actually decide the GX in your building — the greet, the recovery, the hand-off at the pass, whichever ones carry your weight — and you run those under managed volume until they are the reflex. Everything else can live at the level of knowing for now. An operation with three behaviors rehearsed to reflex beats an operation with thirty behaviors trained to knowing every Friday night of the year.

The culture you build is the cast you get. The cast you get is the GX you deliver. The GX you deliver is the brand you build — or erode.

It all starts with the reps.