

The Culture of Hospitality

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I opened my first Saxbys in 2005 on a corner in Atlanta, Georgia, directly across the street from one of the first and busiest Starbucks (Fig. 1). If we were going to fail, we were going to fail fast. My business plan was to create an experience that made lives better. My vehicle was coffee and my funding was my credit card. Before entering the business, I was a consultant in a logistics and supply chain company, so coffee wasn't on my expected career trajectory. I reached a point in my life where I wanted to be in a profession that was entirely people oriented and would allow me to truly make a difference in people's lives. My interest in the coffee business was less about my passion for great coffee and more about creating a warm, hospitable atmosphere, which became integral to selecting our first location.

Saxbys has since grown from one corner café to a 30-unit hospitality business in nine states. Our success, despite tough competition, is testament to the importance of the customer experience (or as we call it, guest engagement) in any professional venture. Our coffee serves as a delivery vehicle for a memorable experience, which in turn drives our business growth. We are in essence a hospitality business fueled by coffee. At Saxbys, hospitality means creating a community experience, anticipating needs, and exceeding expectations.

Our team, from the leadership level to the sales level, is driven by these deep-seated core values. As many great CEOs have professed, hiring the right people is one of the most important variables in the formula for a successful business. At Saxbys, we recognized that the best team members for our business have the same three personal traits: they're outgoing, detail oriented, and disciplined. Or, as we say, they're "O.D.D." Regardless of their prior work experience, they must possess these three traits.

Strong interpersonal skills are at the top of our criteria list for our new hires, and we inspire our team to work with Pride, Passion, and Purpose (another one of our six Core Values). Every team member in the company shares in our mission to "Make Life Better" and understands that their interaction with the guest is just as important as the quality of our coffee. We hire engaging people who embrace the importance of a positive human experience and accordingly believe in the business model with passion. As a result, our team members love the company and want to contribute to its overall quality. They love their jobs and stay with us. Our turnover rate is half of other similar businesses. Loyalty and profitability are equal contributors to the success of any business.

In April 2015, Saxbys opened its first experiential learning café (Fig. 2). The product of a partnership between Saxbys and Drexel University's Close

School of Entrepreneurship, this was the nation's first entirely student-run café, where students earn full academic credit through a university cooperative education (co-op) program and have full authority over every aspect of the business, from the profit and loss statement to the members of the team. In keeping with the values of the undergraduates, we created an atmosphere that is both environmentally conscious, by using only recycled materials for the furnishings, and artistically appealing, with walls decorated by the students' artwork. The result is an uplifting experience that resonates with both student operators and guests.

Our business is centered in Philadelphia, and we are invested in improving the quality of life for our community. Beyond our cafés, we provide unlimited free coffee to the employees of all the other businesses that work in our Philadelphia office building. We put out tip jars every morning and the aggregated tips—about \$10,000 per year!—go to a different nonprofit partner each month. In our commitment to the environment, we gifted each of our visitors with a mug that they use continuously. These efforts have contributed to an atmosphere of generosity and congeniality in our workplace. Our philanthropic efforts continue to grow, with a focus on organizations that provide mentorship like Big Brothers Big Sisters. We also partner with



Fig 1. The original Saxbys—Atlanta, Georgia.

YouthBuild Philadelphia to help high school dropouts get back on their feet to find a job. We've had tremendous success with these partnerships, as it's just one of the ways to give back to our city. Helping to advance the local community is merely an extension of our core value to make life better.

As a guest experience business, we set exceptionally high standards for excellence in service:

- Golden Rule: "Treat others the way *you* want to be treated."
- Platinum Rule: "Treat others the way *they* want to be treated."
- Double Platinum Rule: "Treat others the way they don't even know they want to be treated."

These rules can be applied to any business, regardless of the product or service, but selection of personable, passionate team members and



Fig 2. The original Experiential Learning Café: Drexel University, Philadelphia.

inspiring a culture of generosity are equally essential to the architecture of a successful business.

KEY POINTS AND LESSONS FOR RADIOLOGY

- Radiology departments need to be proactive to facilitate a positive experience for the patient. Patients who are referred to radiology begin their experience when they call to schedule the examination and complete the experience when their physician explains the results of the test. Excellent service in a radiology department requires organized administrators; an easy-to-navigate campus; efficient operations; skilled nurses, technologists, and physicians; and timely delivery of accurate results that add value to the patient's care.
- Radiology examinations are anxiety provoking, with respect to uncertainty about how the procedure is performed, anticipated pain, potential risks, what the images may reveal, and the high cost of the examination. If the patient encounters staff who are compassionate, patient, and supportive, the patient's anxiety can be tempered. Careful selection of receptionists, radiology nurses, and technologists with these three skills is essential to running a department that provides a positive experience for a patient. Because of the intrinsic unpleasantness of any medical procedure, our staff needs to go above and beyond and embrace the Double Platinum Rule: "Treat others the way they don't even know they want to be treated." Anticipate patients' needs and exceed their expectations.

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