Management: Building the Foundation

Good management keeps restaurants running smoothly. When managers communicate clearly, set fair expectations, and give meaningful feedback, staff feel respected and supported, leading to lower turnover, happier guests, and stronger results. This guide shares practical, research-backed ways to build a team that works well together, sticks around, and delivers results.

Shared Purpose:

79% of leaders say purpose matters, but only 34% act on it, creating a gap that drives turnover and weakens morale. In restaurants, shared purpose means staff know what they're working toward and why it matters, making them more focused, motivated, and loyal.

Putting it into action:

➢ **Set the tone:** Pick one clear goal for the week and explain why it matters.
➢ **Connect the dots:** Show how daily tasks tie to bigger objectives and why the details matter.
➢ **Explain the "why":** Whenever tasks or decisions are new or changing, share the reasoning behind them.
➢ **Highlight impact:** Regularly review how each team member's work contributes to overall success.

Trust:

High-trust teams outperform low-trust ones by up to 50% in productivity and retention. Despite that, trust is often treated as an optional "soft skill" rather than an essential element of effective operations, especially in fast-paced environments like restaurants.

Putting it into action:

➢ **Respond, don't react:** Stay calm when mistakes happen; focus on solutions.
➢ **Normalize asking for help:** Make it safe to ask questions and clarify expectations.
➢ **Be consistent:** Apply rules and standards fairly across the team.
➢ **Model the values:** Operate with the same values you expect to see from your team.

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Feedback

In many workplaces, feedback only shows up when something goes wrong. This keeps teams stuck in recovery mode instead of building momentum.

When managers aren't direct, frustration shows up in tone, body language, or inconsistent treatment. And when staff don't have a safe way to speak up, they shut down or start planning their exit.

Situation/Behavior/ Impact Model (SBI)	*This model builds feedback that is direct, specific, factual and actionable, reducing defensiveness and misunderstandings.*

SBI feedback includes the situation where the behavior occurred, the specific behavior itself, and the impact it had.

Situation: *The specific time, place, or context where the behavior occurred.*

Behavior: *The observable action taken, described factually without judgment.*

Impact: *The effect that action had on people, processes, or outcomes.*

Example: *(S) During last night's dinner rush, (B) you left the host stand without telling anyone, (I) which caused delay seating and confusion for the guests and servers.*

Managers who use SBI consistently are rated as more effective by their employees.

Putting it into action:

➢ **Give feedback in real time:** Offer simple, immediate feedback to help people adjust without feeling called out.
➢ **Be specific:** Don't leave people guessing. If you want a behavior repeated or changed, identify it clearly.
➢ **Focus on improvement, not blame:** Feedback should help someone do better next time, not make them feel criticized.
➢ **Make feedback a two-way street:** Invite input from your team to stay accountable and make feedback more balanced.

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Decisiveness + Empathy

Every decision carries weight in a busy workplace. Clear, respectful leadership helps teams stay steady under pressure, while vague or careless direction quickly erodes trust and morale.

Putting it into action:
- ➤ **Create clarity:** When you make a decision, explain your reasoning and move forward confidently.
- ➤ **Listen with respect:** Hear concerns fully, even if you don't agree with all of them.
- ➤ **Hold the line fairly:** Address slipping standards calmly, kindly and consistently.
- ➤ **Lead without ego:** Self-aware and humble leaders are more productive and more profitable.

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Weekly Manager Reset Checklist

Try this weekly to stay grounded, consistent, and fair.

☐ **Set the tone.**

Pick one clear goal for the week.
Share it with the team and explain why it matters.

☐ **Lead by example.**

Choose one value to model this week (e.g. teamwork, efficiency, adaptability).
Keep it top of mind each shift.

☐ **Give balanced feedback.**

Offer one positive note and one improvement-focused tip each shift.
Spread it across the team. Stay specific and constructive.

☐ **Ask for feedback.**

Ask your team for input at least once this week.
It can be on a specific process or just general feedback about the shift.

☐ **Reflect.**

Review your week objectively.
Identify what worked, what didn't, and what you'll adjust next week.

Situation/Behavior/Impact Template

Refer to this template as you build your SBI feedback approach.

☐ **Situation:**
- ✓ Describe when and where the behavior occurred.
- ✓ This should be specific and clear to help them recall the event.

☐ **Behavior:**
- ✓ Explain the behavior non-judgmentally.
- ✓ Be simple and specific.
- ✓ Keep it factual. Describe *what* happened, not *why* it happened.

☐ **Impact:**
- ✓ Share how the behavior impacted you or the team.
- ✓ Keep this factual, based on observable outcomes.

☐ **Putting it together:**
- ✓ During [situation], you [behavior], which [impact].

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Before delivering your feedback, check:

[Y | N] *Will the person recognize the event I'm referring to?*

[Y | N] *Am I describing only what I directly saw or heard?*

[Y | N] *Am I avoiding assumptions that aren't fact-based?*

[Y | N] *Is the impact tied to clear outcomes?*

[Y | N] *Is it clear how they can improve this behavior in the future?*

If you answered "Yes" to each question, your feedback is ready to deliver.

If you answered "No" to any, consider adjusting those parts to strengthen your feedback.

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Resource List

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