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On The Table #9

Espresso Bar Staff Training: Part III of a Three Part Series - Creating a Culture of Excellence ([Part I](#) - [Part II](#))

Dear cyber reader, After examining hiring procedures and initial training in the first two parts of this short series it is crucial to look at how the information is reinforced, or not reinforced, by your company culture.

In my first two years of business before my company culture formed, training was much slower. Really it was just me pushing them, a one way street.

Now we push and pull each other towards excellence. Information is reinforced from all sides as the new comer makes his or her way into the staff. Also, there is a healthy attitude of competition among staff to excel.

(A great example is the basket drying trick. One of my best shot makers, Todd Ayster routinely dried his coffee basket quickly before dosing and packing his next shot of coffee. We all noticed he was getting more flavor from the coffee and started doing it also. Two months later I figured out why it works . It's simple really, water likes to go where water all ready is, it a well known property of physics. Thus, when the basket was wet before packing it helped pressurized water leak around the packed coffee, giving less flavor in the cup.)

One of the key people to help create a culture of excellence is the person behind the scenes tuning machines, rotating coffee for freshness, keeping up with water filters, grinder burrs and the other countless other support tasks to create superb caffe espresso.

The Macchinesti

For a business to be successful at producing high quality espresso coffee, an individual must be appointed as quality control technician for the operation. In Italian culture this person is called the **macchinesti**, the espresso machine specialist.

He or she needs to be in direct contact with staff and the coffee each barista makes on a daily basis. This person must adjust the machines, change dull grinder burrs, taste and praise good results and correct bad

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habits before they work their way into the company culture.

In my opinion, the best form of the espresso business is if the macchinesti is the owner. If the coffee passion and knowledge reside in the owner he or she will understand the needs of the coffee, and requisition the best equipment and supplies. And, as I have stated, the owner must be present on a daily basis in order to inject his or her love for the coffee. If the owner begins to be consumed with other aspects of the business, marketing, etc., the espresso quality will deteriorate very rapidly.

The beauty of an espresso business that makes a fine cup of coffee is that the customers are your best marketing tool. Word of mouth is king when it comes to the coffee business. People just love to brag up their favorite coffee place and bring in friends to try it out for themselves. Everything flows from the coffee.

In this way your ability to produce a great cup improves over time. The staff sees a true commitment to excellence in the passion of the macchinesti/owner who is willing to spend good money on equipment maintenance and quality ingredients.

Staff culture evolves slowly in an organization. The interesting thing to me is that the people that make up your staff will, over time, intuitively hone in on your true priorities. Thus, if you indoctrinate people with a one-week training on espresso and service, but your really more interested in short-term profit, the staff will pick up on this and begin to prioritize things differently in their work habits. They will begin emphasizing speed over coffee quality, and the whole process will be reduced to simply "cranking out the "product."

A top espresso barista is really an artist at heart. You as an owner or trainer must respect the beauty of a perfect cup, while at the same time guiding your staff performance around stated training goals. Show your respect by providing and maintaining the best possible equipment, and work with each individual's strengths and weakeners. Over the years a culture of excellence forms among the staff as they gradually become the owners of their coffee skills, and trainers in the art.

Ciao for now!

END

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