

B E C O M I N G A Customer's Favorite

Pacanovsky will share the 5 essential laws of hospitality.

BY ROSIE CREWS

Bob Pacanovsky has learned a bit about how bowling centers work over the past few years. His presentation at the 2022 BPAA Bowling Summit in Palm Springs, Calif., will be his 20th before a group of center owners and operators, including appearances at two International Bowl Expos and 17 state association meetings.

Hospitality will be front and center in Palm Springs as Pacanovsky shares “The 5 Essential Laws of Hospitality,” demonstrating how to build loyalty, retention and revenue with an emphasis on turning ordinary customer service transactions into black-tie customer experiences.

Hospitality has been used as a wide-ranging touchpoint, one that Pacanovsky acknowledges may mean different things to different people. However, his definition of hospitality is crystal clear, calling it the “art of making that personal connection between you and someone else.”

That someone else certainly includes customers, but it also can relate to employees, vendors and anyone else who walks through the

doors of your business.

“How are we going to make them feel every time they show up at our center that they are more valued and more appreciated?” asks Pacanovsky, adding that customer *service* is the start of the pathway that leads to customer *experience*. “The key is to truly connect with people to make them brand ambassadors of your company.”

The discerning consumer has more choices in attraction-based options than ever before. The complexity of the pandemic has presented countless obstacles for businesses, but Pacanovsky believes it also has opened doors of opportunity. Over the past 18 months, businesses have been challenged to win back their customers and bring in new ones because of a heightened sense of expectations.

“If you just turn on the lights and provide a nice place to bowl, I don’t know if that is enough to bring them back because you just haven’t done anything to make them feel more valued and appreciated,” he says. “You have to move [them] from being a one-time customer or even a prospect



Bob Pacanovsky explains the black-tie experience to a group of Missouri proprietors. He'll make his 20th presentation for center owners at the 2022 Bowling Summit.

Pacanovsky hopes the takeaway for the attendees at his Summit presentation will be an array of tools and actionable concepts to implement in their business plan and put customers to work for their organization.

“I want to help them build a more loyal customer base, and these customers become part of their marketing department for them — their brand ambassadors.”

to that loyal brand ambassador who can’t wait to tell others about how you’re making them feel.”

Personal connections are critical to successful businesses, but Pacanovsky advises clients to also embrace the advances in technology with an equal emphasis. He points out that the powerful impact points are the ones that make the difference and, most importantly, that hospitality

starts before that customer even walks through the door.

“It starts with the type of impression you make with your website and your online presence. Is it easy to navigate, is information easy to find, can you make reservations online, are there contactless payment options? If it’s difficult for your customers to engage through technology, you’re not building that personal connection.”

The Akron, Ohio-based speaker knows a little something about making that personal connection, customer service insight he honed through more than 25 years in the hospitality industry, including restaurants, catering and event planning.

Pacanovsky points to a callback program he initiated with one of his restaurants in the 1990s, when his staff made follow-up phone calls to check in with customers and conduct a short survey about their dining experience. While customer surveys are a much more obvious next step with the evolution of technology, very few were doing them in the days of answering machines, well before email marketing.

The result of tracking the entire customer experience full circle set the groundwork for the next step: the launch of a successful catering business where “we built this customer service experience, which we now call the black-tie experience.”

Pacanovsky’s presentation will connect the dots through each step of his five laws of hospitality. The midway point — the law of trust — is the critical turning point for most businesses.

“We have to practice the law of trust with consumers so we can move them to laws four and five. If our customers don’t trust us, it’s back to square one.”

With that consumer trust, finding something that makes your business stand out in a crowded marketplace

remains important.

“I still believe that regardless of what size you are, and what bells and whistles you have, if you strive to become someone’s favorite, you have a much better chance to increase loyalty, engagement and ultimately revenue,” Pacanovsky says.

Excellence is a journey in business, but it may not be the ultimate destination.

“There’s a difference between being the best and being the favorite,” Pacanovsky adds. “Being the best is an opinion. Best is good, but I would rather be someone’s favorite.”