CHECKLIST

The Bar Owner's Nightly Operations Checklist

kate opatz · 15 years, 6 bars, seattle

this is the system i use to run six bars without working nights. every closing bartender texts me notes before they leave. every morning i review the numbers. this is the exact checklist i'd hand you if i took over your bar tomorrow. print it. tape it behind the bar. use it every night.

OPENING CHECKLIST (before doors open)

- [ ] lights tested and set to service level (not too bright, not too dark)
- [ ] music on and volume checked from the customer's seat, not from behind the bar
- [ ] ice wells stocked
- [ ] garnish station fresh and prepped
- [ ] bar wiped down, stools straight, floor clean
- [ ] menu specials board updated and accurate
- [ ] signature drink station ready (chambong, pickleback, jell-o shot - whatever your thing is)
- [ ] register counted in, starting bank correct
- [ ] staff briefed on any private events, large parties, or VIPs expected tonight
- [ ] bathroom check: stocked, clean, working

CLOSING CHECKLIST (after last call)

- [ ] all guests out, tabs closed, no open checks
- [ ] register counted out, tips split, drop done
- [ ] ice wells drained and cleaned
- [ ] garnish station broken down, perishables stored
- [ ] bottles organized, speed rail restocked for tomorrow
- [ ] bar wiped down, stools up, floor mopped
- [ ] bathrooms cleaned and restocked
- [ ] trash out, recycling out
- [ ] lights off (except security), doors locked, alarm set
- [ ] nightly notes texted to owner/manager

NIGHTLY NOTES TEMPLATE (texted by every closing bartender)

- [ ] total sales: $____
- [ ] guest count: ____
- [ ] what sold well tonight: ____
- [ ] what didn't move: ____
- [ ] any comps or voids and why: ____
- [ ] what needs fixing/replacing: ____
- [ ] anything weird or notable: ____
- [ ] staff notes (who was great, who needs help): ____

MONDAY MORNING NUMBERS REVIEW (what i check every week)

- [ ] sales vs last week, same day - up or down and by how much
- [ ] inventory discrepancies - what's missing, what's over, what doesn't match
- [ ] pour cost review - is it in range or drifting
- [ ] labor cost as % of sales - are we staffing right for the volume
- [ ] top sellers this week - keep them
- [ ] dead items this week - cut them or push them
- [ ] any patterns - slow tuesdays, weird friday, something off
- [ ] outstanding bills or vendor issues
- [ ] private event pipeline - what's booked, what's pending

THE 5 THINGS I LOOK FOR WHEN I WALK INTO A BAR

- [ ] lights flattering? music fit the energy? volume right?
- [ ] service reliable and confident? personality without being overbearing?
- [ ] a signature drink people associate with the bar?
- [ ] consistency - same drink, same quality, every time
- [ ] staff seems happy to be there? people sticking around?

consistency is the whole game. we are open seven days a week, nearly every holiday, always until the closing time posted. never close early. the bar that's open when people need it is the bar they come back to.

this checklist is the backbone. the vibe is the soul. you need both.

dm me BARS if you want me to look at your numbers 🖤