

Keeping the Campus Dining Service on Track

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Monitoring your dining operations can be a time consuming endeavor. However, there are a number of operational tools and measurements you can utilize to hold your service provider accountable in the course of their involvement.

It often begins with your contract. Choosing the appropriate tools and measurements – key performance indicators (KPIs) – depends on your financial arrangement and what is most important to your campus.

Creating Incentives

Once determined, tying performance to a financial penalty and if possible, a financial incentive keeps your provider's attention over the long term. The dollar amount depends on the scope and size of the operation and contract terms.

Three Areas

KPIs can be categorized into three major areas: financial, operational and user satisfaction. The total number of KPIs should be limited (3-5) so the penalty and incentive have meaningful value.

They should include at least one from each category to ensure well-rounded performance. KPIs that don't include financial penalties and incentives should be monitored closely to avoid sudden dips in performance and used as a means to many KPIs for each category, for example:

Measuring Performance with rewards or penalties for good or poor results is the most effective way to ensure your dining and hospitality services meet or exceed your standards.

Operational

Cost per Meal: Average raw food cost per meal, used in planning the menu mix of offerings to meet budgetary requirements.

Meals per Staff Hour: Measures staff productivity; helps plan efficient schedules.

Sales per Staff Hour: Used to plan staffing schedules based on customer traffic.

Third Party Observation: Use of consultants to provide an objective synthesis of operations. An experienced consultant can review operational performance against a detailed checklist and provide recommendations for performance enhancement.

User Satisfaction

Customer Service Ratings, overall or by specific category – i.e., catering, executive/ faculty dining operations. First year results establish a base line.

Once developed, a good survey provides statistical relevancy and solid trend analysis which can assist with future planning or if required, immediate changes in operations.

Social Media Interactions: Type, number and responses measure how well your service provider is communicating with students.

Focus Groups and Interviews: A way to synthesize feedback and comments to get an accurate view of dining services, as opposed to anecdotal one-offs, which are often weighted toward personal preference.

Financial

Increase in Revenues, overall or by specific category, i.e., catering, transient sales: A means to involve your service provider and their marketing resources to assist the college/university in revenue enhancement activities for dining services. This metric can include changes in voluntary board plans and the bottom line.

Implementation

Once determined, it's important to outline the manner and frequency of measurement. Operational and Financial can be monitored monthly, providing an opportunity to discuss operational goals and requirements with your service provider.

Depending on the types of instruments used, User Satisfaction should be gathered once or twice a year to avoid survey fatigue. However, social media outlets can be monitored more frequently to see trends associated with changes and other determining factors.

To learn how Clarion can help you effectively measure and control your dining service, call Ted Mayer, 617/875-7882 or Tom Mac Dermott, 603/642-8011 or e-mail us at info@clariongp.com.