

How To Handle Problem Situations

Human beings are a diverse and sometimes unpredictable species. It is important to remember that each person is an individual and deserves to be treated as such and that most problems have more than one solution.

CUTTING SOMEONE OFF (Intoxication/Declined Credit Card)

- Always be calm and courteous.
- Speak to the customer in private if possible or quietly to reduce embarrassment.
- Listen and empathize.
- Never back down or change your mind.
- Explain "It's nothing personal sir, it's house policy."
- Have a witness present if possible.
- Notify manager and co-workers.

MAKE IT A GOOD ONE

How do you react when someone slyly (nudge, nudge, wink, wink) asks for "a little extra" or a "good free pour"? Quite simply, they are asking you to steal. How do you keep your integrity (and your job) and not only don't offend the customer, but make him/her happy? Play dumb. Act like you don't get it, smile and tell them, "They're all good ones sir." Then try to be especially entertaining. Most people won't push any further and everybody's happy. If they continue to push, ask them if they'd like a double? Most people will stop here. The idea is to not get offended and put the responsibility on them to "explain" what they want. Occasionally, a customer won't be put off and will continue to say, "C'mon man, give me a deal" or just score me one...nobody will know" or "just write it down as spillage." At this point, try telling the customer "it's just not going to happen because that would be stealing and you could lose your job." Then ask them, "You wouldn't want me to lose my job would you? Who would serve you your drinks then?" Always smile and act like it's no big deal (bartenders never lose their cool) or try joking with them. Ask them, "Who are you? My mother? Because she's the only one who gets free drinks around here."

THAT'S NOT A FULL SHOT

Sometimes people will challenge you on this, especially if you use the free pour system. Sometimes people even mistrust liquor out of the gun (the amount as well as the quality) because they can't see it being poured. If you use a shot glass or jigger to measure you can always fall back on a line made popular in this situation by Ryan Boyd (Bar Smart Instructor). He says, "I'm sorry sir, there's only so much vodka I can fit in this little cup." If this doesn't work and they're genuinely upset, replace the drink only if you made the original. If you didn't, send them back to the person who made it or you could get taken advantage of. I don't recommend adding a "little extra" as it's a bad habit to get into.

SERVING AFTER HOURS

Your closing time will vary, mainly depending upon what type of liquor license you have and what day of the week it is, but once you're closed, you're closed! Many people will try and persuade you to give them "just one more" and will give you all sort of reasons and excuses for missing last call. Some will be reasonable, some will get upset, some will whine and some will bribe. Don't give in. Many a bar has been closed down because of service after hours. Often, the very person pushing you to break the law is a liquor inspector. Laws and tolerances will vary place to place (ask your management) but this is a dangerous habit to get into. So before you serve that drink after the lights come on, ask yourself "Is it worth my job?"

It's clear that bartenders often have to deal with difficult people in many different situations. It's just part of the job and you'll have to deal with it. Never lose your cool. No matter what happens, it's not personal, so try never to let them know you're upset.