

10 Tips to Motivate Tap Room Staff

By Andrew Coplon, Secret Hopper

It's tough to find quality workers, and once you do, it's even tougher to find brewery staff as passionate as you are. However, when you make strong hires and build a positive company culture, you are well on your way to building an army of advocates for your brand. Here are 10 strategies you can use to motivate your brewery staff to get them on your level, create a more enjoyable workplace, and to ultimately make your business even more successful.

1. **Offer rewards.** This is the most obvious answer to begin our list with. Simply reward your staff for doing a good job. This can be anything from a cash prize to a few extra low fills to take home to a gift card for a delicious local restaurant. Something tangible to say “thank you” has lasting value. Granted the “you’re doing a great job” remark is something that should always be said, but people like presents.
2. **Offer recognition.** It never hurts to also publicly recognize your staff with a “super, awesome brewery employee of the month” plaque or simply a shout out at a weekly meeting. Certificate maybe? People like to be told in front of others that they are doing a great job. A little positive reinforcement and recognition goes a long way.
3. **Hold contests.** While this is a variation of offering a reward, put specific metrics behind it. I love seeing breweries hold monthly to go beer contests. For example, give a prize to the staff member that sells the most crowlers, growlers, cans, or bottles. Many of the breweries we work with via Secret Hopper recognize the staff member with the highest score on our mystery shop reports. Holding a contest for the staff member with the highest check average is also a winner. Mix up these contests to put the focus on various areas across your brewery that need attention.
4. **Increase check averages/tips. To go beer.** One of the easiest ways for your team members to increase their check averages (and therefore, their tips) is by asking the guest if they would like to purchase beer to go. Unprompted, a guest only makes the purchase 9 percent of the time. However, when asked, a guest makes a to go purchase nearly 50 percent of the time. Money motivates and to go products get your brand noticed outside the brewery. A win-win for both brewery and server.
5. **Share your passion.** Running a business is about putting your heart, soul, and every waking breath into what you do. This is contagious. Don’t just hire staff to pour beer. Hire staff to be the first line of brand advocates for your company. Share your story so that they can share it with their guests. Get them excited about coming to work. We work with beer. While yes, it is a job, it’s one of the most exciting industries to work in. Your staff should have pride in your brewery and craft beer as a whole.

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6. **Create a positive, unique environment.** This can be accomplished in a myriad of ways, such as a fun business theme reflected through décor and spirit of the brewery, benefitting the community through creative programs, etc. Your attitude and that of your management need to reinforce a positive vibe that your staff is excited to embrace and communicate to guests. A sense of team spirit keeps the motivation constant to be the best brewery you can be.
7. **See the rewards of increased engagement.** When a staff member enhances a guest's experience, that guest spends 20 percent more. This takes us back to tipping, which the staff will now see more of as a result. Our study showed that when a guest receives low engagement on their first visit to a brewery, they are only 37 percent likely to return/recommend. However, when they receive high engagement from their server a guest is 98 percent likely to return/recommend your brewery. More passion leads to more engagement which leads to more money being spent, more guests walking through your doors, and a team that has organically become a better, tighter knit business.
8. **Give your staff room to grow.** Most people don't join your brewery with the goal to pour pints for 50 years. Dare your staff to brainstorm new strategies to help your brewery sell more beer and grow. Challenge them to create new programs and initiatives within the business. Offer educational opportunities; a bump in wages for Cicerone certification for example. The potential for growth within your company is a great motivator. Additionally, it can be valuable if both your brewers and front of house staff are cross-trained. A server who better understands the brewing process will be a better educator, and a brewer with the ability to engage with guests will also help forge new relationships.
9. **Management, too!** Happy managers contribute significantly to keeping your staff positive and motivated. Offer these leaders incentives based on performance. For example, give your taproom manager a nice bonus for increasing monthly sales by X percent. Reward your event planner for hosting an event that brought in twice the crowd as last year. Gift your marketing guy or girl something awesome for creating a killer Facebook promotion that went viral and brought a ton of positive press to your business.
10. **Employee Stock Ownership Plans.** We see these popping up more and more in the world of craft beer. When you make employees stakeholders in the brewery, they have more accountability and investment in your company. Accountability and investment = passion for success.



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