Train Your Team to Sell (Without Being Pushy)

Turn your team from order takers into sales makers. Your team speaks to every customer. That means they are your biggest sales opportunity or your biggest missed opportunity.

The good news? You don't need 'salespeople'. You just need to give your team the confidence, language, and habits to make natural recommendations.

What is it you want to sell?
Broadly speaking, there are two types of sales most commonly found in hospitality:

- Upselling - selling a larger or more premium version of the product requested.
- Cross Selling (or "Bolt Ons") - suggesting an additional product that matches with the customer's request.

Upselling should present value to the customer (eg "would you like to add an extra burger patty for £XX").

Cross Selling should improve the customer experience by suggesting a product they hadn't thought of eg "Would you like a slice of cake with your coffee for £XX?".

Don't forget that you can also use these techniques for specific circumstances, such as:

- Needing to sell products with a short shelf life rather than immediately reducing the price.
- High margin products.
- During busy periods, you can focus on items that are easy to produce and sell, reducing pressure on busy kitchens etc.

1. **Simple Pre-Shift Briefings**

Great sales performance starts before service even begins. Brief your team before every service. Keep it short. Keep it focused. Keep it consistent.

What to cover (2–5 minutes max):

- One product to focus on (eg a high margin dish or drink).
- Why it's worth recommending (taste, story, margin, popularity).
- One simple sentence staff can use.

For example:
"Today we're focusing on the seafood special. It's fresh, high margin, and guests love it. Try: 'If you enjoy fish, the sea bass has been really popular today.'"

Why this works:

- Gives clarity — staff know exactly what you are focused on.
- Removes guesswork and hesitation.
- Builds momentum across the shift.

Top tip:
Don't overload them. One focus per shift is enough.

2. Upselling/ Cross Selling Confidence and Language

Most workers don't avoid upselling because they don't care, they avoid it because it can feel awkward. The trick is to make it feel a natural part of the conversation.

Teach them to:

- Make recommendations rather than "sell".
- Be helpful, not pushy - it is ok for the customer to not want it!
- Keep it conversational and remember body language: nodding your head when asking the question greatly improves the chance of a positive response!

Simple language swaps:

Instead of…	Try…
"Do you want…"	"Can I recommend…"
"Anything else?"	"This goes really well with…"
"That's it"	"A lot of people also enjoy…"

Examples:

- "That dish goes really well with the house red. Would you like a glass?"
- "If you've got room, the sticky toffee pudding is a favourite."

Why this works:

- Feels like good service, not sales.
- Builds trust with the customer.
- Increases average spend naturally.

Creating Habits Across the Team

One good salesperson doesn't change your business, but a whole team doing it consistently does. Your goal is simple: make selling a habit, not an effort.

How to build habits:

- Lead by example.
- Share quick wins.
- Keep it positive, not pressurised.

Make it measurable:

- Track one item.
- Review daily or weekly.
- Celebrate improvements.

Why this works:

- Repetition builds confidence.
- Consistency drives results.
- Team culture shifts from passive to proactive.

Key Takeaway
You don’t need pushy sales tactics to increase revenue.

You need:

- Clear focus on what you want to achieve.
- Simple, natural language that the team can use.
- Celebrate success to encourage consistency.

Get this right, and your team won’t just take orders, they’ll confidently guide customers to better experiences (and higher spend).