

# 5 Pitfalls That Will Take Any Good Restaurant Down



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*The following is adapted from Unsliced.*

So you have a successful restaurant. Business is good, the food is delicious, and customer service is spectacular. You're done, right?

Wrong. Murphy's Law teaches us that if anything can go wrong, it will. And resting on your laurels is one way to become stagnant and fail.

You need to stay on your toes and be prepared for any problem that comes your way. And if you don't think problems will appear, you're being blissfully naive. Here are six common problems that can turn any success into failure—and what you can do to stop them.

## #1: Restaurants Die Without Adrenaline

Nothing is worse than a restaurant at 3 p.m. Most tables are empty, and you have a full staff sitting around doing nothing. Some restaurants react to this by closing in the afternoons.

My restaurant doesn't do this because it leads to fewer sales and confused customers. The customer is left wondering, "Are they open now? Let's go somewhere we know for sure is open." So we don't close mid-day, but that means we must be on our toes all day and keep our game face on in case someone comes in during the slow hours.

It's vital to keep standards up at all times of the day, not just during the rush. No matter how busy or slow it is, staff must take care of customers first as well as the rest of the restaurant. By keeping people busy with cleaning the ovens or folding napkins when there are no customers, you can avoid malaise among your staff and prepare for the chaos that ensues when dinner rolls around.

## #2: The Status Quo Will Drop Off Without Leadership

If there is no pressure to improve or no encouragement from management to get staff to excel, then what employees view as acceptable will slowly degrade over time. Apathy will set in and affect tasks, food quality, and attitude. And that spells trouble for your business.

You're in charge, so do something about it. You should always aim to get better at everything you do. There is always room for improvement. Always.

Look for problem areas and address them, whether they're with the restaurant, the food, or with your staff. Uphold your standards or the status quo will rule, and those standards will slowly start to drop. Your customers will notice it, too.

## #3: The Broken Window Effect

It's easy to tell when you're in a not-so-safe neighborhood by how the environment is treated. If a window is broken and no one cares to fix it, then it's a sign that there's no hope for the community.

The same applies to a restaurant. If a light bulb goes unchanged or a sign is unpainted, then it's a signal that the restaurant owner doesn't take pride in their business. That's why you must pay attention to every detail, no matter how small it is, to instill a sense of order in a restaurant.

## #4: Having Shortsighted Goals

When given a choice, people almost always choose the path of least resistance. The problem with that is sometimes people choose the wrong way because they don't evaluate all paths.

Often, people assume the easiest path is the one directly in front of them. In a restaurant and in life, sometimes the path to success may be difficult to find and harder to accomplish.

We shoot for easy instead of difficult, though, and that leaves our goals shortsighted. If you have lofty goals, aim for them and achieve them—even if the path seems rocky.

## #5 - Messing with Their Money

The quickest way to lose all your goodwill from staff is to be dishonest or indifferent regarding pay rates, cash, tips, or checks. My restaurant, Andolini's, uses a system in which managers don't handle checks because we directly deposit all payments.

Imagine a kitchen manager who promises raises to everyone and then goes back on their promise. What would that do to morale and staff retention?

Money is important to everyone, and you have to treat it seriously and sensitively. Be fair, transparent, and judicious to everyone when it comes to pay.

## Stay Stable While Also Growing

By providing stability and focused leadership, you allow your employees to become better people. It's not about being a power-hungry jerk. It's about being a focused leader.

You can do great things when you mind these pitfalls and work to avoid them. They will allow staff to feel safe and stable, and employees will know that they're operating in a dependable work environment. That's how you retain staff and make a profit.

Managers and true leaders get things done. See the problem before the customer does, and then do something about it. That's staying on your toes and being ready to meet Murphy's Law whenever it comes knocking at your door.

*For more advice on restaurant leadership, you can find [Un sliced](#) on Amazon.*

*Mike Bausch is an industry leader whose restaurant, Andolini's Pizzeria, is a top ten pizzeria in the US, as named by TripAdvisor, BuzzFeed, CNN, and USA Today. Andolini's began in 2005 and has grown to five pizzerias, two gelaterias, two food hall concepts, a food truck, and a fine dining restaurant by 2019. Mike is a World Pizza Champion, a Guinness Book world record holder, and a writer for Pizza Today. Mike is part of a Marine Corps family who has lived across America from New York to California. Mike calls Tulsa home and lives with his wife, Michelle, and son, Henry.*