

PUB ROADMAP 2026



BUILDING BRILLIANT PUB TEAMS

KAM

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FOREWORD



Pubs have always been more than just bricks, beams and a well-kept cellar. At their best, they are hubs at the heart of communities, creating warmth, a welcome and a sense of belonging that is increasingly rare in today's digital world. The people who make that happen are you and your brilliant pub teams, but as you battle the ever-increasing set of challenges facing our sector, how do you get that right?

In today's economic climate, the challenge is sharper than ever. Rising costs, changing consumer habits and ongoing pressures on recruitment mean that every decision about your people matters. Hiring well is only the starting point. The real opportunity lies in how we nurture talent, invest in skills and create environments where individuals can grow, stay and thrive.

Great teams do not happen by accident. They are shaped by the leadership of every licensee, sharing their clear values and vision for what their pub should be. When we equip people with the right training, we give them confidence, and when we recognise and reward their contribution, we build loyalty – not just with them, but with customers as well.

Retention of great staff has never been more important, and those team members need to be able to do so much more than ever before, whilst keeping the experience of the customer central to everything. Experienced, motivated teams deliver better service, create stronger relationships with customers and ultimately more resilient businesses.

This report shares some key information about customer expectations, and the gaps we sometimes have between them and the delivery of great customer service. We look at what is important to our teams, how training, onboarding, and efficient systems can all help in keeping the talent that will define the future of our sector. We see first hand the brilliance of our members, from NITAs winner Steve Banks from The Woodman, Ruislip who puts all his team through the APLH qualification, giving them confidence and a feeling of being invested in, through to current LOYA winners, Mike Dove and Tommy Higgs from the Three Horseshoes in Witney, encouraging their teams to enter themselves into awards (and reaching the final three in the Pub Chef of the Year!), we know just how important looking after your teams can be to your business.

We hope you will get some valuable insights from this year's Pub Roadmap report, but please get in touch to share your own success stories with the investment you have made in your teams.

Steven Alton
CEO
The BII

INTRODUCTION



This report aims to equip licensees with practical, low-cost and high-impact strategies for creating an exceptional employee experience, ultimately leading to an outstanding customer experience. This is especially crucial during a time of tight staffing, limited investment, and challenging trading conditions.

Why this matters now

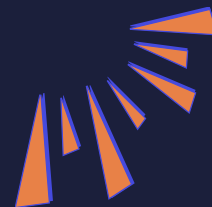
Pubs are under pressure from all sides:

- Staff shortages, staff cost increases and high staff turnover
- Limited time and headspace for managing people
- Customers still (rightly!) expecting great service
- Less room for error in tough trading conditions

This report recognises the reality licensees face and focuses on working smarter, not harder, thus improving both experience and efficiency - without compromising either.

It is based on feedback from 1,000 pub customers via an online questionnaire (who have visited a pub in the last month) over 100 pub employees, pub licensees or managers, surveyed via the BII Workforce database.

The research took place in February 2026.



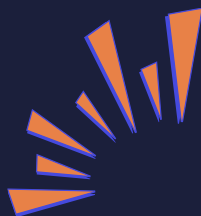
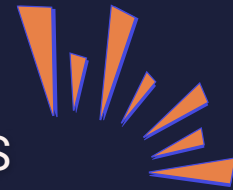
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**BUILDING
BRILLIANT PUB
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WHY GREAT STAFF AND SERVICE IS CRITICAL AND WHY IT FEELS HARDER THAN EVER



WHY GREAT STAFF AND SERVICE IS CRITICAL



When staff and service are excellent, customers are more likely to stay longer, spend more, recommend the venue and return in the future.

86%

of pub customers say staff can make or break their pub experience

91%

of customers say quality of staff and service is very important when choosing a venue. For many it is more important than price and range of food/ drinks available

51%

say that seeing familiar staff is very important /important

29%

of customers actively seek out venues with better service, even if they cost more

DELIVERING OUTSTANDING SERVICE IS GETTING HARDER:-

The pub sector is incredibly resilient; however, rising prices, inconsistent supply and changing customer behaviours are challenging that resilience. These additional complexities have led to licensees having to spend more time managing suppliers which adds to the overall pressure and makes providing great service feel harder than ever. Rising prices for customers also mean they are more aware of what they're spending, and expect an even more outstanding experience in venues so that they feel they are "getting what they pay for".



**BUILDING
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TEAMS**

WHAT IS THE CURRENT EXPERIENCE FOR CUSTOMERS, EMPLOYEES AND LICENSEES



CURRENT EXPERIENCE



Customers

In the last 3 months customers report noticing:



Customers are noticing the challenges, which are demonstrated in the service they receive. They see more venues short-staffed, mistakes being made and feel that they are taking longer to get served. Some customers feel service is rushed and staff are appearing unsure or stressed.

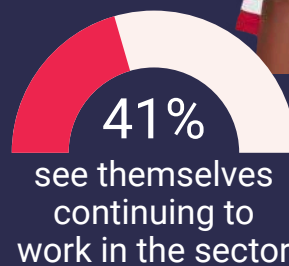
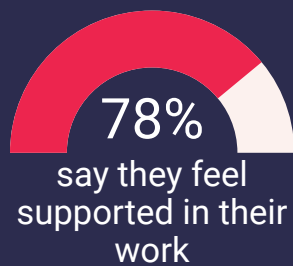


CURRENT EXPERIENCE



Employees

Overall, employees are enjoying working in the sector, but there are opportunities to help them.



Causes of friction include:

- Difficult customers **58%**,
- Faulty equipment **25%**
- Lack of training and instruction **14%**
- Poor communication **11%**.

The perception gap...



CURRENT EXPERIENCE

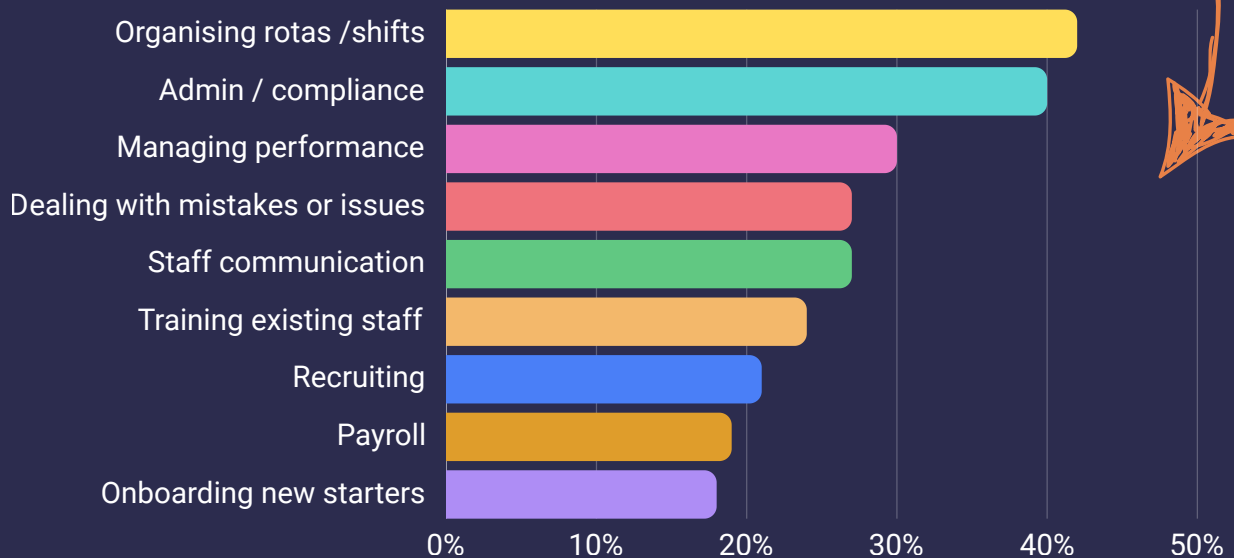


Licensees

Frustration, time-wasting and firefighting occur for a variety of reasons, however organising rotas and shifts seems to be a consistent headache, alongside admin.

Effective systems can dramatically deliver significant time savings, helping reduce friction all round.

Which areas relating to people management currently take up more of your time than you would like?



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HOW TO DELIVER A BRILLIANT PUB TEAM



EXCELLENT RECRUITMENT



Employing the right people and keeping them is critical for ongoing efficiency, however recruitment is time consuming and marketing jobs takes time and energy. There are great rewards of recruiting the best pub team, ranging from generating super sellers, seeing young people flourish, having a great vibe within the team and even making friends for life.

31% of licensees say managing the team is harder than 12 months ago



Licensees highlighted these areas of people management are taking up more time than they would like:

Training
24%

Recruiting
21%

Onboarding
18%

“Hire people your regulars and team-mates will enjoy talking to.”

Opportunities to be brilliant:

Recruitment process: Streamlining the advertising, application and interview processes can lead to efficiencies.

Promoting the culture: Demonstrating a strong employer brand which highlights the culture, a pub can attract the right people to fit the team and stay.

Perks: By offering competitive perks alongside salary and development opportunities employees can stay and develop, saving time for future recruitment and building a long lasting, cohesive, well developed team.

And finally, focusing on hiring the right ‘personality’ alongside experience will make sure the candidate is the right fit and the working relationship can thrive.



CASE STUDY: HIRING THE RIGHT PEOPLE



I believe in hiring for attitude over experience. You can train skills, but you can't train personality, energy, and a genuine care for others. I look for individuals who show commitment and truly want to be part of our team.

Getting the right fit for both the team and the pub is essential. I focus on how candidates communicate, are they positive, engaged and do they have the right level of confidence to represent our culture.

Trial shifts are an essential part of our process. They allow us to see how someone interacts with the team and customers in a real environment, and just as importantly, whether they feel right for us.

Top 3 tips for other licensees

- **Prioritise attitude and values over experience**
- **Use trial shifts to see the real person**
- **Build a team that fits your culture, not just your rota**

Steve Banks, The Woodman, Ruislip



I look for people who have passion. Skills and experience are good attributes but they also need passion. I ask all my potential staff how they plan on earning more money working at the Flying Fish. The answer I often hear is "work more hours, or work harder", what I am looking for is "To be more valuable". I tell them if you work at McDonalds flipping burgers they will pay you £12.50 an hour. If you run McDonalds and make it the most recognised brand on the planet, they will pay you £10,000.00 an hour. Same hours, different value to the marketplace. So become valuable, learn more skills, learn about the business. Don't just turn up to work and go home. Do more than you are being paid for because you are investing in yourself. This gives my team a sense of growth and purpose.

My three top tips would be

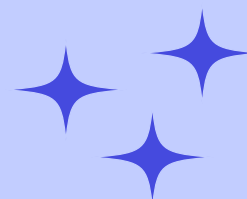
- **Hire thinkers not workers**
- **Be a mentor for your staff. Let them be comfortable coming to you for life advice**
- **Don't spend major time on minor people. If they are not showing hope of progress replace them sooner rather than later**

Buddy Love, The Flying Fish, Somerset



[Check out the BII Resource Hub for more information](#)

[Employment](#)



A GUIDE TO... EXCELLENT RECRUITMENT



1

Define the role & candidate profile:

- Prepare a detailed, accurate job description outlining core responsibilities, shift patterns and pay rates. Draw attention to both financial AND non-financial rewards. Separate mandatory skills (e.g., cellaring experience) from trainable traits (e.g., a welcoming personality)
- Highlight the culture of the workplace to help recruit people that will fit in easily

2

Source broadly & inclusively:

- Target diverse talent pools to protect against ongoing industry staff shortages
- Advertise roles on hospitality-specific job boards such as [Hospitality Jobs UK](#), local community hubs, and active social channels
- Consult the [BII Guide on the benefits of a diverse workforce](#) to implement open, inclusive language to expand your application numbers

3

Conduct structured, objective Interviews

- Ask consistent questions to every applicant to ensure a fair assessment
- Use a scoring grid to grade candidates objectively on experience, qualifications, potential, communication, and teamwork as well as 'personality' ie will my guests and team love them?

4

Complete mandatory compliance & contract checks:

- Verify right-to-work documentation in person
- Finalise formal terms of employment including salary structures, tip distribution policies, and exact working hours
- Use the official [BII Staff Contract Builder tool](#) to generate legally sound, hospitality-compliant employment contracts



Ideas to implement

From the operators already running brilliant pubs.

- Ask every candidate to complete a 30-minute paid trial shift
- Introduce candidates to the team *before* hiring
- Ask "What makes good hospitality?" in interviews
- Ask applicants what pubs they personally love and why
- Show applicants the rota and shift reality upfront
- Recruit through current staff recommendations (and offer a 'recommend a friend reward')
- Use Instagram/socials to show pub culture and attract the right people

BRILLIANT ONBOARDING



Onboarding is so important, bringing staff up to speed quickly and ensuring they are confident and happy from the start helps to build excellent long term foundations. First impressions count, so having confident staff is critical.

55%

of pub employees said that when they joined, they mainly 'learnt on the job'

36%

of pub employees reported initial training to be structured and consistent

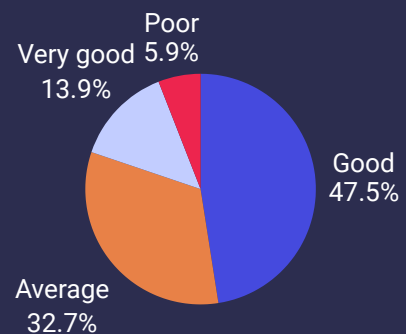
22%

of employees said training was inconsistent

7%

only 7% found initial training ineffective

Experience of onboarding / initial training for new starters:



Opportunities to be brilliant:

Better training: 74% of employees said better training would positively impact the customer experience.

Building confidence quickly and maintaining support : 44% of licensees felt employees were confident in their role within 2 weeks. However, 29% were taking 3-4 weeks and 28% taking 1-6 months.

Continuous training: 58% of licensees reported doing tasks that their team could do with more training.

Delegation of structured onboarding: Only 29% of licensees reported structured onboarding processes and 53% of licensees/senior management were personally overseeing and delivering training for new starters.

“ I'd love to get an onboarding training plan in place to work with new starters and also start the shift with a briefing which I only do on special events. It's the time it takes to put together a training plan that means I haven't got one!
Licensee



15



CASE STUDY: ONBOARDING & BUILDING CONFIDENCE WITH NEW STARTERS



I let my staff do the initial training , so for example in the kitchen porter section the chef shows the new recruits how things work and how we expect them to be done. Then I watch and see how their brains process the information and look to see if they find more effective ways of getting the job done. If I notice anything that needs correcting I go back to the chef and inform her so her authority is not undermined. This way I train two members of staff together. I do the same for the bar, kitchen, and front of house. All our new staff are shown the correct way, then they jump in. Its the best way to build confidence and get them hands on quickly. It also highlights if they are good under pressure.

A perfect example is our sous chef Chloe who is as confident running a kitchen shift herself as she is on the bar, or working weddings. One thing I always do is cross train all my staff so they are interacting with customers and not just stuck out back.

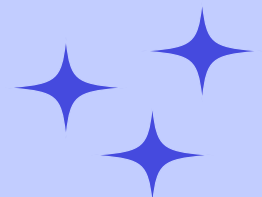
Top tips would be

- **Give your staff the confidence to be leaders and be responsible**
- **Cross train your staff. It keeps them motivated. It is better to have well trained staff that leave than poorly trained staff that stay**
- **Reward them when they do well and educate and guide them when they don't**

Buddy Love,
The Flying Fish,
Somerset

[Check out the BII Resource Hub for more information](#)

[Training](#)



A GUIDE TO... BRILLIANT ONBOARDING FROM DAY 1



1

Preparation: ensures new hires feel like an asset rather than an inconvenience.

- Use tools like the **BII Staff Contract Builder** to handle legal paperwork early, so the first day can focus on culture
- Prepare uniforms and a welcome kit to build immediate sense of belonging

2

Buddy assignment: Match your new starter with an experienced "peer mentor" who isn't their direct manager to answer "silly" questions. This also gives other staff members added responsibility and adds new skills.

3

Guided premises tour: Walk them through the pub, highlighting not just the bar and kitchen, but emergency exits, first-aid kits, and "safe spaces" for staff breaks

4

Explain "how we do things here: Every pub has its own standards, culture and way of working. Explain the "why" behind standards, not just the process itself.

- how the team communicates
- how you greet customers
- expected pace and standards
- how problems are handled
- what great service looks like in your pub

5

Follow a 'first week check-list'

- ✓ Shift with strongest trainer
- ✓ Taste top 5 products (or more!)
- ✓ Learn regular customer names
- ✓ Run one task independently
- ✓ Receive one piece of positive feedback daily



Ideas to implement

From the operators already running brilliant pubs.

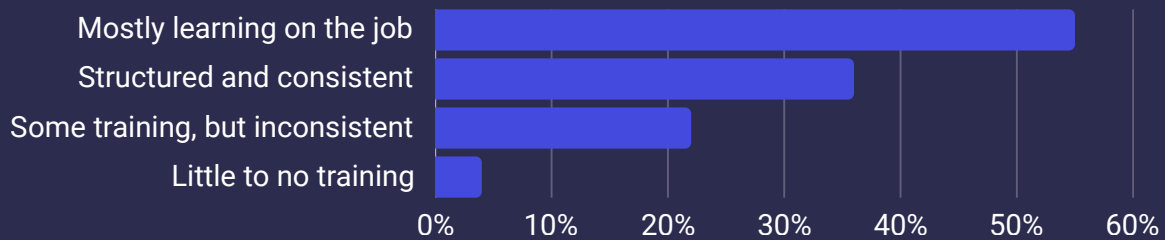
- ✓ Introduce to ALL team-mates in their venue AND to regular customers
- ✓ Give them one simple "win" in the first hour
- ✓ Teach 5 best-selling drinks and dishes immediately
- ✓ Give them a printed "who to ask for what" sheet
- ✓ Ensure they're 100% clear what to do if there is a customer complaint/dissatisfaction
- ✓ Include them in pre-shift briefing from day one
- ✓ End every new starter's first shift by asking: "How did today feel for you?" and "Was there anything you were unsure about?"

EFFECTIVE (AND EFFICIENT) TRAINING

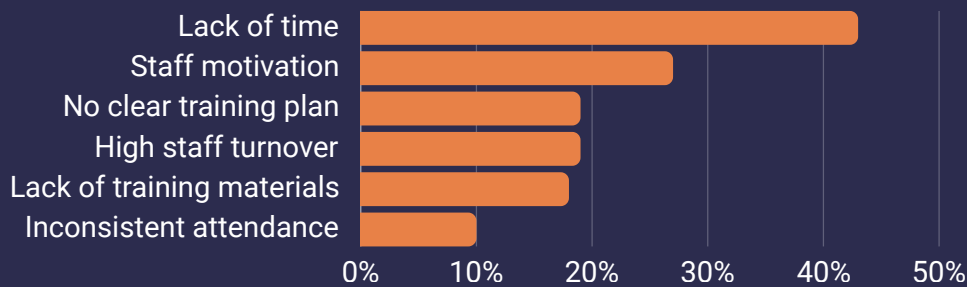


Managers are feeling the pressures of costs, pricing, availability and quality. These challenges all reduce time available for recruitment, onboarding, training and supporting staff.

Which of the following best describes the initial training you received as employees?



Current challenges licensees face when training their teams:



“ If I could change one thing, I would implement more structured training and clear systems for staff, so they are confident and consistent in their roles, reducing the need for me to step in and firefight day-to-day issues.

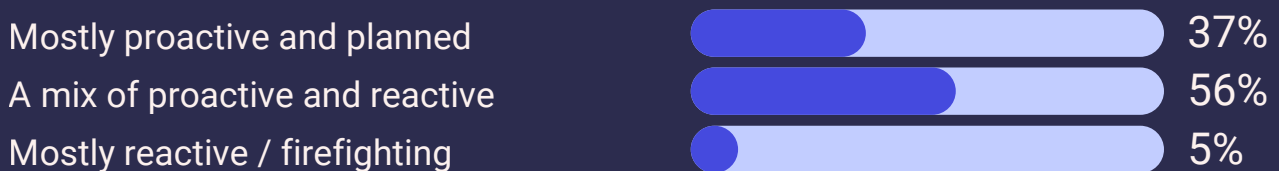
Licensee



EFFECTIVE (AND EFFICIENT) TRAINING



Management approaches to training among licensees show an opportunity for more proactivity (with again, time being the biggest barrier):



Licensees said that **58%** of the time they felt they ended up doing tasks that the team should be able to do with the right, or more, training.

When under pressure, good intentions break down and inefficiencies emerge. Frustration, time-wasting and firefighting occur for a variety of reasons, however organising rotas and shifts alongside admin compliance were a seen as a consistent headache for licensees and managers. Effective systems can deliver significant time savings, helping reduce friction all round.

Opportunities to be brilliant:

Managing pub teams becomes significantly easier when managers have:

- More **time** to focus on people rather than administration
- Simple, **structured** training systems
- Clear **processes** and supportive **technology**
- **Reliable, accountable** staff
- Strong **communication** and clear **expectations**

Many of these improvements do not require major financial investment but instead rely on clear systems, consistent management practices, and better use of time.



A GUIDE TO... EFFICIENT AND EFFECTIVE TRAINING



- 1 Save time long-term by creating simple standard operating procedures:**
Build basic, single-page checklist processes for routine venue tasks (such as opening the bar, cellar cleaning, or till reconciliation) to clarify shift roles and daily expectations. Consider including a QR code to a quick training video created by other members of the team.
- 2 Replace long training sessions with quick micro sessions:**
Run short pre-shift training huddles, with practical demonstrations instead of waiting for formal training days. Keep your bite-sized lessons aligned with professional UK industry standards by integrating lessons from the [BII Training resources](#).
- 3 Build a culture of accountability:**
Pair experienced team members with new hires under an informal "buddy system," delegating routine daily training to senior floor staff. This frees up managers from basic shadowing tasks while empowering seasoned employees with leadership responsibility. Use experienced team members to demonstrate service behaviours live on shift.
- 4 Utilise the BII and BII Workforce resources**
Encourage your team to sign up to the [BII Workforce](#) for online training courses and 'How to...' guides (most available for free) and take a look at the course available via [the BII](#) cost-effective online training (most under £50 or free).

"Sitting down and having 2-hour training sessions is complete history now!"



Ideas to implement

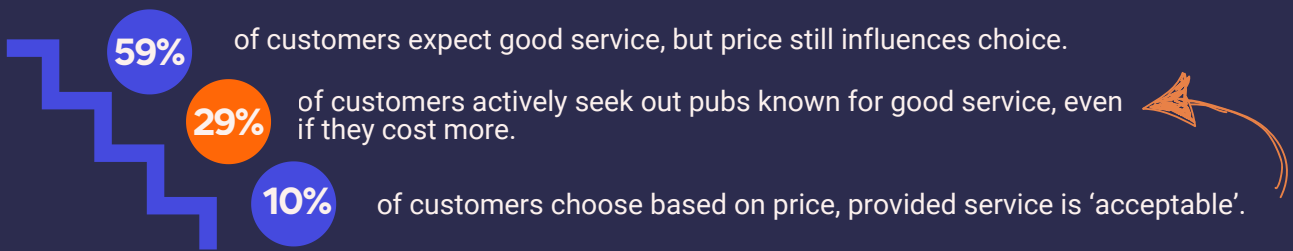
From the operators already running brilliant pubs.

- ✓ Run 5-minute pre-shift huddles (include quizzes around 'what would you do if...')
- ✓ Focus on one training topic each week (tie it in with seasonal focus)
- ✓ Create laminated opening and closing checklists
- ✓ Record quick training videos on managers' phones (eg if a new cocktail is introduced, it should be the bar manager talking it through) and build a library to reference back to
- ✓ Role-play one difficult customer situation every week
- ✓ Run "beer/wine/spirit/low and no of the week" tastings
- ✓ Use WhatsApp for quick training updates and reminders

MOTIVATING AND ENGAGING STAFF



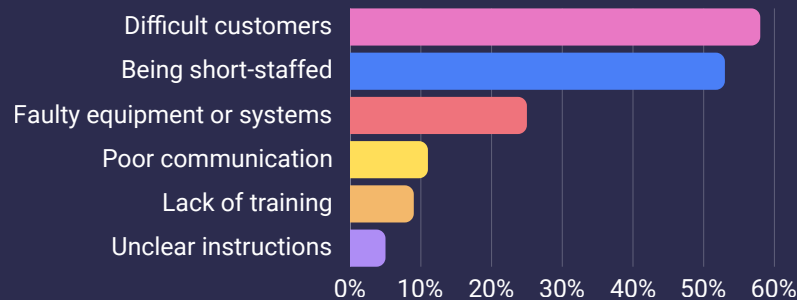
Motivated and engaged staff who deliver outstanding service are essential to any pub business:



So what really motivates pub employees?

Employees don't only choose to work in a specific pub for the pay, they are attracted by the flexible hours (60%), staying local (40%), working in a fun environment (48%) and being able to get a role at an entry level (17%).

However, the following is currently causing most frustration to pub teams during a shift:



Opportunities to be brilliant:

Customers do notice motivated staff (and certainly notice if they're demotivated) so creating a positive culture and team building initiatives to keep staff engaged is key. Thinking back to recruitment and finding people that fit the culture can really help here, alongside understanding what really motivates employees (it may be flexibility or praise and is not always financial).



CASE STUDY: MOTIVATING & ENGAGING YOUR TEAM



Set your team up for success. The quickest route to fatigue is not having the right tools for the job, or having people deployed at the wrong times.

Create the best possible working environment from well-maintained, serviced kitchens to a team noticeboard filled with energy and support.

Interrogate your scheduling so it not only follows your sales curve, but also gives your team the time they need to prepare and deliver at their best. Every week I get our whole businesses rota and make sure we haven't missed anything. For instance, I make sure people get a mix of nights and days. If people always end up working weekends or evenings, it affects their love of the job. I also check each shift has the right balance of people to deliver an outstanding customer experience.

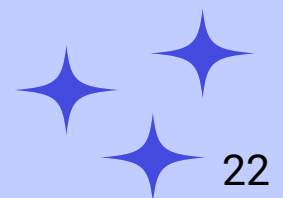
I spend a lot of time looking at each role in the business and asking myself how we can make sure they can achieve a life-work balance and not have a reoccurring bad day. Wherever we see a higher staff turnover it's because the team has not been set up for success. It's on us as leaders.

Most importantly, let your people know you see them. We make a real celebration of our team's birthday with a procession with a cake and sparklers in front of the guests. Added bonus is that guests see this and think that it must be a great place to work.

December is a really busy month, with everyone up against it. We have a staff activation which isn't sales related but based around culture. For instance, if no-one takes an unauthorised absence in December, we will give £250 towards a team night out. If no food gets sent back to the kitchen, due to high quality control at the pass, that's another £150 to the team. If they hit all of the triggers, they can earn £600 between them.

Celebrate and reward those who live your values, while applying gentle pressure to those who aren't yet consistent, helping to move everyone towards the same high operational standard.

*Sam Hagger,
Founder & MD of Beautiful Pubs Collective*



ENSURING FABULOUS SERVICE AND MAGIC MOMENTS

Every customer is different, however the research shows some strong themes about what really matters when it comes to fabulous service.

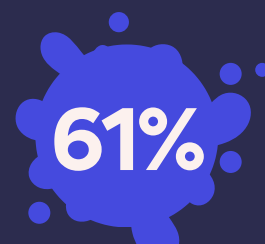
Which of the following staff behaviours make the **BIGGEST** positive difference to your customers' experience when being served in a pub?



of customers would not return to a pub if staff were rude



of customers would not return to a pub if intimidating customers were not managed by staff



of customers would not return to a pub if food quality is poor

In busy times, from a customers perspective, the critical factors are:



CASE STUDY: CREATING MAGIC MOMENTS FOR CUSTOMERS



Encourage your team to be generous and curious. When time allows, invest it in building relationships with guests not just chatting with colleagues. Something as simple as saying, “How was your holiday?” to a returning guest makes them feel seen. In turn, they see your team and that connection is often reciprocated through loyalty, gratuity, or great reviews.

Encourage your team to go out of their way to overdeliver especially for new guests, not just regulars. A memorable first experience makes your venue the obvious choice next time. If they return, over-deliver again adding even more value. It doesn't have to be grand gestures; it can be something small, like topping up a glass of wine at the table. The key is making your team feel confident to do this within a clear framework, it's not about buying loyalty, it's about building it over time through consistent, thoughtful actions.

We recognise team members who have gone out of their way to create magic moments by presenting a monthly ‘top banana award’ and generally making a fuss of them!

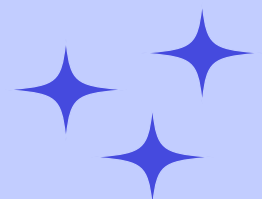
And finally: community, community, community. Whether it's organising a local clean-up group or working with suppliers to support a school, be active and visible in your community. Don't just sponsor, show up and contribute.

Top three tips for other licensees:

- **Encourage curiosity and genuine connection with guests**
- **Empower teams to overdeliver in thoughtful, consistent ways**
- **Be visible and active in your local community**

Sam Hagger,
Founder & MD of Beautiful Pubs Collective

**Check out the BII's online training to upskill and invest
in your team**
[Customer Service course from the BII](#)

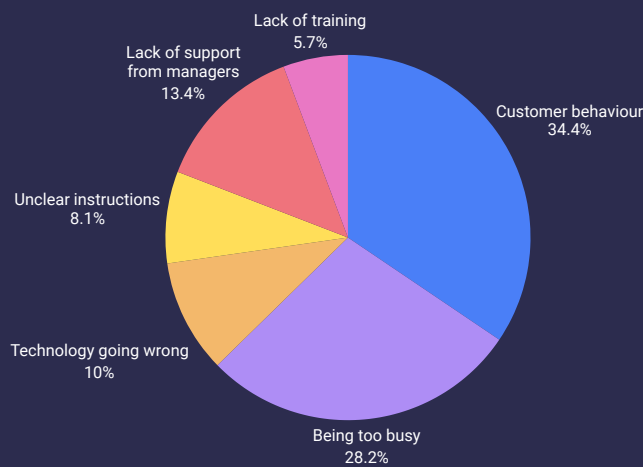


ENSURING FABULOUS SERVICE AND MAGIC MOMENTS

Customers said the following are most likely to create a genuine “magic moment” for in a pub:



Pub employees see the following as the current ‘threats’ to delivering ‘magic moments’:



Opportunities to be brilliant:

- Clear communication of roles and expectations
- Ongoing feedback (not just one-off training)
- Preparation for difficult customer situations
- Support from managers during busy periods

This combination leads to more confident staff, which directly improves speed, consistency, and quality of customer service. The evidence suggests that stand-out magic moments lead to increased spend and ongoing loyalty.



CASE STUDY: CREATING THE RIGHT CONDITIONS FOR MAGIC MOMENTS



We talk about “magic moments” as if they are something big and deliberate, something designed, trained and rolled out across a business. But in practice, they are rarely any of those things. They are small, well-timed and human. In a pub, that might look like remembering someone’s drink without being asked, noticing someone is on their own and checking in without making it awkward, holding a table for a regular who is running late, or bringing water for a dog without being prompted.

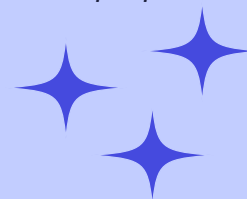
*You have to create the conditions for “magic moments”. In my businesses, that started with customer service training, but not training people to say the right words or follow steps. We talked about why it mattered, what we wanted people to feel, why customers came back, and why small acts of care build customer loyalty and belonging. We also talked about the kind of place we were trying to create. Why did the pub matter to us? Why did it matter to the team? And above all, **why does this pub matter to customers who chose to spend time there?** That purpose becomes the kernel of every decision. Then you have to reinforce it, which meant noticing the behaviour I wanted to see more of. When someone handled a difficult customer with care, remembered a regular’s name, helped a new starter, or did something thoughtful, I would call it out for the team to understand “this is what matters here”.*

*One game we played a lot was “**positively outrageous service**”. Who could go furthest? Who could notice the most? Who could do something that mattered most to a customer or to someone else in the team? It made each service feel alive and fun, not scripted. It trained the values and behaviours we cared about.*

It also comes down to permission. Most teams do not lack care; they lack confidence. They worry about getting it wrong, giving something away, or stepping outside what is expected. It is scary as a publican, licensee or manager, because you have to allow room for mistakes. But if you want a team to think for themselves, they cannot be frightened of getting it wrong. High standards are not about perfection or control. They are about pride; caring enough to try, learning and responding.

That is how you build a self-directed team that can create those moments without everything needing to come from the person leading it. When you create belonging for your customers, you create it for your team too and they feel that what they do matters. People remember how you make them feel, although they may justify choices with logic, they make those choices with emotion. That is why these small moments matter, and why they are, so often, the reason people keep coming back to the great British pub.

Cassie Davison
Author of Stand Out Hospitality



A GUIDE TO... FABULOUS SERVICE



**BUILDING
BRILLIANT PUB
TEAMS**

- 1 Set expectations & standardise skills:**
 - Clearly define operational roles and shift responsibilities so the team knows exactly what excellence looks like.
 - Implement structured training benchmarks, using professional programs like the **BII - Level 1 Customer service** course to align your team.

- 2 Build a creative and empowered team culture:**
 - Give your team the operational freedom to try creative, personalised gestures that surprise and delight guests, and reward and recognise their efforts.
 - Allow bar and floor staff to make minor, immediate judgment calls (e.g., replacing a dropped drink or gifting an anniversary dessert) without waiting for managerial approval.

- 3 Prepare teams for difficult situations:**
 - Conduct brief roleplay exercises during team meetings to practice handling order mistakes, long wait times, or guest friction calmly.
 - Train your front-of-house staff to spot critical body language cues (e.g., checking for empty glasses, scanning the room) before a minor issue escalates.
 - Give employees clear framework boundaries to resolve issues, leveraging official toolkits like the **BII Handling customer complaints guide** to turn a negative interaction into a loyalty-building recovery

- 4 Establish ongoing feedback & recognition:**
 - Call out specific examples of great hospitality during pre-shift briefings to reinforce your desired venue culture.
 - Provide constructive feedback that treats minor service mistakes as positive learning moments rather than disciplinary issues.
 - Review customer testimonials and online feedback, and use the positive highlights to openly celebrate and reward staff members who actively generate "magic moments".



Ideas to implement

From the operators already running brilliant pubs;

- ✓ Teach staff to acknowledge customers within 10 seconds
- ✓ Encourage staff to remember regulars' names and drinks
- ✓ Empower teams to fix small issues without manager approval
- ✓ Bring water bowls to dogs without being asked
- ✓ Teach teams to actively scan for empty glasses, confused customers etc
- ✓ Roleplay complaint handling during quiet periods
- ✓ Share examples of "magic moments" during pre-shift briefings
- ✓ Use pre-shift briefings to highlight bookings, birthdays and regulars
- ✓ Encourage managers to support visibly during busy shifts

TURNING YOUR TEAMS INTO SUPER SELLERS



There is a great opportunity for pub teams to not only offer outstanding service to your guests but also to generate increased revenues and improved customer experiences by improving their sales skills:

68%

of customers said they would visit less often/think twice about visiting if staff were unable to answer questions about food or drink.

23%

said that staff confidently recommending food or drinks creates magic moments



Top 5 things which staff say currently prevents them from upselling to customers:

1. Lack of confidence
2. Training gaps
3. Managers taking over in busy periods
4. Staff shortages
5. Too busy to upsell

Opportunities to be brilliant:

There is a big opportunity to increase training in relation to upselling. By using more experienced staff to demonstrate how it's done, alongside elements of formal training plus recognition for employees who achieve this, the whole team deliver above and beyond the basics.

A little incentive can go a long way, and using incentives for staff to upsell is a proven mechanic to encourage staff to upsell. And finally, licensees leading by example set a great tone for the brilliant pub team to be super sellers.



CASE STUDY: INCREASING SPEND THROUGH BETTER SERVICE



We have seen first-hand at TipJar how important transparency, financial wellbeing and access to tips are. With that focus, clients have demonstrated how happier staff equal happier guests and more sales and profitability.

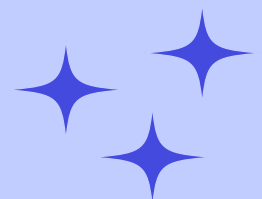
Our clients, for example Paragon Pub Group, moved to a transparent digital model because their teams wanted fairness that they could see. Managers noticed an uplift in motivation and when staff feel respected, it transforms culture.

They saw a 280% increase in team member mentions and positive feedback online, and a 16% increase in positive customer reviews. It just shows that loyalty isn't built with gimmicks. It's built with trust and when people know they're being treated fairly, they relax, they engage and they start taking pride in the place that they work. Transparency isn't just good compliance, it's good culture.

Top three tips for licensees:

- **Be transparent about money and tips to build trust and motivation**
- **Focus on how your team feels as this drives behaviour**
- **Use service as a way to increase spend and loyalty**

Dan Hawkie
Chief Commercial Officer, TipJar



A GUIDE TO... SUPER SELLING



- 1 Deep product knowledge & tastings:** Confidence comes from first-hand experience. Ensure staff have tried the menu, wines, and signature drinks so they can describe flavours vividly rather than just reading a list. Hold brief "tasting huddles" before shifts to help food pairing.
- 2 Master the "soft" upsell:** Train staff to use suggestive, open-ended questions that feel helpful rather than pushy. Instead of asking "anything else?", suggest specific items: "Would you like to try our local gin with that?"
- 3 Shadowing "champion" sellers:** Use your most experienced team members as mentors. Have new staff shadow them during peak hours to observe how they naturally suggest premium spirits or additional starters.
- 4 Loyalty as an "exclusive club":** Shift the focus from "selling a programme" to "offering a benefit." Customers like to feel like they are part of a community. Train staff to frame the loyalty programme as a way for regulars to get personalised perks and exclusive rewards.
- 5 Recognition & friendly competition:** Maintain momentum by rewarding successful upselling. Use shift-based "shout-outs" or small incentives for the staff member who sells the most of a specific promotional item or signs up the most loyalty members.



Ideas to implement

From the operators already running brilliant pubs.

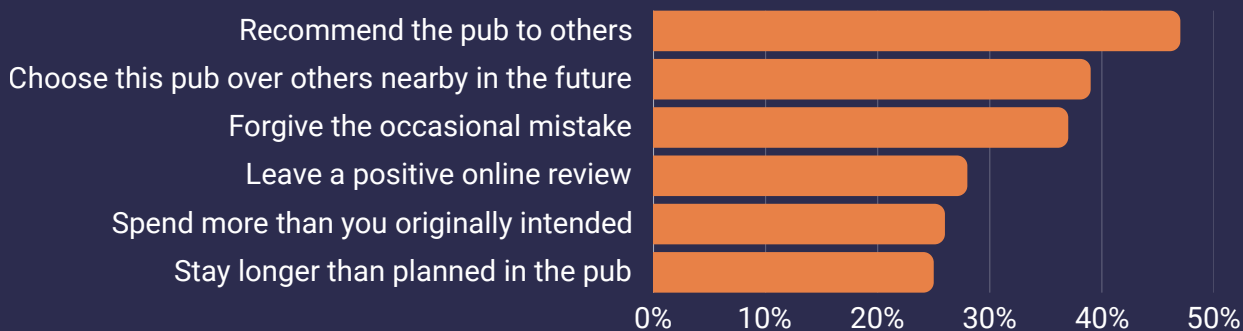
- ✓ Taste every special before service starts
- ✓ Encourage staff to share personal recommendations or guest favourites with customers
- ✓ Encourage staff to suggest pairings confidently
- ✓ Create small upselling competitions between shifts- eg- 'dessert club'; offer the chance to win a free dessert to whoever sells the most per shift
- ✓ Teach staff the stories behind local beers and suppliers
- ✓ Keep tasting notes behind the bar so staff can quickly refresh knowledge during shifts
- ✓ Train teams to recommend favourites naturally, not scriptedly
- ✓ Use pre-shift briefings to focus on one featured product daily

BEING CONSISTENTLY CONSISTENT

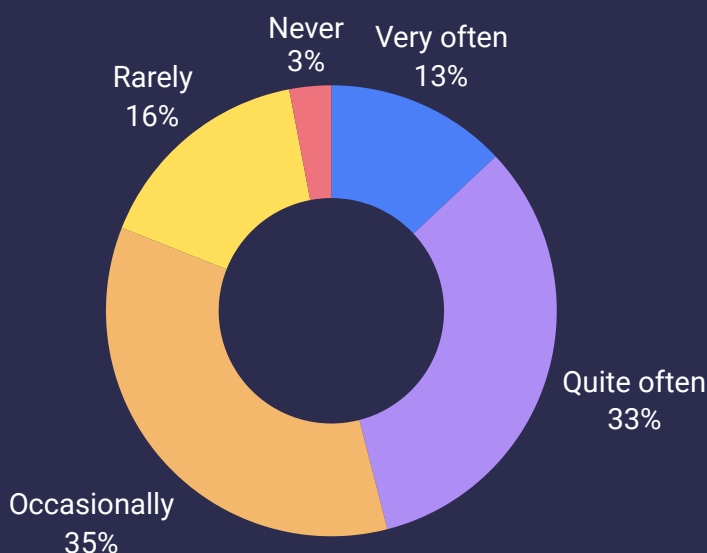


Customers continually reference the importance of customer service, so service needs to be consistent for every customer, on every visit.

This is important because when service and pub staff are excellent, customers are very likely to:



When visiting a local pub, how often do customers notice a difference in service, depending on which staff are working:



BEING CONSISTENTLY CONSISTENT



18%

of pub employers were not confident that customers receive a consistent experience, regardless of who is on shift

12%

of pub employers were not confident that employees receive a consistent experience regardless of who manages them or which shift they work

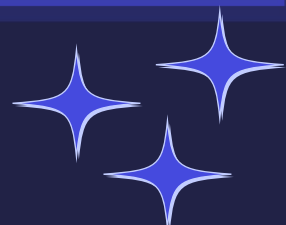
What helps employees do their job consistently well?



Opportunities to be brilliant:

There are tons of great opportunities to improve consistency in the day to day and more structured training in the business. Training improves the customer experience indirectly by creating consistent, confident staff; reducing errors and the need for “firefighting” and improving decision-making on the floor. By ensuring smoother onboarding of new hires consistency can start from day one.

A key barrier repeated here is lack of time and resources, suggesting that even when managers know training is important, they often can’t implement it effectively, but data shows that prioritising this can have long term benefits.



CASE STUDY: RUNNING GREAT SHIFTS, EVERY SHIFT



There is no substitute for being on the floor, learning from others and building experience in real time. However, this needs to be supported by formal training that helps people recognise what good looks like. Until someone points out that a dog might need a bowl of water, for example, people simply do not see it.

For example, Sam Hagger, founder at Beautiful Pubs joins his kitchen brigades every Friday for the first cook of their weekend specials, it's an hour a week to engage with each brigade and ensure they are set for success throughout their key trading window.

Teams need both instinct and skill. While many bring strong interpersonal ability, there needs to be a balance between on-the-job learning and structured support. Making use of available resources, whether through industry bodies or internal support systems, can help leaders have better conversations and support their teams more effectively.

Technology also has a role to play. Used well, it can support teams by reducing workload and helping manage operational pressures such as bookings and service flow. At the same time, it can enhance the customer experience. Different customers want different things. Some prefer the convenience of ordering via QR code, while others value interaction at the bar. A one-size-fits-all approach does not work. The key is to offer flexibility and use the right mix of tools and approaches to suit different occasions and customer needs.

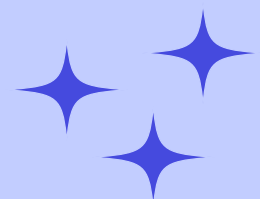
Top 3 Tips for licensees

- **Make sure your team feels supported, not stretched**
- **Close the gap between what you think is happening and what your team experiences**
- **Give your team the confidence and autonomy to handle customer interactions**

Joby Mortimer
Director of Charity Services, LTC

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Licenced Trade Charity. 





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Wellbeing Support

- Counselling for you, your children and your relationship
- Critical incident
- Wellbeing platform and live chat



Practical Support

- Housing & benefits advice
- Job search & interview prep
- Education
- Management advice line
- Legal advice



Financial Support

- Debt advice
- Hardship grants
- White goods
- Rent & deposit
- Arrears & repairs
- Scholarships
- Bursary places
- 'nudge' platform



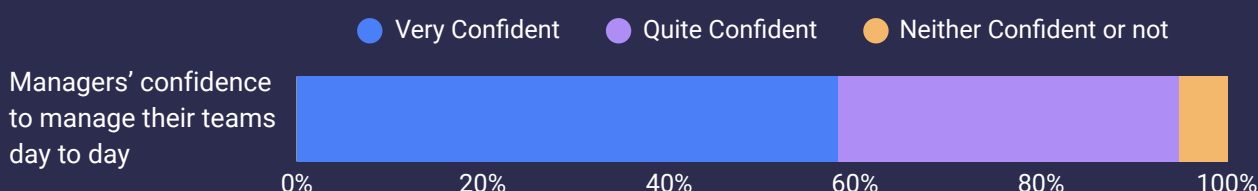
Register for the LTC Wellbeing
Platform free on our website

LEADING WITH CONFIDENCE

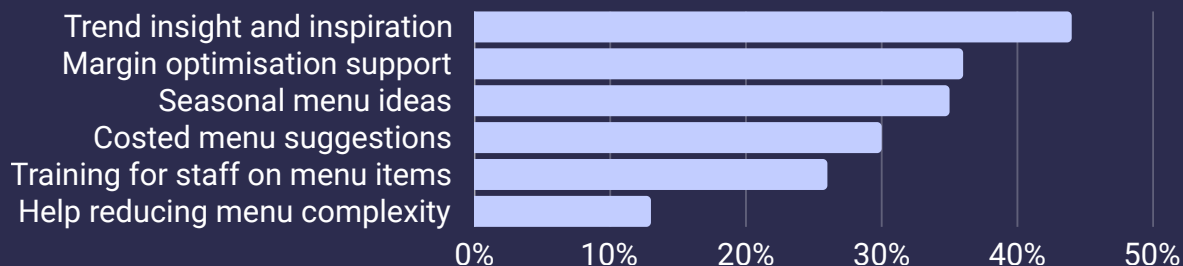


If managers and licensees have the skills and confidence to lead their teams, employees are more likely to be satisfied and stay, and customers are more likely to experience great service, spend more and recommend and return to the venue.

20% of managers have never done any formal people management or leadership training.



Types of support managers would find most helpful:



"If I could change one thing about my job, I would have clearer communication and better task tracking, so everyone knows exactly what to do and deadlines are met without constant follow-ups."



The opportunity to build a great pub team has clear benefits, and licensees can lead the delivery of consistently brilliant service and magic moments. The BII has a large number of resources available to help licensees and pub teams.



CASE STUDY: LEADING FROM THE FLOOR.



Let's be real, this industry is really competitive, and everyone offers pay and benefits, but to truly win I think you have to offer something a little bit deeper - and that's a brilliant employee experience. We're creating a culture where people feel respected, challenged and excited to walk through our doors.

It's about being really transparent with your teams: if we mess up we own it, if the business is facing a challenge we share it. Trust means our teams don't just follow orders, they understand the bigger picture and feel like genuine partners.

I think mentoring not management is something that we really need to focus on and we are doing so at ETM Group. Forget rigid training manuals of the past and foster a culture of mentoring. I've spent years in this amazing industry and the greatest growth comes from our peer-to-peer connections, coaching and continuous development. We see our senior teams as mentors, dedicated to lifting up the next generation of our hospitality stars. It's really all about building careers, not just filling rotas.

Top 3 Tips for licensees

- **Be present and visible to build trust and confidence**
- **Focus on mentoring and coaching rather than just managing**
- **Be open and honest so your team understands the bigger picture**

Amanda Smyth
People Director at ETM Group

[Check out the BII Resource Hub for more information](#)

[Professional Development](#)



A GUIDE TO... LEADING WITH CONFIDENCE



The opportunity to build a great pub team has clear benefits, and licensees can lead the delivery of consistently brilliant service and magic moments. The BII has a large number of resources available to help licensees.

BII Training

Core Career Qualifications

Licence Management:
APLH (Personal Licence)
Length: 6 Hours
Price: £75

Front of House:
Level 1 Customer Service
Length: 3 Hours
Price: £40

Pre-Entry Awareness
PEAT (Pre-Entry Training)
Length: 2 Hours
Price: £100

Specialist Departments and Hubs

Licensee and Management:
Effective Communication (Free)
Equality & Inclusion (£10)
Essentials of Pub Management

Cellar & Bar Care:
Beer, Cellar & Genius (Free)
Cellar to Glass (£10)
Cask Marque Beer School

Health & Safety:
COSHH Training (£10)
Emergency First Aid (£10)
Health & Safety Awareness (£10)

Food Safety & Allergens:
Food Allergy Training (Free)
Food Safety Awareness (£10)
Food Safety Hygiene L3
Drinks Manufacturing (£10)

Front of House Compliance:
Phrases for Hospitality (Free)
Drink Spiking Awareness (Free)
Drug Awareness (£10)
Underage Sales Prevention (£10)

Digital Marketing Skills:
AI for Publicans (Free)
Social Media Intro (Free)
Platform Guides: FB / Insta
TikTok / Google Profile (Free)





BUILDING YOUR BEST TEAM KEY TAKEOUTS



GUIDE TO BUILDING YOUR BEST TEAM



**BUILDING
BRILLIANT PUB
TEAMS**

To thrive in 2026 and beyond, pubs need to focus on key practical, cost-efficient, high-impact ways to create a consistently brilliant employee experience that leads to a consistently outstanding customer experience, at a time when staffing is tight, investment is limited and trading conditions are challenging.

✓ **Achieve excellent recruitment**

Pubs must deliver more than just food and drink- they need to offer outstanding efficiency and service by recruiting first class employees who stay. This can be achieved by targeting job adverts, automating screening and tracking of applicants, streamlining interview processes, demonstrating a strong brand and culture, offering non-financial perks that matter to employees and hiring people based on personality not just experience.

✓ **Brilliant onboarding:**

Licensees need to build a brilliant pub team from day one by executing fantastic onboarding. This includes better training, building confidence quickly plus maintaining support. To deliver brilliant onboarding, focus on more structure and consistency with scope for more people to be involved in the process, plus a balance of on the job and formal training.

✓ **Brilliant and efficient management:**

Managing pub teams becomes significantly easier when managers have more time to focus on people rather than administration. They need simple, structured training systems, clear processes, supportive technology, accountable staff, strong communication and clear expectations. Many of these improvements do not require major financial investment, but instead rely on clear systems, consistent practices, and better use of time.

✓ **Motivated and engaged staff**

Your teams are the beating heart of the pub. Training, supporting and rewarding employees will enhance customer service, reduce turnover and improve overall pub performance. Customers do notice motivated staff, so provide quality incentives and team building initiatives to keep staff engaged. Increased efficiency decreases stress and leaves more time for the fun and engagement valued by employees.

✓ **Fabulous service and magic moments**

Evidence suggests that magic moments lead to increased spend and ongoing loyalty. Magic moments rely on a combination of the staff and their training, so recruiting, onboarding, ongoing training, support and communication are all critical. Deliver clear communication of roles and expectations, provide ongoing feedback, prepare staff for difficult situations and ensure managers support staff during busy periods to drive the magic moments and customer satisfaction.

✓ **Super sellers:**

There is a huge opportunity to increase training in relation to upselling. By using more experienced staff to demonstrate how it's done, alongside elements of formal and informal training plus recognition for employees who achieve this, the whole team can deliver above and beyond the basics.

✓ **Consistently consistent:**

Customers value consistency. Training improves the customer experience by creating consistent, confident staff; reducing errors and the need for 'firefighting' and improving decision-making on the floor. It's also about having the right processes and even technology in place.

✓ **Leading licensees:**

The opportunity to build a great pub team has clear benefits, and licensees can lead the delivery of consistently brilliant service and magic moments. The BII has a large number of resources available to help licensees- take advantage of them!



THE LAST WORD.



The research suggests that running a great pub in today's challenging environment doesn't have to be about big budgets or dramatic changes, there are opportunities to get the fundamentals right, and do them consistently well. Customer responses show that from recruitment through to daily service, every stage of the journey plays a part in shaping the customer experience.

The licensees told us it all starts with attracting the right people. Hiring for both skill and personality, creating a strong sense of culture, and offering meaningful (not just financial) benefits to bring in staff who genuinely want to be there, and crucially, want to stay. Employees told us that recruitment is only the beginning; a well-structured, supportive onboarding process sets the tone early, building confidence, capability, and connection from day one.

The data implies that after an employee joins the team, simplicity and clarity become key. When managers are supported by clear systems, effective training, and the right tools, they can spend less time on admin and more time leading. Licensees explained that leadership can be visible, consistent, and people-focused to create an environment where staff feel supported, accountable, and motivated to perform at their best.

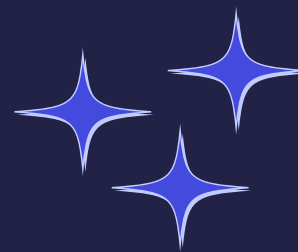
Both employees and licensees responded that when staff are motivated, everything else follows. Data suggests that engaged teams deliver better service, create stronger connections with customers and bring energy into the whole environment. Customers said that this is where 'magic moments' happen, those small but memorable interactions that turn a good visit into a great one, driving both loyalty and spend.

The research picked up that there is also clear potential to build confidence around upselling and service delivery. Licensees told us that with the right mix of coaching, recognition, and mentoring, teams can move beyond simply meeting expectations to truly exceeding them.... from topping up the wine to noticing the empty dog water bowl!

Ultimately, consistency ties it all together. The study uncovered that consistent training, consistent processes, and consistent leadership lead to confident teams and reliable, high-quality customer experiences. And in a sector where customers showed us they value service so highly, that consistency becomes a powerful competitive advantage.

In the end, great pubs are built by great people and licensees have shown that they can lead from the front, setting the standard and creating the culture that others follow. The BII guides and other resources can help by focusing on practical, people-first approaches, so pubs can build resilient, high-performing teams that deliver not just service, but memorable experiences, at the heart of communities, time and time again.

Charlotte Varney
Research Manager, KAM



ABOUT.



BII

The British Institute of Innkeeping has been running for over 40 years, and today exists to provide its 13,500 members with key support to help their businesses thrive, take their voices to Government to champion our incredible sector and share best practice from across our diverse and talented membership. Helping free traders, lessees and tenants from every area of the pub industry, be part of something bigger and join the BII.



KAM

So much more than just a research agency, KAM is the supportive voice of the UK hospitality industry. We take pride in offering cutting-edge consultancy backed by deep insights. We thrive on providing our clients with valuable and actionable insight solutions that drive real results and purposeful change. If you're ready to be informed, educated, and inspired, hop on board and let's embark on an exciting journey together. www.kaminsight.com



Brakes

Brakes is a food and distribution company that supplies food, drink, and other products primarily to the catering industry in the UK. With over 20 distribution centres, Brakes is the leading wholesale foodservice supplier in the UK. We offer a wide range of products, including fresh, refrigerated, store cupboard and frozen food items, as well as non-food supplies. We have been a significant player in the foodservice industry since our inception in 1958 and have grown to be the preferred catering and food supplier for thousands of chefs in the industry. We are a proud part of Sysco, giving our customers confidence that we will continue to deliver on a local level with the strength of our global partnership.



LTC

The Licensed Trade Charity (LTC) was founded in 1793, and we have been helping those in the licensed hospitality sector for over 200 years. Thanks to our army of fundraisers across the country, we are able to support pub, bar and brewery people whenever they are most in need of help. We support hundreds of people facing a crisis each year with practical advice, wellbeing support and financial guidance. It is estimated that around 250,000 people working in the licensed hospitality sector are in need of help at any one time, and we're here to support as many as possible. We have established a number of commercial operations and investments that generate the income we use to fund our charitable work, and we work closely with operators around the UK to raise awareness of the support we can offer to their people.



KAM

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PUB ROADMAP 2026



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**BUILDING
BRILLIANT PUB
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