



Customers only notice when things are not perfect

In hospitality, customers are more than transactions – they're guests, mates, locals and regulars. Being hospitable means catering to their needs and preferences and taking an extra step to make them feel welcome and valued. Here, Dave Kerr from The Beaufort – a nautical bar and restaurant in Melbourne – talks good old-fashioned hospitality and how good customer service today means embracing new technology and changing consumer preferences.

Since the Beaufort opened in 2012 we've seen a change in the way our customers pay. In fact, in the last two years alone we've gone from a 50/50 split between cash and card to an overwhelming preference for card payments. A significant driver behind this has been the introduction of tap-to-pay technology. It's a convenience thing for our customers and our staff – it's just so easy to use so it's really become the norm.

The ease and simplicity by which customers can pay for food and drinks at The Beaufort supports the two mantras we live and work by when it comes to delivering a superior customer service:

1. No one notices when things are perfect. They notice when things are not; and
2. Saying 'no' – finishing on a negative note leaves the worst last impression.

Surcharging customers for card payments plays into both of these, which is why since day one we've not added any extra fees when our customers opt for paying with something other than cash.

People stand up and take notice when they aren't surcharged. For us it's a no brainer to foster return business, which is critical to our success.

Word of mouth is hugely influential and so catering to our customers' payment preferences is good for us. Some are surprised when we say '*no, we don't surcharge*', they're really grateful and it makes a difference. Loyal customers are loyal for a reason and staying Surcharge Free is a big part of this. It's a really easy and cheap way to make a great impression.

As a business we can track the amount we've paid in merchant fees and compare it against the repeat business we've got from card users. We've done this and we're satisfied in the return on investment it has delivered. Also, our corporate customers tend to prefer using cards and as a group they spend more and are more likely to return if they have a great experience.

Not surcharging is also a brand thing for us. It ties in with our hospitality commitment. If you're in hospitality, the point-of-sale is the last line – the experience at that moment, while brief, still makes a lasting impression. There's a bar down the road that's always charged a flat rate for card transactions and that's just not us – it feels like an inhospitable thing to do.