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## **Be Proud to be Surcharge Free**

*With various studies showing customers actively seek out businesses that don't surcharge, enforcing this fee is a risk companies can ill afford to take. Fallon Gomez from Platinum Restaurant Group tells us why more businesses need to shout about their surcharge free status to stand out from the crowd, and ensure their customers are left happy time and time again.*

When you work in hospitality there is one critical objective that overrules all others: ***Make sure clientele have a special and enjoyable experience from start to finish.***

In the restaurant industry, customers often decide to spend their hard-earned money with you for a special occasion, such as a birthday or anniversary. They've chosen to dine with you despite having various other restaurants to choose from and we recognise and respect that.

Therefore, the last thing you want to do is deliver any kind of service that jeopardises their dining experience.

There's no hiding from the fact that payment surcharges have a detrimental impact on customer satisfaction. In the restaurant game it might result in an otherwise enjoyable evening ending on a sour note, with the blame lying solely at the feet of the restaurant.

I guarantee that this one negative interaction at the end of the dining experience, will overshadow everything that has gone on beforehand. The customer won't remember the food, the wine, that dessert they loved or the attentive service, they'll remember that last moment where the experience was short of the mark.

This means when the customer is deciding where to eat next time they may decide to take their business elsewhere.

It's also important to consider that the costs associated with eating out – especially for big groups – it's convenient for diners to pay using a card as they don't always carry large amounts of cash. In these instances, is it fair to tax your customer because of how they've decided to pay? We certainly don't think so!

We're proud to say that surcharging card payments is **not** a business practice we apply at Platinum Restaurant Group. In fact, it's a practice we encourage all others to scrap. We're certainly seeing a host of wider benefits thanks to our decision.

Across our 12 restaurants – including Blackbird Café, Casa and Mecca Bah – we have many returning customers. This is because of our commitment to offering the highest standards, from sourcing the best quality ingredients to offering supreme customer service.

Offering surcharge free payment is a key aspect of this. We know diners like to eat at our restaurants because of the peace of mind they have when it comes to paying. Additionally, it ensures there's no awkward encounter between our staff and diners at the end of the meal. The positive environment this helps create is invaluable – not only are diners more likely to return, they tell their friends about the complete experience which results in new business too.



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In fact, being surcharge free has had such a positive impact on our business that we display signage at our front desks letting customers know, and tell them face-to-face. This might seem small, but in the grand scheme of things showing you don't surcharge makes a huge difference because unfortunately too many businesses still apply this cost.

At its core, good customer service is about listening to your customers, being passionate about what you do, and going above and beyond to exceed expectations. When a business surcharges it goes against each of these values – I'm yet to hear from a customer who likes surcharges – and the sooner they are scrapped the better; for customers and businesses.