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THE INSURANCE GUIDE

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How to find the recipe for success for food service clients

By **JOHN CULOTTA**

In the world of commercial pest control, you would be hard-pressed to find more high-stakes work than with clients in the food service industry. A restaurant or bakery's level of cleanliness is just as pivotal to its success as the quality of its food. One of the quickest ways for a guest to deem a restaurant lacking is by finding pests — or what they leave behind.



Bad customer reviews are one thing, but an entirely different set of problems arises for restaurant owners when the health department gets involved. Should a health inspector find signs of a pest problem, a restaurant could be deemed unsafe for operation and shut down until the situation is fully resolved.

Restaurant owners will turn to pest management professionals (PMPs) during this time when their businesses are at their most fragile. Now is not the time to overpromise or underdeliver. Fulfilling promises starts with managing customer expectations, using accurate language in person and on paper, and keeping your pest control business protected from liability and risk exposures. There's no better reason to begin taking a closer look at your pest control company's contract language and training procedures.

Set clear expectations — in writing

Rome wasn't built in a day, and pest problems usually are not solved in one, either. When a pest issue cannot be resolved in one treatment, a food service business may incur even longer shutdowns and further encounters with the health department. This is not only a huge financial burden on the business, but also a detriment to the restaurant's reputation.

When meeting with a client in the food service industry, it is important to explain that a pest issue may not be resolved after one treatment. Educate your clients using clear language in conversations and contracts. This helps ensure they understand what to expect and will not be dissatisfied with your services. In addition, clear communication helps protect your pest control business from liability should a restaurant have to close again due to an infestation or signs of one.

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Prevent problems with proper training

Training also is pivotal in meeting client expectations. If you promise your clients a certain type of treatment and the positive results that come along with that, it is important to be able to deliver. A properly trained team of PMPs has the soft skills to accurately communicate expected results to clients and the technical skills to execute the correct pest management services.

Clear communication and highly trained staff cannot please every customer — or ensure a treatment is effective. Protecting against the unexpected is why businesses have insurance. Proper insurance also should address claims against you stemming from long-term client closures.

At PCOpro, we understand the reality of this type of claim. We now offer an endorsement to our policy extending the Errors and Omissions Insurance to provide third-party financial loss claims in addition to business interruption and property damage claims. This endorsement is part of the broad, specialized range of coverages we offer PMPs. Learn more at Brownyard.com.

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