

## Common Problems with 'Perfect' Staff: Be Careful - By Ken Burgin

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Do you employ Mr or Ms Perfect?

They smile a lot, they cover extra shifts, know how to fix the fryer, how the boss likes his coffee and can cheer up cranky guests like magic.

And because everything is going so well, it's easy to leave them alone while you concentrate on fighting other fires. But putting time into managing these people can be a much better investment than constantly chasing problem staff. And if you don't, there's a bunch of bigger issues that may come up.

### **So what's the problem?**

**They may burn out from taking on too much.** A key goal for all staff should be work-life balance - it's not just a new fad. Enthusiasm can slide into feeling exploited, and then resentment. Work with them on career plans and ensure they have good holidays.

**You may be overpaying them.** The relief of having reliable help tempts some owners to be too generous. Make sure that the pay is not out of line with other key staff.

**Are they good because everything else is bad?** If the systems are faulty, lacking or chaotic, you need super staff to hold the place together. If you've got good, clear systems and everyone 'follows the manual', it's surprising how well a 20 year old can run key shifts.

**They may not be great team players.** Don't let resentment build - suddenly Mr NewGuy is getting all the love and attention. Other staff may be good 'B team' workers but they just don't share this person's mad enthusiasm for being at work. Developing teamwork, with all it's subtlety, is a key skill for supervisors and may be an area where this person is weak.

**Do they know more about the business than you do?** It's never a good look when the staff know more than the boss - how to fix a POS problem, find an emergency wine delivery or handle a sudden large booking. You don't have to do everything yourself, but you need to show you can make it happen.

**They have no life outside work.** This is a business, not a religious order - is something happening at home that could affect future performance? Do they find it hard to form adult relationships? It may affect their team work.

**Is doing a ton of shifts just a short-term fix?** Why do they need so much extra money? Is it a gambling problem, family drama or crazy spending habits? Technically it's not your business...until it becomes your problem.

**They might fall in love.** Be realistic - everything will change. If they're single, someone (else) perfect may come along and suddenly the world is different. Long hours at the business come second to evenings with someone special.

**Someone will steal them.** New operators often overpay - it may be the only way they can attract talent. Your star may be tempted by a dazzling offer - more money, responsibility or glamor. Time will tell if the new job lasts - your competitive advantage is your reputation, the ease of working there and the 'solidness' of your business. Make them more obvious.

**Even perfect staff don't balance the till and count the float.** There have been too many tragic tales of supergirl helping herself to the proceeds. Keep audit systems strong, and make sure they take regular holidays. People who are genuinely good don't mind proving they are honest.

Does this mean less trust or lower expectations? Not at all - just make sure 'how we do it here' (the systems) are of the same quality as the person in the limelight. Careers change quickly and even golden staff are tempted by crazy pay offers. No problem, we're covered...next!

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