

THREE CHEERS TRAINING

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Submission to independent review of the impact of liquor law reforms

To: The Hon. Ian Callinan AC QC

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Trading as: Three Cheers Training

Subject: Best and next patron management techniques for licensed venue staff

“Special Alcohol Management Service” (SAMS) is a fully developed, proven solution to current hospitality failings in patron management at licensed venues.

I was once an event producer / promoter. When I used to put on parties or events, I used to occasionally notice patrons who I could tell the next day were going to be waking up with regrets due to the amount of alcohol they'd drunk i.e. they'd be waking up with a hangover, or because of some action they'd taken under the influence of alcohol that I knew they'd wish they hadn't done e.g. everything from fights to drunk texting.

As a hospitality person, patrons waking up the next morning with a bad hangover or regrets and therefore perhaps regretting going out at all is a hospitality failure. I'm not interested in patrons / guests waking up the next day feeling or thinking this way, perhaps saying they don't want to go out ever again or saying things like they never want to drink again or for the next month cause they feel so terrible. I'm not happy too that as people get older and more experienced at going out that many begin to associate going out at all with their friends as resignation to a hangover the next day, which is why incidentally I believe the going out culture in Sydney is generally quite young.

At the time I was putting on events, I couldn't see a way of dealing with this except for getting people to go home earlier, which they wouldn't like and the venue wouldn't like either for lost business. So what bars would do and are presently doing is just serving patrons until they show clear signs of intoxication and then asking them to leave (ATL),

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occasionally identifying some obvious patrons before intoxication and advising them to change their drinking choices before the inevitable. Some venues manage to ATL a patron before they reach intoxication but not many.

This, by the way, is where all licensed venues are presently stuck, the industry as a whole doesn't know that there is another, better way to go, one where major improvements can be made to the management of patrons whilst increasing the hospitality they experience, increasing safety for all and the revenue that they make.

Now it's important to note too that in addition to patrons who are clearly intoxicated, there are those who don't show symptoms as readily or who aren't "intoxicated" as per the definition of the term however have still reached a point where the next day they'll still be hungover and / or have made some bad decisions that they regret.

For example; A bar may do a couple of Ask To Leaves (ATLs) for intoxication over the night but the next morning a quarter or half or even 3/4s of the people who were in that bar and left of their own accord woke up with a hangover. Has everyone who wakes up with a hangover or regrets from alcohol induced behaviour been asked to leave (ATL) the venue they were at the day / night before? No is the short answer here and the percentage of people saying "no" is much larger than those who reply "yes".

So again, this was a problem that I used to think about. How can patrons have equally as good a time if not better, how can we make the whole experience safer, how can we increase the hospitality experience patrons have both in the venue and the morning after, and how do we keep the venues making money?

Then in December of 2009 I struck upon a big part of the overall solution. This is when I first began to develop what is now "Special Alcohol Management Service" (SAMS), a hospitality improving patron management system for licensed venues to implement.

As previously mentioned, I began to develop this initially to explore the idea of increasing hospitality to alcohol drinking patrons so as to assist them to not have hangovers the next day or any regrets. But once I began to see that the techniques that were being developed actually increased the peace too I decided to put all my effort into it.

“Special Alcohol Management Service” (SAMS) is a fully developed, proven solution to a massive problem. I've been working on it solidly for over 6 years with great success in those venues who have implemented it properly. SAMS has proven itself to work in the field and the patrons overwhelmingly react to it positively i.e. they like it.

SAMS is both simple and quite complex. I'll strive now to paint a basic overview of what it comprises, the training proper obviously goes into much more detail.

There are 3 foundations to SAMS and like legs of a tripod all 3 have to be equal so that the tripod stands strong.

The first foundation revolves around the word “**Assist**”.

When we drink alcohol the frontal lobe is the first part of the brain to be effected. In fact there is decreased brain wave activity in this area of the brain within less than 10 minutes of the first sip of alcohol.

This frontal lobe is called the brain's “Executive Centre” and it's where we basically make all our good decisions from. When the frontal lobe is effected in this way our decisions become more impulsive and emotionally based. We also begin to lose our inhibitions. This frontal lobe being effected is why many of us have experienced going out for just one drink and ended up being out “all night”, either literally or figuratively.

Patrons because of this frontal lobe impairment, require staff's hospitable assistance to make the right choices.

There are arguments being made from within the industry that patrons should have to be more self-responsible, presently a patron does not get in trouble with the law if they reach intoxication in a licensed venue but the staff do for example. This argument is weak in my opinion, it's clear that when the frontal lobe is impaired that patrons make different choices than what they do when they have no alcohol in their system.

It's within the industry's ability to proactively assist patrons and to manage them effectively. It's a challenge but it's doable, so we the industry should just accept it and get on with it. SAMS shows venue staff how to do this. Venues though have to care

enough to want to do this successfully. It's the highest level of hospitality that they can show to their drinking patrons and should be viewed as such by the venues themselves and the patrons who frequent them.

The second foundation of SAMS has the heading of "**Mood**".

A venue has the power and ability to set the mood or atmosphere that is within it.

Setting up an atmosphere of hospitality in a venue has a positive effect on patrons' state of mind and establishes an overall good vibe within the venue.

There are those venues which are run badly where everything is tense. The security are gruff, sometimes arrogant, the managers are uptight and snappy, the barstaff are unfriendly. This state of mind transfers to the patrons. If, for example, patrons are being intimidated into compliance then there are always those who will rebel especially once they have some alcohol in them.

Sometimes patrons can reach intoxication and be asked to leave a venue or handled out the door in such a disrespectful way that it leaves them furious and therefore dangerous on the street. I've seen that a lot.

Sometimes too patrons can be refused entry in such a way that has them left angry on the street and again in a dangerous mood.

There are a number of different ways that patrons and staff from venues interact, all of these are important to establishing and maintaining a positive mood in the venue and outside the venue, and in keeping the peace.

In the training we talk about the saying "Like Reflects Like" which means basically that what we give patrons is what we'll get back from them.

Every common scenario that happens in a licensed venue is covered in SAMS training, so that best hospitality outcomes have the greatest chance of being consistently achieved.

The training also talks of ways of protecting staff from getting abused by patrons which can happen a lot. Abuse from patrons, violence from patrons, threats etc. can turn staff against patrons in general or make them overly cautious which can sometimes show itself as aggression.

Someone who once worked for me whilst I was developing SAMS said to me "I'm not Ghandi!" after having been continuously affronted by patrons over the course of a night. This is something that can be mitigated and SAMS helps venues mostly eradicate it which allows for mostly pleasant conversations between staff and patrons. This essentially builds rapport between staff and patrons, improving hospitality outcomes and ultimately making for a safer venue, including the surrounding community.

The final foundation of SAMS to talk about is under the heading of "**Water**".

Alcohol is a diuretic, as in when we drink alcohol it dehydrates the body as it causes us to lose water that's in our system. The equation is that for each standard drink we have we lose 120ml of water via urination.

In order to stay hydrated a person drinking alcohol must have at least 240-360mls of water per standard drink that they have on top of the water already in the alcoholic drink. A standard drink for those who don't know, is 10g of pure alcohol which can be found in a shot of spirits for example. A glass of wine is about 1.4 – 1.6 standard drinks, a schooner of full strength beer is approximately 1.6 standard drinks.

As you can equate, if drinkers are losing 120mls of water per standard drink then they're going to get dehydrated pretty quickly.

It's important for licensed venue staff to proactively assist patrons to stay hydrated because dehydration is linked to a couple of things we don't want to see. (Proactively means to regularly take water to the patrons, a self-serve water jug on the end of the bar is not sufficient.)

Dehydration is important to stave off as it is linked to increased irritability (a dehydrated person is more likely to get upset or annoyed by things e.g. more arguments / fights), decreased cognitive ability (a patron will lose their ability to think as well as they

normally would e.g. more altercations and less ability to make right drinking choices), and dehydration is also linked to the development of a negative outlook.

You may have read it as somewhat idealistic to think you can help patrons not get hangovers and still let them basically have a great time, do what they want etc. The way we do this is through getting the water out to the patrons often, doing our best to keep them hydrated. This staves off decreased cognitive ability which means patrons make better drinking choices moving forward, it also stops the physical pains of becoming dehydrated e.g. a headache from a hangover the next day which is mainly due to the brain having shrunk inside the skull due to it being dehydrated, and pulling on pain sensitive fibres that connect it to the skull.

Drinking water when drinking alcohol, is as important as drinking water when doing exercise. It's no good for someone to say they drink water just before they go to bed, it's necessary instead to steadily drink water throughout the night / time out particularly again because of this loss of cognitive function that dehydration is linked to. If a venue keeps up the cognitive function of their patrons by keeping them hydrated from early on then their patrons will pretty well end up successfully self-managing.

This also by the way leads to patrons enjoying themselves more. It keeps the fun from drinking alcohol but takes away the bad bits.

So these in short are the 3 foundations of Special Alcohol Management Service (SAMS); Assist, Mood and Water or as we acronym it in the training to help trainees remember it; MAW hospitality.

Implementation of SAMS is the best way for venues to take away problems that arise from alcohol related behaviour. It gives venues the best chance of not having intoxicated patrons be in their venue or subsequently leave their venue to be on the streets, and it helps ensure patrons too are more peaceful and cognisant both onsite and in the local community.

So that's SAMS laid out in short. Not only is it good for business, it's good for patrons and the community too. That's why the name of my business that trains it is called "Three Cheers Training" as there are 3 wins.

The reasons are there, both intellectually and practically, why SAMS works and is effective. It's something that was developed in the field, and proven to work time and time again with different demographics. Most importantly the patrons overwhelmingly appreciate it so it raises the level of hospitality and therefore customer satisfaction.

Special Alcohol Management Service is also the best way to better Australia's drinking culture which is often denounced. SAMS is a roll your sleeves up and get in there approach that makes changes at the heart of the problem, at the coal face as the saying goes. In venues where SAMS is properly implemented you can see the change it makes first hand. For example; as patrons go from being first wary of being offered water to then accepting it, to then where they're actually asking you if they can have one i.e. they're initiating it.

I've had success with SAMS in hospitably managing both blue collar and white collar patrons, both women and men, professional athletes, professional rugby league players, union players, Australian cricketers, their coaching staff.. The creative industry, famous faces, people who are wealthy, people who are battlers, backpackers including the loveable Irish, people just out of gaol etc, big groups, small groups, personnel from the Australian Defence Force; the army, navy, air force, the special forces.

In fact the Special Forces Commandos, who would regularly disappear on trips to Afghanistan, inspired me to name the "Special" part of the training course after them i.e. Special Alcohol Management Service. This is because they were friendly, relaxed, had an air of competency about them and are also known as "the thinking soldier". SAMS doesn't obviously train soldiers but I like to think that it does turn out "thinking licensed venue staff".

The longer SAMS isn't implemented the more people there are who are getting hurt. Not just from incidents like fights, but from drunk driving offences, alcohol related accidents in general and health effects too.

Also the economy is another thing that gets helped by proper implementation of SAMS as people don't call in sick with hangovers, productivity and safety in the workplace isn't compromised by people turning up for work the worse for wear etc.