

SERVICE PRESSURE SCENARIO TRAINING PACK

Ten full-service pressure scenarios for manager judgment, handoffs, staffing pressure, recovery, and operational decision practice.

INCLUDED TOOLS

- Ten Full-Service Pressure Scenarios
- Manager discussion / coaching use
- Judgment under real restaurant pressure

Use with the current approved book for context and implementation guidance. Print or replenish only the tools the restaurant will actually use. Physical Fulfillment remains optional; digital access and self-printing remain available.

Ten Full-Service Pressure Scenarios

Use these scenarios for manager meetings, trainer development, or a controlled leadership exercise. The point is not to discover one universal answer. Participants should identify operating truth, protected outcome, constraint, decision authority, first reversible action, communication path, and what evidence would determine the next move.

1. The Empty Tables That Are Not Available

At 6:10, eight tables are visibly open. Four servers have each received two tables within the last seven minutes. A party of twelve has just been seated, the service bar has nine tickets, and the grill is beginning to age. Three walk-in parties are waiting and can see the empty tables.

Manager task: Decide what the host should communicate, whether a short hold is justified, who owns the decision, what signal ends the hold, and how the manager prevents the host from absorbing the guest frustration alone.

Evidence to request: participants should name the records, observations, counts, timing, policy, or verification they would need before claiming certainty. A strong answer should protect the guest and the team while leaving a clear next review point.

2. The Calm Dining Room and the Invisible Online Wave

The dining room is only sixty percent occupied. Fifteen online orders are due within twenty minutes, including several items from the same pizza and grill stations. A manager preparing to cut labor sees low dine-in sales and wants to send a cross-trained cook home.

Manager task: Identify the real demand picture. Decide which future commitments and station capacities must be reviewed before the labor decision. State what evidence would justify keeping or releasing the employee.

Evidence to request: participants should name the records, observations, counts, timing, policy, or verification they would need before claiming certainty. A strong answer should protect the guest and the team while leaving a clear next review point.

3. The Trainer Who Looks Like Extra Labor

A new server is shadowing one of the strongest servers. The schedule shows both employees, so the manager assigns the trainer a normal section. A reservation wave arrives, and the trainer begins doing most of the work while also explaining every step to the trainee.

Manager task: Determine the trainer's usable capacity, what should have been planned differently, and how the manager can protect both guest service and real training without treating the trainee as free labor.

Evidence to request: participants should name the records, observations, counts, timing, policy, or verification they would need before claiming certainty. A strong answer should protect the guest and the team while leaving a clear next review point.

4. The Glassware Constraint No One Sees

Drink ticket time is rising. The bartender is blamed for being slow. The service well is full of completed drinks, clean wine glasses are nearly gone, and dish has several racks waiting because the clean landing area is blocked.

Manager task: Find the constraint. Decide the smallest intervention likely to improve throughput. Identify which measurements would prove whether the bartender was actually the problem.

Evidence to request: participants should name the records, observations, counts, timing, policy, or verification they would need before claiming certainty. A strong answer should protect the guest and the team while leaving a clear next review point.

5. The Guest Recovery That Changes Categories

A steak was overcooked and is being remade. The server apologized and the manager offered an approved adjustment. The guest then begins shouting personal insults at the server and demands that the employee be fired before the meal continues.

Manager task: Separate service recovery from employee protection. Identify who owns the guest, what boundaries apply, what can be decided at shift level, and what facts or conduct would require escalation.

Evidence to request: participants should name the records, observations, counts, timing, policy, or verification they would need before claiming certainty. A strong answer should protect the guest and the team while leaving a clear next review point.

6. The New Manager Reverses the Hold

The outgoing manager placed a ten-minute seating hold because expo lost a runner and the window was backing up. The incoming manager sees guests waiting, dislikes holds, and immediately tells the host to seat every open table without reading the log or asking why the decision was made.

Manager task: Identify the continuity failure. Decide how an incoming manager may responsibly change a prior decision, what decision history should transfer, and what should happen if the condition has genuinely improved.

Evidence to request: participants should name the records, observations, counts, timing, policy, or verification they would need before claiming certainty. A strong answer should protect the guest and the team while leaving a clear next review point.

7. The Strong Employee Everyone Uses

One dependable server has trained three people this month, covered two call-outs, taken every large party, and closed late four times. Another call-out occurs and the manager automatically calls the same employee on their day off because "they always say yes."

Manager task: Evaluate the immediate shift need and the longer fairness cost. Identify alternatives, evidence leadership should review over time, and how recognition differs from repeatedly consuming the same person's reliability.

Evidence to request: participants should name the records, observations, counts, timing, policy, or verification they would need before claiming certainty. A strong answer should protect the guest and the team while leaving a clear next review point.

8. The Equipment That Powers On but Is Not Ready

A cooler is running but has been drifting near the restaurant's required limit. The opening checklist is signed complete. Prep is about to load the cooler with the morning production. The opener says it was fine yesterday and does not want to delay prep.

Manager task: Identify the authoritative condition, what must be verified, what temporary control may be needed, and why a completed checklist cannot overrule physical evidence.

Evidence to request: participants should name the records, observations, counts, timing, policy, or verification they would need before

claiming certainty. A strong answer should protect the guest and the team while leaving a clear next review point.

9. The Rush Is Over - Except It Is Not

The entrance is quiet and the manager begins sending employees home. The kitchen still has remakes, dish is behind, several tables are paying at once, a large party has not been reset, and two guest promises require manager follow-up.

Manager task: List the remaining queues. Decide what must be restored before cuts continue and how the manager distinguishes visible demand ending from the system actually recovering.

Evidence to request: participants should name the records, observations, counts, timing, policy, or verification they would need before claiming certainty. A strong answer should protect the guest and the team while leaving a clear next review point.

10. The System Leaves With the Manager

A long-time GM resigns with two weeks notice. The owner discovers that the GM is the only person who knows several vendor contacts, the reasoning behind table-hold rules, how serious guest complaints are followed up, and which version of several manager forms is current.

Manager task: Use the survivability and legacy principles to build the transition. Identify what must be documented, trained, verified, transferred, and allowed to be questioned rather than copied blindly.

Evidence to request: participants should name the records, observations, counts, timing, policy, or verification they would need before claiming certainty. A strong answer should protect the guest and the team while leaving a clear next review point.

SCENARIO REVIEW STANDARD

After each exercise, do not grade the group only on whether it chose the same action as the facilitator. Evaluate whether the team identified the real condition, protected nonnegotiables, used the right level of authority, chose a proportionate first action, communicated ownership, and named the evidence that would determine the next decision. The purpose is disciplined judgment, not memorization of heroic answers.