FREE FIELD GUIDE FOR HOSPITALITY OPERATORS

The Revenue Already in the Room

Why otherwise good venues underperform - and a practical 30-day guide to deciding what to change first.

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FIELD NOTE 01 / Why this matters

A good venue can still be a commercially frustrating business.

Guests may like it. The team may work hard. Reviews may be positive. Yet the numbers can remain stubbornly underwhelming. That gap is rarely caused by a lack of care. It is caused by commercial decisions becoming disconnected from one another.

Hospitality is unusually exposed to small leaks.

A little too much discounting. A quiet Tuesday accepted as normal. A menu that sells well but contributes poorly. Staff who provide warm service without making confident recommendations. Events that fill seats but attract the wrong spend. Marketing that creates attention but not action. None of these looks catastrophic on its own. Together, they decide whether a venue merely turns over money or builds a healthy return.

The operator's disadvantage

Owners and managers are immersed in the business. That closeness creates expertise, but it also makes patterns harder to see. Urgent service problems repeatedly defeat important commercial work. Familiar habits begin to feel like facts. The venue becomes busy solving today's problems instead of designing next month's performance.

Revenue growth is rarely one heroic idea. It is a sequence of better small decisions, repeated consistently.

This guide gives you a practical way to step back, look at the venue as one commercial system and choose the few changes most likely to matter. It is not a promise of instant transformation. It is a framework for making better decisions with the people, space, products and customer attention you already have.

FIELD NOTE 02 / Commercial truth

Busy and profitable are not the same thing.

Turnover is visible. Profitability hides in the detail: what was sold, at what margin, during which session, by which team, to which type of guest - and whether that guest returns.

The discount illusion A promotion can create a full room while training guests to wait for a lower price. Judge the whole contribution, not the headcount.	**The bestseller illusion** Your most popular item may not be your most valuable item. Volume without contribution can keep a team busy without improving the result.
The event illusion A packed event is not automatically a good event. Consider spend outside the ticket, staffing, displacement and the likelihood of repeat visits.	**The average illusion** A healthy weekly average can hide weak sessions, unproductive opening hours and products that consume disproportionate effort.

A more useful question

Do not ask only, 'How much did we take?' Ask, 'Which part of the experience created the return, and can we repeat it without damaging the brand or exhausting the team?'

Start with contribution, not vanity

- Compare gross profit by product category, not sales value alone.
- Review performance by daypart and session, not only by week.
- Measure promotional activity after direct costs and additional labour.
- Track average spend and second-purchase behaviour alongside covers.
- Look for evidence of return visits, recommendations and group bookings.

FIELD NOTE 03 / The revenue map

Six levers determine how hard your venue works.

The strongest improvements usually sit across more than one area. A new event, for example, succeeds only when the proposition, price, team, promotion and follow-up support one another.

01 / Proposition A clear reason to choose your venue, for a specific occasion, over every reasonable alternative.	**02 / Product & price** A range that balances guest appeal, margin, speed, theatre and operational reality.
03 / Demand shaping A deliberate reason to visit during weaker sessions, built for the customers most likely to value it.	**04 / Team behaviour** Confident recommendations, consistent standards and shared ownership of the guest journey.
05 / Events & repeat Experiences that create a visit now and a relationship worth continuing afterwards.	**06 / Measurement** A small set of useful numbers that tells you what to continue, change or stop.

Treat these levers as one system. Improving one while ignoring the others often moves the problem rather than solving it.

The next six field notes give you a practical review for each lever. As you read, mark observations rather than jumping immediately to solutions. Diagnosis first. Priorities second. Action third.

FIELD NOTE 04 / Lever one

Give people a reason to choose you now.

A venue is not competing only with nearby venues. It competes with staying at home, delivery, streaming, other leisure choices and the customer's instinct to postpone the decision.

Why it matters

'Good food, good drinks and good service' is the minimum credible promise, not a distinctive proposition. A useful proposition tells a particular guest why this venue is right for this occasion. It should influence the offer, atmosphere, language, programming and expectations.

Questions worth answering

- Which occasions do guests already trust you for?
- What do regulars say about you when you are not in the conversation?
- Which parts of the experience could a competitor copy tomorrow?
- What would genuinely disappoint guests if it disappeared?
- Does each important trading session have a clear reason to visit?

Weak	Stronger
A friendly local serving quality food and drink in a relaxed atmosphere.	The dependable midweek reset: generous seasonal food, a genuinely warm welcome and enough atmosphere to make Tuesday feel worth leaving home for.

A practical move

Write one sentence for your venue and one for each commercially important session. If the sentence could describe ten competitors, it is not finished. Test it with regulars and lapsed guests. Their language is often more useful than yours.

FIELD NOTE 05 / Lever two

Make the menu do commercial work.

A menu is simultaneously a range, a sales script, an operating plan and a piece of brand communication. Treating it as a list of available products leaves too much to chance.

Look beyond percentage margin

Margin percentage matters, but so do cash contribution, preparation time, wastage, consistency, perceived value and what the item encourages the guest to buy next. A high-margin item that rarely sells does less work than a well-positioned favourite with strong contribution and an easy companion sale.

Review the range

- Which items create the greatest gross profit in cash terms?
- Which popular items have weak contribution or high operational cost?
- Where is choice creating hesitation rather than value?
- Which products naturally lead to a second purchase, side or upgrade?
- Can the team explain the price difference between good, better and best?
- Do descriptions help guests decide, or merely name ingredients?

Price is not only a number. It is a message about confidence, quality, occasion and expected experience.

A practical move

Choose the twenty products responsible for most sales. Plot popularity against cash contribution. Keep and protect the stars. Reprice, reposition or redesign the high-volume underperformers. Give promising high-contribution items better language, placement and team recommendations. Remove items that add complexity without earning their place.

FIELD NOTE 06 / Lever three

Shape demand instead of simply discounting it.

Quiet periods are not identical problems. Tuesday lunch, Thursday evening and Sunday after 6pm involve different people, motivations and alternatives. One generic promotion cannot solve all three well.

Diagnose the session

Start with the customer and occasion. Who is close enough to visit? What are they doing immediately before and after? What friction prevents the visit? What would make the outing feel worthwhile? The answer may be speed, certainty, belonging, entertainment, convenience or a small ritual - not simply a lower price.

Audience Who can realistically visit during this exact session? Avoid designing for an imaginary mass market.	**Occasion** What job is the visit doing: convenience, connection, celebration, escape, discovery or routine?
Reason now Why should the guest act this week rather than 'sometime'? Build a credible trigger, not artificial urgency.	**Operational fit** Can the venue deliver the promise consistently with the team and cost base available in that session?

A practical move

Select one weak session. Build one proposition for one audience and run it consistently for four weeks. Give it a name, a clear promise, a simple booking or arrival path and a reason to return. Decide the success measure before launch. Do not replace it after one quiet week unless the evidence identifies a genuine flaw.

FIELD NOTE 07 / Lever four

Turn service into confident guidance.

Guests rarely want to feel sold to. They do, however, appreciate a useful recommendation from someone who understands the product, the occasion and the signals they are giving.

The gap between service and selling

A team can be friendly and efficient while leaving value on the table. The issue is usually not effort; it is a lack of product confidence, shared language, timely prompts and clarity about what good recommendation behaviour looks like. When staff fear sounding pushy, they say nothing. Guests then default to the safest choice.

Build recommendation habits

- Teach a small number of confident recommendations, not the entire catalogue at once.
- Explain who each recommendation is for and why it improves the occasion.
- Use questions that help the guest decide rather than scripts that force a product.
- Make the next purchase visible before the first one is finished.
- Share one commercial focus at every pre-shift briefing and report the result.
- Recognise excellent guest guidance, not simply the highest individual sales number.

The best upselling does not feel like pressure. It feels like the venue paying attention.

A practical move

Choose one category and create three natural recommendations: an easy upgrade, a complementary addition and a discovery option. Practise the language for ten minutes before service. Measure both uptake and guest reaction for one week, then refine.

FIELD NOTE 08 / Lever five

Make every event earn a second visit.

Events can fill difficult sessions, attract new audiences and create memorable reasons to talk about a venue. They can also consume management time, strain operations and disappear without leaving a commercial trace.

Give the event a job

Before choosing the theme, decide what the event must achieve. Is it designed to generate profit that night, introduce the venue to a new group, reactivate lapsed guests, sell a higher-value category, create content, build a recurring community or change perception? One event may do several things, but one should be primary.

Before Define audience, commercial purpose, capacity, break-even point, sales deadline and the next action you want guests to take.	**During** Protect the normal guest experience, capture permission appropriately and make the follow-on visit easy to understand.
After Measure total contribution, secondary spend, new-customer mix, repeat booking and operational cost - including management time.	**Repeat** Build recognisable formats that become easier to sell and deliver. Constant novelty is expensive.

A practical move

Add a 'next visit' mechanism to the event before promoting it: priority booking for the next date, a relevant return offer, a club or mailing-list invitation, or a simple reason to bring someone new. The event is not finished when the room empties.

FIELD NOTE 09 / Lever six

Measure enough to make a decision.

A dashboard can contain dozens of numbers and still avoid the question that matters: what should we do differently next week? Useful measurement is small, timely and connected to an action.

A practical weekly view

Demand Covers, bookings, walk-ins, cancellations and capacity by session.	**Value** Average spend, cash contribution and mix by important category.
Behaviour Second purchase, upgrades, add-ons and team recommendation uptake.	**Return** Repeat visits, event rebooking, referrals and permission-based audience growth.

Use comparison carefully

Compare like with like and annotate unusual circumstances. Weather, local events, closures, staffing and one large booking can distort a week. The goal is not to explain away every result; it is to avoid rewarding or abandoning an idea based on noise.

Create a test record

- What are we changing?
- Why do we believe it will work?
- Which number should move, and by how much would matter?
- What will remain unchanged so the test is interpretable?
- When will we review it and what decisions are available then?

Data is not the opposite of hospitality instinct. It is how good instinct becomes repeatable judgement.

FIELD NOTE 10 / Venue scorecard

Where is the greatest commercial opportunity?

Score each statement from 1 (not true) to 5 (consistently true). Do this separately with the owner, manager and two team members. The differences between scores may be as useful as the totals.

Commercial statement	1	2	3	4	5
We can explain clearly why guests choose us over alternatives.	■	■	■	■	■
Every major trading session has a defined audience and purpose.	■	■	■	■	■
We know cash contribution and popularity for our key products.	■	■	■	■	■
Promotions are assessed after product and labour costs.	■	■	■	■	■
The team can make confident, relevant recommendations.	■	■	■	■	■
Our events have a clear commercial objective and follow-on action.	■	■	■	■	■
Guests have an obvious reason to return within 30 days.	■	■	■	■	■
Marketing reflects an offer the operation can deliver consistently.	■	■	■	■	■
We review performance by session rather than weekly total alone.	■	■	■	■	■
We stop, change or scale activity based on agreed evidence.	■	■	■	■	■

Read the result

Your lowest scores indicate friction. Your biggest disagreements indicate blind spots. Choose no more than two areas for immediate work. Trying to repair all six levers at once usually creates activity without learning.

FIELD NOTE 11 / Action

A practical first 30 days.

The purpose of this plan is not to complete every possible improvement. It is to create one clear commercial rhythm: observe, choose, implement, measure and decide.

WEEK 1	**See the truth** Review trading by session and category. Speak to regular, new and lapsed guests. Observe the journey from discovery to departure. Complete the scorecard and name the two most important constraints.
WEEK 2	**Choose the move** Select one commercial priority, define the intended customer behaviour and build the smallest credible change. Agree ownership, cost, measures and the date on which a decision will be made.
WEEK 3	**Deliver consistently** Brief the team, launch clearly and protect the experience. Record questions, objections and operational friction. Resist changing several variables in response to one unusual shift.
WEEK 4	**Learn and decide** Compare the agreed measures with the baseline. Keep what worked, fix what showed promise and stop what produced noise without value. Document the next four-week cycle.

One well-run test creates more value than ten half-launched ideas.

FIELD NOTE 12 / The Venue Revenue Sprint

When you need an experienced outside view.

This guide can help you begin. The £895 Venue Revenue Sprint is for operators who want a faster, independent diagnosis and a practical plan built around their actual venue.

What the Sprint reviews

- Commercial proposition and reasons to visit
- Pricing, product mix, promotions and margin logic
- Quiet periods, events and demand-shaping opportunities
- Guest journey, team recommendations and service behaviours
- Marketing messages and the route from attention to action
- The measures needed to make the next decision confidently

You receive A commercial diagnostic, prioritised opportunity map, practical 30-day action plan, owner debrief and focused staff session.	**The approach** Direct, constructive and grounded in operational reality. Ideas are judged by likely impact, cost, speed and effort.
Best suited to Independent pubs, bars, restaurants, hotels and experience-led venues that are already trading and ready to act.	**Fixed fee** £895 for one venue. Format, access and any travel are agreed before booking, with no surprise costs.

The Sprint does not promise a magic percentage. It gives you a clearer commercial decision and the practical route to test it.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Advice from someone who has carried the keys.

Huw-Morgan Evans is a founder, operator, trainer and experience designer with more than two decades across hospitality, venue operations, international business and customer behaviour.

Hospitality Fourteen venues developed and launched; resorts managed across three continents; seven-figure budgets; UK pub leadership; co-founder of Raise Your Glass.	**Business building** Founder and successful seller of start-ups; part of the original Escape Room concept team; founder and product lead of MatchMyMood.
Leadership & training Global facilitator for LG Electronics; programmes for Samsung, Hyundai and Citibank; trainer to the Governor of the Bank of Korea.	**Communication** International lecturer, editor, writer, marketing practitioner and host of two prime-time radio programmes.

His formal and professional credentials include a Diploma in Marketing, executive education through Copenhagen Business School and qualification as a PADI Master Instructor. His wider career includes scuba journalism and conservation work off the Great Barrier Reef.

Ready for a sharper commercial view of your venue?

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