

ask the experts special

to asking a member of staff to recite what's available – and in that respect, it makes the pub or club money.

Merchandising is all about setting out your stall in the right way, splitting the products you sell into categories – 'excite', 'core' and 'maintain' – and make your bar a kind of shop window for the products you sell.

'Excite' – premium spirits such as Morgan Spice and Tanqueray, products that can be subject to special promotions.

'Core' – products you need access to but don't need to promote, such as Smirnoff, Gordons, Bacardi, Bells.

'Maintain' – products you need to stock, such as Pernod, Martini, Port, Campari.

Where the back bar area is concerned, light and dark spirits should be separated and slow sellers removed from the main selling area and from optics. Remove clutter too, such as moneybags, glassware and mobile phones. "It's your shop window. If you don't sell it, don't display it," said Andy.

When it comes to 'category merchandising', Andy advised 'double banking' of bottled beers, ie two rows of Becks, and promoting spirits with mixers, such as Gordons and Tonic but also, perhaps, Gordons with Cranberry to generate consumer interest. It is important to utilise 'hotspots' such as the tills as customers tend to radiate towards them, he said.

Students were given magnetic boards representing a back bar area and were asked to place different drinks categories in what they considered to be the right position. The exercise was all about utilising space. Andy said that the top shelves of back bar fridges were for new and exciting brands, the middle shelf for top sellers and the bottom shelf for 'must stocks' such as low alcohol lagers.

He advised students to re-stock their fridges last thing at night as it takes eight hours to chill and serve a bottle of anything. Always rotate the stock and have a minimum of two 'facings' per brand.

We moved on to discuss internal marketing and merchandising where methods range from tent cards to image-led posters. The key to success with the latter, said Andy, was reducing down the information to the bare minimum in order to convey short, snappy, easy-to-assimilate messages that stand out in a crowd and then place them in prominent places, such as on pillars, opposite the main entrance, next to big-screen televisions and in the garden (when the weather's fine).

Posters carrying more detail should be placed at the bar, over the urinals, on the backs of toilet doors or near to the fruit machines. So-called 'empty belly' posters – where operators can write their own promotional messages in an empty space provided – should be at or near the bar where buying decisions are made. And then there are 'bar runners', drip mats and menus and, of course, tent cards. With the latter, the rule is 'don't overdo it'. Bar runners are designed for visibility and can be placed at the back or front of the bar.

One absolute golden rule: don't advertise food in the toilets.



When it comes to external advertising, the internet is the place to go. If you haven't considered Facebook, perhaps you should and don't forget Twitter. It doesn't cost much to develop your own website and always remember to take people's email addresses, making it clear to them why you are asking for it. Outside of on-line assistance, there's no harm in putting flyers in local gyms, shops, hair salons, gent's barbers, local clubs or even churches (advertising Sunday lunches in the latter).

"Staff training is rare in this industry," said Andy. "People say they don't have time or that the staff don't stay here long enough or they simply can't be bothered. But if you don't train your staff, how can you deliver the experience?"

There is a very simple training model based on the letters EDCI (Educate, Demonstrate, Imitate, Consolidate). Put simply, you explain what you want to achieve, you demonstrate it, your trainees imitate it and then you consolidate it; and for those not sure what 'consolidate' means, it's simply that you reinforce what you have taught your staff so that they understand it.

"If you train your staff, they will stay, they won't waste any of your stock and they will enjoy the job – and your customers will enjoy themselves too," said Andy.

We moved on to the perfect serve. Here are a few important tips.



How to utilise back bar space properly

- Five per cent of a pint of Guinness can be the head.
- Always use branded glasses.
- Spirit and mixer serves must be in a 12oz slim glass.
- Serve with ice unless asked not to.
- Fill the 12oz glass with ice as it chills the glass and the spirit.
- The ice won't melt and the drink will taste the same from start to finish.
- Use all of the mixer – if you don't the customer will use it for his or her next drink and you will lose out on a sale.
- With soft drinks like J20, fill three quarters full of ice.
- Serve with lime not lemon as the latter is too bitter.
- Serve with a wedge and not a slice.
- Serve white wine chilled, and red at room temperature.

Andy asked those present the price of various drinks in their outlets and worked out an average for a pint of Carlsberg, a glass of wine, a J20 and a spirit and mixer. Adding the average price he reached £8.80, which he multiplied by 365.

"Did you know, that by selling just one more drink a day you would make an additional £3,212?" he said, demonstrating how serving drinks properly is more than just a marketing ploy. ■



Preparing for the perfect serve