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If You Wait Until You Need Us, You're In Trouble

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Leader's Perspective

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To many operators, it seems that service agents aren't properly equipped to repair equipment the first time. Let me be candid: In many cases, that's true.

Why? For starters, there are hundreds of types of commercial appliances. When we add variations of features, it becomes thousands of models. Even the largest manufacturers can't train enough technicians across the country to be capable of maintaining and fixing every known appliance. So, even the best-educated techs and well-equipped service agencies need to call the factory for assistance.

Next, inventory management is unusual in the service business. We currently maintain more than 200,000 SKUs in our computer system. However, only 19,000 of these show a sale at one time or another. Many have only been sold once. Ever. Imagine a restaurant where someone may

order any of 20,000 meals and the chef is expected to have every possible ingredient available.

We also have to add in the fact that manufacturers usually don't maintain records showing where their equipment is installed, which, in turn, means that their servicers also don't know that it's there. Sometimes, new models are purchased and installed before servicers are provided with training, manuals or parts, and factories too often don't know how that equipment got to the operators in the first place.

Finally, most of the service calls we go on are responses to requests we received the same or previous day. Because the need for our services is urgent, and nearly constant, we have little time to prepare for individual service appointments.

Given these issues, here is a simple, *free* way for operators and restaurateurs to maximize the quality of service their equipment receives:

1. Ask a service agent to come to your kitchen to review equipment (when it is still fully operational) and discuss service needs and schedules. Ideally, operators want an authorized factory service company for the bulk of equipment maintenance and repairs. Operators can also find a list of reputable service agencies at www.cfesa.com, our trade association's web site.

2. Offer to use a service agency exclusively (and pay the company on time) if they will commit to pricing, as well as response and completion timing that meets your operation's requirements.

Once operators have built mutually beneficial relations with a reputable service company that has expertise with installed equipment and which has made a commitment to your organization because they know you are committed to theirs, the service you want and expect will be provided.

Otherwise, you're just waiting until you need us and, by then, you're more than likely to be in trouble.

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