

The Don Difference Series  
John Niser

0:00-0:29 We're an industry which is all to do with entertaining, with creating an experience. And you create an experience by understanding the mechanics of what happens and then also understanding how you can make money out of it, and how, you know, there are certain things that will have to happen for this to actually take shape and be marketed properly and for people to come in and use your hotel, your restaurant, or resort, or whatever.

0:30-1:05 Now, there's a very big difference between what we're doing and what a vocational school would be doing in the sense that we're using the practical environment to understand the vernacular of our business with no real objective of creating that specialist cook, or that specialist waiter, or a specialist receptionist. That's not the objective here. But if you haven't done that, you can't move to the other step. So the hotel and the practical environment helps us to do that.

1:06-1:45 In all the courses we do, there are kind of stratas of education that you're gonna' find. So you're going to find, at the beginning, someone who is, ya' know, cutting their fingers and understanding the different rices and the different cooking methods and things like that. Then there's another where you've got to look at the science behind this where you've got to understand, you know, what happens and why you can use a sous vide technique, or if you pulverize things what happens to them from a molecular standpoint because that will help you then go one step further into understanding the opportunities there are with different cooking methods and all that.

1:46-2:15 But the whole idea there is then to be able to manage that kind of environment. You then understand what the environment is composed of and how people who work in that environment, what tools they have so you can better choose the people, better choose the right mechanisms that you're gonna' have. That's what that's about. It's not about teaching people how to cook, or how to be a receptionist at a hotel. But if you don't have that, you can't do it.

2:16-2:55 We've got the course where we run a restaurant for 10 weeks and the student sits down with me, and it's really tough and I'm not easy in the classroom with these things because this is the place where it becomes real. We're preparing three or 400 dishes in four hours, serving 150 customers and

you know, and you're having to analyze the data and do menu engineering afterwards at 11 o'clock at night—just like if you had your own business. You have to do these things. And at the end of the semester, a student comes to me and says, 'Dr. Niser, I'm not afraid of you anymore.' And I said, 'And, why not?' you know, what? She said, 'Because now I know what you want. You just want us to come with ideas. You don't want us to come to you all the time asking what to do.'

2:56-3:27 If you go and talk to employers and you say, 'What are you looking for?' 'We need people who can manage conflict, who can manage people, who have got a certain sense of dress, who've got... who can come to work on time, who've got ambition, who've got a can-do spirit... These are things that are more higher education, you know, they're more critical thinking skills than they are technical skills. And so I think today there is a very strong justification for a degree in our field.

3:28-3:31 (Music)

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