

YOUR RESTAURANT SUCKS!

**EMBRACE THE SUCK.
UNLEASH YOUR RESTAURANT.
BECOME OUTSTANDING**

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Dedication

To **Kim**, *my lady that glides*

You are the bee's knees. Your love is my light. You are home.

To my brothers in the **United States Air Force Pararescue** who all live by the Code:

These things I do, that others may live.



My Kempo Karate Instructor, the late Hanshi Terry Lee Bryan

You gave me the best advice I ever received in only **five** words....

You'll want to quit, don't.

To my Restaurant Coaching Clients:

Love what you do and you will set the world on fire.

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*“The truth will set you free, but first it
will piss you off.”*

- Joe Klaas

Okay, you won't like this...
If your restaurant **sucks**, it's
because **you** suck at running it.

Donald Burns
THE RESTAURANT COACH™

**Author's Note: many of these lessons have been pulled from my blog posts on Foodable TV, Toast Restaurant Management, BevSpot, Incredibly Small Business Blog, Modern Restaurant Management, Tyspy, Nightclub & Bar, and my own blog at www.therestaurantcoach.com*

Now, writing for major blogs you have to know that posts are often edited for length and for language (I sometimes drop an occasional F-Bomb).

*So here within this book you will get the full posts as I originally wrote them...**real and raw**.*

I don't use profanity to offend anyone. I use language to break your thinking and make you uncomfortable. When you get to that place, then (and only then) will you start taking action to change.

Take a Deep Breath and Die

I held onto the wall gasping for air. I was in the middle of doing an exercise called “crossovers”. I had 10 seconds to breathe then hold my breath, drop down to the bottom, swim across an Olympic size pool with an empty air tank on my back, try to avoid the instructors providing “harassment”, make it to the other wall, go up the side, get 10 seconds to breathe and do it all again.

Why would anyone do this to themselves? Isn't this a book about restaurants?

Stick with me for a moment...

I grew up in the restaurant business. My father was an old school executive chef who was trained by a German chef who would throw knives at his cooks (he would make Gordon Ramsey seem like a nice guy). Training in my father's kitchen was no picnic for any young cook and for his son, it was my own real life version of Hell's Kitchen. I'd start out working the prep station, work my way up the brigade system, do something to piss off my father and be back turning vegetables.

At one point my father told me that “Cooking is in your blood”. I seriously wanted a transfusion. So, I did what many young men did when escaping a dominant parental figure, I joined the United States Air Force (*at the time it seemed a good idea*). It really was more like jumping out of the frying pan and into the fire.

A Life Changing Decision

I enlisted with a guaranteed job to be a Russian Linguist. During basic training a sergeant came in to the classroom to show a film about an elite team.... Pararescue. These men did combat rescue in extreme

conditions. Scuba, tree jumps, HALO, fast roping off the back of a helicopter.... okay, that got my attention. My life had already been about being the best. At 16, I received my first-degree black belt in American Kempo Karate. By 18, I had reached the rank of second degree black belt (I currently hold the rank of 5th Degree Black Belt in Kempo) and was also taking Shōrin-ryū Karate as well as studying Arnis (Filipino stick fighting). Trying out for a Pararescue position was a logical option and it sounded a lot more exciting than language school.

Pararescue is the Special Operations Team for the United States Air Force. Each branch of the military has specialized operatives that perform unique missions. The Navy has the SEAL Teams. The Army has The Green Berets. The Marines have Force Recon and the Air Force has PJs or Pararescue men. Their sworn duty is to rescue and recover personnel in combat situations. As a PJ, you're trained in combat survival, parachute skills (you attend both Army Airborne and Halo Schools), Army Combat Diver School (SCUBA), mountain rescue, water rescue, paramedic training, aircrew training, and tactical training.

PJ's are the definition of "Bad Ass Combat Medics."

After you "try out" for a class and get in, the real fun begins. The first 9-weeks is called indoctrination and it's where most PJ candidates drop out or S.I.E (Self-Initiated Elimination). The majority of guys are good with normal physical demands like timed runs and calisthenics. The timed swims take out a few because some people might be fast as hell on land, however get them in a pool with fins and a mask on and they find out quickly this is a different world. Then they start to really thin the team out by throwing in what is known as "water harassment". It starts simple with a buddy breathing exercise.

Buddy breathing is when you and a partner keep your head under water and pass a snorkel back and forth to share air. Sounds easy-right? Not so fast... The instructors start to turn up the heat and will put their hand over the end of the snorkel, just when you are about to get a breath. No air? Now what? The ones that make it just pass the snorkel across to their buddy and wait for another turn. The ones that panic get eliminated. The stakes are too high in a combat rescue situation to panic. Now the physical elements take a turn into the psychological realm.

Back to Crossovers

There I was, clinging to the wall, gasping for air. I'd lost track of how many times I had been back and forth. I also lost track of time how long I had been holding onto the wall. It must have been way over the ten seconds because I remember two instructors screaming at me to, "get off the wall!" The louder they screamed, the tighter I held onto the wall. Then (the commandant) Master Sergeant Clegie Chambers slowly walked over to me. Master Sergeant Chambers was an intimidating man. Tall, burly and sporting a big 80's mustache like Tom Selleck in Magnum PI. He crouched down by me and took off his aviator sunglasses. He calmly said ten words that changed my life forever: **"The easiest thing for a man to do, is quit."** Then he added, "Now, get off my fucking wall." *I took a deep breath and never looked back.*

Almost 2 years later, I stood on stage with fourteen other men who made it through what is known as "the Pipeline or Superman School", it's one of the longest special operations training courses in the world. It also has one of the highest attrition rates in the entire U.S. special operations community at approximately 80-90% (some classes have only graduated 2 people). I had become a member of a brotherhood that even after I left the military after 4 years would have a never-ending impact on my life. Becoming a member of the Special Operations Community (or Spec Ops) has definitely given me an edge in the restaurant industry. The lessons I learned about high performance teams and becoming relentless in my approach to goals are ingrained into my mindset. You'll never know how far you can go, until you push yourself past your comfort zone.

What is your limit?

What is your maximum effort?

How far can you take your restaurant?

If you are the kind of person I think you are, then you need to find out.

That's what this book is all about.

This book is the real deal. I will share with you how to truly unleash

your restaurant by showing you the things that are stopping you from getting the restaurant you know deep inside that it can be.

I am not going to give you a new checklist. Trust me the last damn thing you need is another checklist or software that will just sit on your computer (or clipboard) and not be utilized. *I'll leave that to those other restaurant "experts" out there who want to sell you their stuff & systems.*

You see, I'm sure you've tried many systems and restaurant software programs. Maybe you've seen some results. I envision that most likely you did not get the results you really wanted. It's not that the systems are bad, it just that they are not the **real** solution.

Focus on the Right 80%

Have you heard of an Italian Economist, Vifredo Pareto? He discovered a very unusual pattern of input versus output and it all started in his garden. Eighty percent of the peas were produced by just 20% of the pea pods. It made him wonder if that strange imbalance was just in his garden. His research showed it was not just green beans. He uncovered that 80% of the land in Italy was owned by just 20% of the population. Thus, the Pareto Principle was born. Known also as the 80/20 Rule, it states that roughly 80% of your results come from only 20% of your activities.

When it comes to getting results for your restaurant, I can say with 100% certainty (from working with over 400 restaurants a year) that *20% is systems* and **80% is mindset!**

No bullshit. It's not that system, software, or process that you think of as a silver bullet to fix all the things that are wrong with your restaurant. Those are external tools. Your 80% is the mindset you and your team have. Like Dorothy in the Wizard of Oz, ***you have always had the power,*** you just never realized it!

That's why those new checklists, new software, and new systems never get the results you want. You were focused on the wrong end of the equation. You were focused on the 20%.

This book was written to get you refocused on the real solutions to create the ideal restaurant you know it can become. We are going to stop looking outside for solutions and shift to that internal element that will finally unleash your inner genius and create your ideal restaurant.

This is about you.

If you really want to unleash your restaurant, you will have to face some dark places that you have ignored. You'll have to ask yourself those questions that you have avoided.

If there are times while you're reading and you get uncomfortable, that's good. Being comfortable is why you are where you are in life and business.

They say the truth will set you free, but first it will piss you off.

Ready to get pissed off?

I don't fix restaurant problems.
I fix the thinking that causes the
problems. Once you fix that, the
problems fix themselves.

Donald Burns
THE RESTAURANT COACH™

You Are Here

Have you ever looked at the map at a mall and found that little dot that said “you are here”?

I have some good news and bad news for you.

The bad news: Your restaurant is what you **think** it should be. That’s exactly where you are right now. You are where you **thought** you should be. What you think you are, you become.

The good news: When you change your **mindset**, you change your **restaurant**

*...and your **life**.*

If you thought this was going to be your typical “how to run a restaurant” type of book, sorry to let you down. We are going to discuss the real issues holding your restaurant back from reaching its true potential...**You**.

That 3-pound piece of grey matter that sits atop your neck nestled in between your ears is capable of amazing things. It’s also the thing that holds you back. It means well (most of the time). It’s just that you let the reptilian part of your brain do the driving more than you should. Inside that beautiful brain are some outdated beliefs, rituals, and habits keeping you stuck in mental quicksand. Those things are like an old software program running in the background. You don’t notice them and the negative impact they have upon your restaurant and your life. It is time to update your mental management operating system.

The Habit Trap

We like to think we make every decision throughout the day. The reality is that **40-45%** of those things you call “decisions” are actually habits that are buried in the oldest part of your brain called the basal ganglia (that reptilian part).

Just like anything we have good habits, and we have some bad habits. Here are a few that impact your restaurant more than you realize:

- Complaining
- Gossip
- Talking down to people
- Having cliques
- Uncontrolled outbursts
- Isolating yourself
- Being late
- Being messy
- Inefficiency
- Emotional reactivity to text or emails
- Poor communication
- Not recharging/taking strategic breaks
- Lack of self-care
- Not planning the day/week

- Playing the martyr
- Managing in reaction mode
- Lack of follow-through
- Inconsistency

How are habits formed?

Habits are formed when actions are tied to a trigger by consistent repetition. When the trigger happens, you have an automatic urge to perform the action.

For example:

- * When you wake up (trigger), you start the coffee machine (habit).
- * When you get to work (trigger), you check your email (habit).
- * When you get stressed (trigger), you yell at your team (habit).

Our lives are filled with these trigger-habit combos, often without our being aware of them. If you drive home from work every day following the same route, you probably often drive by habit, making turns without thinking about it, because of constant repetition.

How does this happen?

1. Consistent repetition over the years. *Think of it like this; walking on the rug in the same way until you start to see a path.*
2. You start with actions performed very consciously at first, before they were a habit. Gradually, they became more automatic and less conscious. *All habits are born from thought.*
3. There is a feedback loop that helped us repeat the habit. For example, if you are stressed and eat junk food, you might get pleasure (positive feedback), and if you don't eat the junk food, you

remain stressed (negative feedback). So, positive feedback for indulging an urge makes you want to do it repeatedly. Negative feedback for not indulging makes you not want to do it repeatedly.

Whenever the trigger happens, it leads to the formation of a habit.

When you change the trigger, you can change the habit.