The Two Roads, Briefly

Where To Start · https://jeffreysummers.com/docs/the-two-roads-briefly/

If you take one thing from my framework, take this. Every restaurant is running one of two fundamentally different businesses, and almost every operating failure I have read in forty-five years traces back to an operator building one while intending the other.

Road One

Transactional. The business accumulates volume. It competes on price, convenience, speed and promotion, and it treats each visit as a closed event that has to pay for itself. The people who come in are transacting, and the operation is built to fulfill that transaction efficiently.

This is a legitimate business. Run honestly and designed correctly, it works. What does not work is running it while telling yourself you are in the other one.

Road Two

Relational. The business builds capacity. It competes on what the Guest cannot get elsewhere, and it treats each visit as one moment in an ongoing relationship that compounds. The Guest is not buying a meal. They are extending a contract that gets more valuable to both sides the longer it holds.

This is the harder build and the more durable one, because the thing it accumulates cannot be copied by the operation across the street cutting price.

Why Operators Fail Here

Not by choosing the wrong road. By never choosing, then installing a mix of both. Road One pricing with Road Two labor. Road Two promises in the marketing with Road One architecture on the stage. A cast asked to produce hospitality inside a system built to execute throughput.

That operation cannot win either way. It carries the cost structure of the relational build and the competitive exposure of the transactional one, and the operator cannot understand why working harder is not closing the gap.

What To Do With This

Name which road your operation is actually on — not which one you intend, which one your pricing, staffing, training and measurement are currently built for. Then decide whether that is the one you want. Those are two separate decisions and most operators have made neither.

The full architecture of both roads is in the Knowledge Base. The prosecution of Road One arbitrage is at Hacksterism. The architecture of the relational build is at Restaurant Physics.

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