

CHAINS

*4 Ways Responsible Alcohol Training & Safety
Align with the Goals of Restaurant, Retail, Hotel,
and Other Chain Businesses*



Presented By:

An Insightful White Paper



AT A GLANCE: 4 Ways Responsible Alcohol Training & Safety Align with the Goals of Chain Businesses



Goal #1: Scale the Chain

Alignment: Responsible alcohol training, certification, and related safety practices can increase revenue (a.k.a. safe money) without significantly increasing expenses for a chain.



Goal #2: Mitigate Alcohol Risk & Liability for the Chain

Alignment: Responsible alcohol training and related safety practices can help alleviate risk and support a safe, positive, and welcoming environment at a chain.



Goal #3: Navigate Alcohol Training & Regulatory Compliance for the Chain, Especially Across Different States

Alignment: Chain owners/operators with a large staff can easily manage responsible alcohol training online—across multiple states—with a single provider.



Goal #4: Support Communities Where the Chain Is Located

Alignment: Responsible alcohol training and related safety practices can support local communities and keep generations of customers safe and coming back to the chain.



INTRODUCTION: Why Is Responsible Alcohol Training & Safety a Critical Focus for Chains?

A typical chain business operates multiple locations with consistent offerings, quality, and service across each establishment. Examples include restaurants/bars, hotels, resorts, casinos, retail shops, grocery and convenience stores, bowling alleys, movie theatres, gas stations, concession stands at stadiums and airports, plus more.

Chains can be city-specific, regional, nationwide, or even international, and they can be enjoyable and beneficial to the communities they serve, attracting repeat customers and becoming sites for memorable moments with family and friends.

In addition, many chain businesses sell and/or serve alcohol through staff who are trained and certified in responsible service and safety (with additional ongoing training). Why is this type of training and certification so crucial for chains?

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INTRODUCTION (Cont.)

Responsible alcohol training and certification from providers like Serving Alcohol are vital to ensure compliance (sometimes across different states), to reduce liability, protect the brand, and safeguard customers, staff, and the local community where each business is based.

Employees who are properly trained and certified in responsible alcohol sales and service may be able to identify possible unforeseen situations or safety issues, thereby helping to protect customers, staff, the business, and the local community. Conversely, a 2019 Toast report indicates that only about 53 percent of restaurants provide training for alcohol service. Yet, without proper training in responsible alcohol service, staff may struggle to manage incidents or make appropriate decisions at chains that sell and/or serve alcohol. In addition, the over-service of alcohol at on-premise chain establishments can be associated with driving while intoxicated, violence, and other harms, according to a report by the Journal of Studies on Alcohol and Drugs. (Journal of Studies on Alcohol and Drugs, March 11, 2024).

As a result of improper sales/service or over-service, a chain business can potentially be held responsible. In fact, in most U.S. states, commercial servers of alcoholic beverages can be held liable for damage or injuries caused by their drunken or underage patrons.

Since 2021, insurance companies have seen an increase in liquor liability claims, causing premium rates to nearly double for some businesses, per Rue Insurance in New Jersey.

Moreover, in 2010, alcohol misuse cost the United States \$249 billion, with three quarters of the total cost of alcohol misuse related to binge drinking, and underage drinking accounting for nine percent, per the 2010 National and State Costs of Excessive Alcohol Consumption report (Jeffrey J Sacks, Katherine R Gonzales, Ellen E Bouchery, Laura E Tomedi, Robert D Brewer; 2015 *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*).

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Ensuring safety can lead to a positive experience for patrons and staff, in addition to fostering loyalty and promoting a secure community.

INTRODUCTION (Cont.)

Of course, responsible alcohol training can make a significant difference at a chain business. According to [The Effectiveness of Responsible Beverage Service Training Programs: A Literature Review and Synthesis](#) (James C Fell, Jennifer Scolese, Tom Achoki; April 18, 2024, *Journal of Alcoholism Drug Abuse & Substance Dependence*), "There are strong indications that RBS [responsible beverage service] training, when implemented correctly, when sustained, when owners and managers buy into the strategy and when implemented in coordination with other interventions, can substantially reduce a number of harms due to risky alcohol consumption."

Chain businesses should consider prioritizing responsible alcohol training and customer safety. Ensuring safety can lead to a positive experience for patrons and staff, in addition to fostering loyalty and promoting a secure community. When managers and owners have a properly trained and certified team who cares, interacts, and monitors their patrons concerning alcohol sales and service, a rewarding experience can be had by everyone. Chain businesses that invest in this area will most likely have the opportunity to grow and thrive.

This white paper examines how responsible alcohol training and certification for all staff can support the objectives of chain businesses in four key ways.

FIRST, SOME FACTOIDS:

Chains & Alcohol Sales/Service

"The retail tier [for alcohol sales/service] is typically classified into two categories, on-premise and off-premise. On-premise retailers, such as restaurants, bars, hotels, and casinos, are those that serve alcohol to patrons for consumption on the premises. Off-premise retailers, such as supermarkets, wine and liquor stores, club stores, and convenience stores, are those that sell alcohol for consumption off the premises. States heavily regulate alcohol sales by both groups of retailers." – **"Competition in the Markets for Beer, Wine, and Spirits" by the U.S. Department of the Treasury, in consultation with the U.S. Department of Justice and the Federal Trade Commission, February 2022**

"In examining the drinking preferences of 5,000 hotel visitors, NielsenIQ CGA found that in aggregate, the U.S. hotel channel includes almost 21,000 drinking outlets and is growing faster than traditional on-premises establishments within the U.S. With the willingness of today's consumers to drink wherever and whenever they choose, hotels remain a hotbed for growth within the beverage alcohol industry." – **"The Hotel Bar Is Becoming a Destination for American Drinkers" by NielsenIQ, April 2019**

"Selling alcohol in grocery and convenience stores is common across the U.S. and is a complex system with limitations and restrictions that differ from jurisdiction to jurisdiction." – **"Grocery & Convenience Stores as Alcohol Outlets" by National Alcohol Beverage Control, December 2016**

"When a grocery store starts selling beer, its sales grow beyond just six-packs and cases: Households, and beer-purchasing households in particular, visit the store more frequently and increase their total monthly grocery expenditures, according to new Cornell research." – **"Beer Sold in Grocery Stores Drives Higher Sales in Other Categories" by Laura Reiley, Cornell Chronicle, January 2025**

"Fast-food chains are increasingly serving alcoholic drinks to lure in new customers. In this highly competitive industry, companies are continually looking for an edge over other players and adding alcoholic drinks to their menu is a sure way of increasing their margins (mixed drinks offer profit margins of up to 90 percent)." – **"Fast-Food Giants Are Tackling the Alcohol Business" by Samuel Wich, EHL Insights, EHL Hospitality Business School, March 2019**

"Selling alcohol can be profitable for a restaurant; in fact, many eateries rely on alcohol sales to keep things afloat." – **"Why Don't Most Fast Food Restaurants Serve Alcohol?" Food Republic, by Erin Metz, May 2025**





4 Ways Responsible Alcohol Training & Safety Align with the Goals of Chains

Goal #1: Scale the Chain

Alignment: Responsible alcohol training, certification, and related safety practices can increase revenue (a.k.a safe money) without significantly increasing expenses for a chain.



Goal #1 (Cont.)

Chain owners and operators face numerous challenges. Running multiple restaurants, bars, hotels, stores, or other businesses is inherently complex—expenses are substantial, staff management is tricky, marketing is continuous, and financial issues can arise, among many other hurdles. Thus, scaling the chain, which involves increasing revenue without significantly raising expenses, typically becomes a necessary and ongoing effort. Responsible alcohol training and certification for all staff and the ongoing enforcement of related safety policies can assist.

Most chains do require their staff to be trained and certified in responsible alcohol service by reputable providers, such as [Serving Alcohol](#). In some instances, this training is mandated by state regulations and/or the chain's liability insurance provider. The goal of this training is to help chains avoid adverse situations, community complaints, liability issues, and jeopardizing liquor licenses—or worse. Unfortunately, not taking training seriously may lead to significant problems.

Indeed, success for some chain businesses partly relies on making responsible decisions and reducing risks when it comes to alcohol sales and/or service, and this depends on well-trained staff. Over-serving and over-pouring for short-term gains can harm a chain. Conversely, promoting a safe environment through responsible alcohol training and related policies can lead to long-term success. Proper staff training in responsible alcohol sales/service, as well as certification, is essential for business growth and longevity.

By focusing on responsible alcohol training and certification for staff, and by supporting a safe, secure, and welcoming environment, chain owners and operators have the satisfaction of knowing that they're scaling the business by making "safe money."

What is safe money and how does it support scaling the chain? Safe money is all about professional caring and understanding of patrons' needs through the responsible sales and/or service of alcohol ([download our Safe Money white paper](#)). Ongoing alcohol training and certification for all staff and the enforcement of...

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The idea of safe money and related practices can enhance a business's profitability, protect generations of customers, and position a chain or business for long-term success.

Goal #1: (Cont.)

... responsible alcohol safety policies or house policies can help reduce the opportunity for potential, unforeseen risks. This helps to keep customers and staff safe, and it fosters safe communities. Thus, if a chain ensures responsible alcohol training and certification for all its staff, as well as the enforcement of related policies, it inevitably boosts revenue without significantly increasing expenses. Why? Because alcohol training from reputable providers like Serving Alcohol is cost effective and leads to safe money.

The idea of safe money and related practices can enhance a business's profitability, protect generations of customers, and position a chain or business for long-term success. Certainly, every alcohol-selling and/or alcohol-serving establishment that prioritizes and takes responsible alcohol service seriously—achieved through alcohol training and certification of all staff—is contributing to the creation of *safe money*.

By safeguarding guests through responsible alcohol training and safety measures, chains can secure a prosperous future driven by customer loyalty. Patrons will continue being customers of the chain if they feel safe and welcome. In some cases, customers will incorporate the chain into significant life events, such as birthdays and anniversaries, establishing traditions that will be passed down through generations.

In the end, a strategy for scaling a chain can be as simple as implementing cost-effective alcohol training for all staff, and then following through by enforcing related house policies and providing additional training or refreshers for staff.



Goal #2: Mitigate Alcohol Risk and Liability for the Chain

Alignment: Responsible alcohol training and related safety practices can help alleviate risk and support a safe, positive, and welcoming environment at a chain.



Goal #2 (Cont.)

Most chain businesses look to mitigate risk and liability, especially when it comes to the sale and/or service of alcohol. In fact, one of the most significant risks in any alcohol-serving venue is the legal liability that comes from overserving guests or failing to prevent underage drinking.

Lawsuits, fines, and license suspensions can severely impact a business when it comes to alcohol sales and service. In most states, businesses can be sued for driving accidents caused by an underage person who was served alcohol at the establishment. Selling or serving alcohol at a chain can trigger situations where patrons or others are injured on the property or where alcohol-related violence occurs.

Responsible alcohol training and certification for all staff (and owners and managers) can mitigate these risks by preparing staff to make informed decisions that align with local regulations and company safety policies.

For chain businesses that sell and/or serve alcohol, responsible alcohol service, training, and certification is more than just a legal or insurance requirement—it's a critical component of building a safe, positive, and welcoming environment for patrons, staff, and the local community alike.

Whether it's a restaurant/bar, hotel, or retail chain, establishments that prioritize responsible alcohol training and related safety practices are better equipped to handle risks and deliver high-quality service that fosters customer trust and loyalty.

Responsible alcohol training and certification helps staff—such as servers, bartenders, salespeople, managers, and security—with the knowledge and tools necessary to identify and handle situations involving obviously intoxicated patrons, underage guests, and other alcohol-related challenges. This kind of training isn't just about avoiding fines or complying with liquor laws—it's a proactive step toward risk reduction, which is key. A well-trained staff can reduce the legal risks faced by a chain business that sells and/or serves alcohol. Staff that are trained in..

Continued...



Goal #2 (Cont.)

... responsible alcohol sales/service can help prevent situations, thereby protecting everyone—customers, staff, the local community, the business, and the business's reputation.

Staff who are trained are more confident and capable when faced with difficult decisions, such as cutting someone off or dealing with a disruptive guest. Such confidence helps create a controlled, safe environment and reduces risk and liability.

Every alcohol selling or serving business should make it a priority to educate their staff regarding the best practices of selling and serving alcohol, not only for the legal risks that might result but for the safety of the overall establishment, its staff and customers, and the local community. Failing to train and certify all staff in responsible alcohol service can result in significant financial and human costs.

Chains need to consider responsible alcohol training and certification programs, like the ones that [Serving Alcohol](#) offers, educate staff on alcohol awareness, proper ID checking, recognizing signs of obvious intoxication, refusing service tactfully, and knowing when to involve management or authorities, among other key areas. Many insurance companies offer discounts to establishments that provide this training for their staff, recognizing the reduction in liability it represents.

Overall, operating a chain involves much more than offering great products, food and beverage, or customer service; it includes the underestimated role that responsible alcohol training, certification, and related safety practices can play in ensuring a safe, positive, and welcoming environment. Promoting a safe chain encourages safe money, which will ultimately help a business be more successful over a long period of time.

By equipping employees with the knowledge and tools to manage alcohol service responsibly, establishments can significantly reduce potential risks and foster a culture of safety and accountability.



Goal #3: Navigate Alcohol Training & Regulatory Compliance for the Chain, Especially Across Different States

Alignment: Chain owners and operators with a large number of employees can easily manage responsible alcohol training and certification online—across multiple states—with a single provider.



Goal #3 (Cont.)

For chain businesses operating across multiple locations—especially across different states—maintaining up-to-date alcohol training and certification and ensuring compliance with many staff members can seem like a daunting challenge... but it doesn't have to be.

Of course, every state has different regulations or laws regarding the service and sale of alcohol—and the laws are constantly changing. **Currently, the following states require alcohol training and certification for staff:**

- Arizona (for owners and managers)
- California
- Connecticut
- Delaware
- Georgia (for the delivery of alcoholic beverages)
- Illinois
- Indiana
- Louisiana
- Michigan
- Montana
- North Carolina
- Oregon
- Pennsylvania
- South Carolina
- Tennessee
- Texas
- Utah
- Vermont
- Washington
- Wisconsin

For some large chains, ensuring compliance with alcohol sales/service regulations may involve navigating requirements across the above listed states. ***Continued...***



Goal #3 (Cont.)

Even where state training isn't mandatory, many chains have their own alcohol sales and service policies, still requiring staff to complete training and certification.

So, how does an owner/operator of a chain business easily train and certify its staff across multiple locations, maintain compliance in various states, and have an overall alcohol sales/service policy that's consistent across different establishments?

Leading online training and certification providers, such as [Serving Alcohol](#), offer in-depth training and courses that are state-specific and state-approved. Each course contains in-depth knowledge of the sale/service of alcohol for a particular state and addresses the specific needs of that jurisdiction. These state-approved alcohol training and certification courses also fulfill any requirements by the state.

Serving Alcohol's cost-effective, state-compliant alcohol training and certification products go beyond the industry standards. The Serving Alcohol courses are more knowledgeable and informative, and the company acts as a "one-stop shop" for chains that want to easily manage their online training and certification for a large team of staff. The company's dashboard for business accounts makes it simple for owners and operators to provide, manage, and stay up to date with training and certification for staff. Serving Alcohol also offers discounts for business accounts, as well as compliant food safety training. [Download our info sheet](#) for details on the benefits of working with Serving Alcohol for training, and how a chain can easily set up a new business account.

In terms of having consistent alcohol sales/service policies across different establishments in different states, Serving Alcohol encourages all chain businesses to have house policies that are stricter than all state laws, as a way to be consistent.

Tips for Chains

Here are a few tips for chain owners and operators, who are trying to navigate alcohol training and regulatory compliance, especially across different states:

- Ensure that all staff (including owners and managers) receive...

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Goal #3 (Cont.)

- ... comprehensive, state-approved alcohol training and certification because alcohol liability and/or legal issues can potentially ruin a business.
- Owners and operators of chains should be aware of managers who are “doing their own thing” or who implement their own alcohol policies at different establishments, which is not a good thing; the chain should ensure state compliance and have company-wide consistency by implementing policies that are stricter than state policies.
- Documentation is key. Ensure that the chain's alcohol sales/service policies are on file, clearly posted, and available to all staff at every location. Ensure that policies are made available to new hires and taught at the start of any new hire's onboarding process. Re-evaluate corporate policies and internal training programs on a regular basis.
- **Stay on top of staff training and refreshers. Keep all staff up to date and certified. Monitor and have staff update their training as needed. The Serving Alcohol business account dashboard can help with that.**
- Remember that holidays are a very busy time, thus, staying on top of training and enforcing policies can be easily overlooked. Chains should continue their focus on training, safety, and enforcing policies during busy holidays.

Undeniably, training and certifying all staff members in responsible alcohol sales/service will have a positive impact on the chain, by helping to keep everyone safe—staff, customers, and the local communities that the chain serves. More importantly, educating staff may save lives.



Goal #4: Support Local Communities Where the Chain Is Located

Alignment: Responsible alcohol training and related safety practices can support local communities and keep generations of customers safe and coming back to the chain.



By focusing on responsible alcohol sales/service training and related safety practices, the chain is contributing to the overall safety and protection of the local community.

Goal #4: (Cont.)

A primary goal of many chain businesses, including those that sell and/or serve alcohol, is to support the local community where the chain resides, as it creates loyal customers and builds positive ties to the community. To that end, responsible alcohol sales and service can be a key component of the chain's effort to support the local community.

Responsibly selling and/or serving alcohol is not just about keeping the business, staff, and customers safe, it's also about protecting the people within the local community.

Why is this so important? It's important because a customer can potentially leave a business that sells/serves alcohol and cause harm—or worse—after being sold or served alcohol. For example, The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration notes that every day about 37 people in the United States die in drunk-driving crashes, which is one person every 39 minutes. In 2022, 13,524 people died in alcohol-impaired driving traffic deaths. During 2020-2021, excessive alcohol use (binge drinking) was responsible for about 178,000 deaths, per the U.S. Center for Disease Control.

By focusing on responsible alcohol sales/service training and related safety practices, the chain is contributing to the overall safety and protection of the local community.

Being a responsible seller/server of alcohol means adhering to laws, regulations, and standards, training and certifying your entire staff, maintaining ongoing staff education and refreshers, and adhering to and enforcing policies or...

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Goal #4 (Cont.)

... house rules. Through all of this, owners and operators of chains create a safe space for everyone, which extends to the local community.



FOCUS ON:

Responsible Alcohol Sales & Service

It's clear that alcohol sales, service, and consumption is very much integral to U.S. business and culture. It's financially important to many businesses and socially important to many customers.

For a chain business, alcohol is a money maker. For customers, alcohol enhances social experiences among friends, family, and co-workers.

Of course, what's key in all of this is that alcohol is sold, served, and consumed responsibly.



Thank You!

Established in 2007, Serving Alcohol supports businesses and professionals that sell and/or serve alcohol (or who need food safety training). Our responsible alcohol training and certification programs help businesses responsibly sell and/or serve alcohol on-site or to-go, ensuring compliance, safety, and professionalism in the service industry. We're trusted by liability insurance carriers, and we currently serve more than 2,000 active business accounts around the United States.

Our state-approved certifications are designed for businesses and their entire staff, and our cost-effective, compliant training products and services go beyond the industry standards. For business accounts, we're a simple one-stop shop for training, staff/learner management, reporting, and certificate printing.

Contact Us! We're Here to Help.

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