Thirty Percent

THE THIRTY PERCENT OPERATING STANDARD

Field Guide One

The Follow-Up Protocol

The email and text sequences that bring a guest back, and the data that tells you who was never coming back in the first place.

For owners and general managers of restaurants, bars, and any business where a guest sits down, spends money, and then walks out the door without you ever finding out how it went. Companion to Workbook One: Indoctrination.

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The Hospitality Indoctrination Protocol. Phase One of Three.

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Before you send anything

A guest walks out of your building and into a blind spot. You do not know if they loved it. You do not know if they are ever coming back. You do not know if the one thing that went wrong went wrong for forty other people that week.

Everything in this guide exists to close that blind spot. And it only does two jobs. If a sentence in one of these emails is not doing one of these two jobs, cut it.

THE TWO JOBS

One. Get the data. Find out whether they had a ten out of ten experience, and find the ones who did not before they tell everyone except you.

Two. Entice them back. Give them a real reason to return inside thirty days, and use that visit to start moving them toward being a regular.

Job one is defense. Job two is offense. The sequences in Part Four do both in a single email, which is why the order matters so much: you give first, then you ask. Never the other way around.

The word we are using

Workbook One gave you a two-word test for every guest interaction. They were either **honored** or they were **handled**. This guide is the version of that test you can run at scale, on every guest, automatically, whether or not you were in the building that night.

A ten is honored. Anything under a ten is a guest who got handled somewhere, and the follow-up is how you find out where.

How to use this

Part One is the legal layer. Read it. Do not delegate it, and do not skip to the copy. Part Two is how you get permission to send anything at all. Part Three is the build. Part Four is every word you need, ready to paste. Part Five is the phone call that saves the guest you almost lost.

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PART ONE

The rules

You are about to contact people at home, on their phone, using data they gave you across a counter. There are two different bodies of law covering that, they are not the same, and the one most operators ignore is the one with the teeth.

READ THIS FIRST

This guide is written by operators, not lawyers. It is not legal advice and it does not create an attorney-client relationship. Marketing law changes, it varies by state, and it varies by where your guest lives, not where your restaurant sits. **Before you send a single campaign, have a lawyer in your state review your consent language, your list source, and your text message program.** One hour of their time costs less than one complaint.

Email and text are not the same law

Most operators think of "marketing messages" as one category. Legally they are two, and the gap between them is where the money gets lost.

	EMAIL	TEXT MESSAGE
Governing law	CAN-SPAM Act	TCPA, plus carrier rules
Consent needed before sending	None required federally. It is an opt-out regime.	**Prior express written consent.** Full stop.
Penalty exposure	Civil penalties per violating email, enforced by the FTC	**$500 to $1,500 per message**, with no cap, and private individuals can sue you
Registration	None	You must register your brand and campaign (A2P 10DLC) or carriers block you outright
Opt-out window	Honor within 10 business days	Immediately, and STOP must always work

Read the consent row again, because it contradicts what almost everyone in this industry believes.

THE CORRECTION

Under federal law, **you do not need someone to opt in before you email them.** CAN-SPAM is opt-out. You can email a guest who never signed up, as long as your headers are honest, your subject line is not deceptive, you include a physical mailing address, and you give them a working way to unsubscribe that you honor within ten business days.

Texting that same guest without written consent can cost you **$500 to $1,500 per text**, and there is no cap. Send one unconsented blast to a thousand guests and the theoretical exposure is $500,000 to $1.5 million.

So why do we still insist on opt-in?

Because legal and smart are different questions, and four things will hurt you long before the FTC does.

1. **Deliverability.** Gmail and Microsoft do not care about CAN-SPAM. They care about complaint rates. Upload two hundred people who never asked to hear from you, take a handful of spam complaints, and your domain reputation drops. Then the emails your regulars actually want stop landing too.
2. **Your reservation platform's contract.** Covered below. It may prohibit exactly the workflow you were planning.
3. **State law.** Several states have their own text messaging statutes that are stricter than federal law, and some have their own email provisions. Your obligation follows your guest's phone number, not your address.
4. **Guests outside the US.** Canada's anti-spam law is genuinely opt-in with real fines. One Canadian tourist on your list and the rules change.

So: collect consent on purpose, and treat it as the standard even where the law gives you slack. That is not a legal position. It is the same hospitality argument as everything else in this system. You do not send things to people who did not ask for them.

Where your list came from matters

The most common plan we hear is the one that sounds easiest: export last night's reservations, upload the file, send everyone the follow-up. Before you build that, check your source.

SOURCE	CAN YOU USE IT FOR YOUR OWN MARKETING?
Your own POS or loyalty database	**Yes.** This is your data, collected by you. This is the source you want to be building toward.
Resy	**Generally yes.** Resy gives restaurants access to guest emails and visit history, exportable to your CRM. Confirm your own agreement.
OpenTable	**Careful.** Diner contact details are part of OpenTable's network, and most contract configurations restrict exporting them for outside marketing. You own the data you collected yourself, such as phone and walk-in guests. Read your agreement or call your rep before you export anything.
Third-party delivery marketplaces	**Usually no.** A guest who ordered through a delivery app is generally that app's customer, not yours. See Part Three for what DoorDash actually gives you.
A purchased list	**Never.** Not once. It will burn your sending domain and it is the fastest way into a complaint file.

One detail worth knowing: when you export guest data from a reservation platform, marketing opt-in status is usually one of the fields. If that field is missing or empty, the safe assumption is that the guest is *opted out*, not opted in. Do not treat a blank as a yes.

The consent language to use

Put this wherever you collect an address, on paper or on a screen. The checkbox must be unchecked by default, and it must be separate from any other agreement.

EMAIL OPT-IN

☐ Yes, send me an occasional email from [RESTAURANT]. Usually a few times a month, about what is new and what is coming back. Unsubscribe any time.

TEXT OPT-IN. EVERY ELEMENT BELOW IS REQUIRED

☐ Yes, [RESTAURANT] can text me. By checking this box I agree to receive marketing text messages at the number provided, including messages sent by an automatic telephone dialing system. Consent is not a condition of any purchase. Message and data rates may apply. Message frequency varies. Reply STOP to cancel or HELP for help. [LINK: Terms] [LINK: Privacy Policy]

Keep a record of every consent: what they agreed to, the exact wording they saw, the date, and where it happened. If you are ever challenged, the burden of proving consent is yours, and a spreadsheet of phone numbers is not proof.

What every email has to carry

- A **from** name and address that honestly identify your restaurant.
- A subject line that accurately reflects what is inside.
- Your **physical mailing address.** Your street address works.
- A clear, working **unsubscribe** link, honored within ten business days, with no fee, no login, and no survey in the way.
- If the message is an ad and the recipient did not ask for it, it must be identifiable as an advertisement.

NEVER

Never buy a list. Never text without written consent. Never keep sending after someone opts out, on any channel. Never make the unsubscribe hard to find, and never hide it in a light grey four point font, because a guest who cannot find the door will press the spam button instead, and that one costs you far more.

And never make a reward conditional on a good public review. The platforms prohibit it and the FTC has rules about suppressing negative reviews. Ask everyone or ask no one.

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PART TWO

Getting the list

None of this runs without contact details and permission. The good news is that a restaurant touches a guest eight or nine times a visit, and almost every one of those moments is a place to ask.

The principle

Ask when you are giving, not when you are taking. Nobody hands over a phone number in exchange for the privilege of being marketed to. They hand it over to get something in that moment: the Wi-Fi, the reservation confirmation, the receipt, the table they are waiting for.

So attach the ask to the give, make it one extra second of effort, and tell them the truth about what they will get.

Nine places to capture

CAPTURE POINT	HOW IT WORKS	QUALITY
Wi-Fi splash page	Guest enters an email to get the password. Highest volume in the building. Put the opt-in checkbox on the same screen.	Volume
Reservation	Already collected. Check your platform's terms first, and add your own opt-in question to the booking notes or confirmation.	High
Check presenter QR	A card in the folder. "Scan this, tell us how we did, we will send something." Catches the walk-ins nothing else catches.	Highest
Digital receipt	Your POS already asks. Make sure the opt-in checkbox is actually turned on and that the language above is what it says.	High
Waitlist	You are already taking a phone number to text them their table. That is a transactional text, not a marketing one, so you still need a separate marketing opt-in on that screen.	Volume
Birthday club	Name, email, birthday, nothing else. The single highest-converting reason to come back that exists.	Highest
Gift card purchase	You capture the buyer. Most restaurants never market to them again, and a person who bought your gift card has already told you what they think of you.	Highest
Online ordering	Your own direct ordering channel, not a marketplace. These are your customers and their data is yours.	High
Private events	One booking, twenty to a hundred guests in the room. Ask the host for the invite list only if the host is comfortable asking their guests. Never scrape it.	Situational

Collect less than you think

Every additional field cuts your capture rate. You need four things and you can live without two of them.

- **First name.** Required. Every sequence in Part Four uses it.
- **Email.** Required.
- **Mobile number.** Optional, and only with the separate text consent above.
- **Birthday, month and day only.** Optional. Never ask for the year, you do not need it and asking makes people close the tab.

Do not ask for a mailing address, a party size, a dining preference, or anything else at capture. You can learn all of that from their behavior later.

SAY IT OUT LOUD AT THE TABLE

"Before you head out, if you scan that card and give us thirty seconds on how we did tonight, we will send you something for next time. It goes straight to [OWNER NAME], not into a void."

That last clause is doing the work. Everyone has filled out a restaurant survey that went nowhere. Telling them a human reads it is the difference between a four percent response rate and a twenty percent one.

Who asks, and when

The check drop is the moment. Not the greeting, not mid-meal. The server drops the check, says the line above, and leaves. That is it. Build it into the position guide the way Workbook One builds hospitality into every other position, and put it on the daily mastermind board until it is automatic.

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PART THREE

The machine

The whole point is that this runs without you. You build it once, you spend ten minutes a morning feeding it, and it handles every guest who walked through your door the night before.

The ten minute morning ritual

If you have a POS or loyalty platform that syncs automatically, skip this. Most operators do not, so here is the manual version, and it genuinely takes ten minutes.

01 **Export last night.** Pull yesterday's guest list out of your reservation system or POS as a CSV. Confirm the marketing opt-in column is included.

02 **Filter to opted in.** Delete every row without consent. This is the step people skip and it is the one that matters.

03 **Upload.** Import the file into your email platform, applying a tag with the visit date.

04 **That tag starts the automation.** You do nothing else. The sequence fires on its own at 10am, branches on the rating, and alerts you if anyone is unhappy.

WHY 10AM AND NOT THE SAME NIGHT

Send it the next morning, not at eleven at night when they are driving home. The visit is still fresh, they are at a desk or on a couch, and the email lands at the top of a morning inbox instead of the bottom of an overnight one. If your system can fire automatically, ninety minutes after the check closes also works well for lunch and early covers. What does not work is waiting three days.

Build it in ActiveCampaign

This is the full build. It takes about ninety minutes the first time.

01 **Create the custom fields.** Contacts, then Manage Fields. Add `Last Visit Date` as a date, `Last Visit Score` as a number, and `Visit Count` as a number.

02 **Create the tags.** You need `visit-followup` to start the automation, and `score-1` through `score-10` for the branch. Create them now so they exist when you build.

03 **Build the landing pages.** Ten one-click destinations, one per score, or a single thank-you page with the score as a URL parameter. Each has to be a unique URL so the automation can tell them apart. Keep it to one line of text: "Got it. Thank you." The click is the data, the page is just somewhere to land.

04 **Build Email 1** from the copy in Part Four. The rating row is ten buttons or ten linked numbers, each pointing to its own URL. Make them big enough to tap with a thumb.

05 **Create the automation.** Trigger it on *Tag is added*, set to `visit-followup`, and set it to run once per contact. Turn off "runs multiple times" or your regulars will get the same email every week.

06 **Wait until 10am,** then *Send Email 1*.

07 **Add a Wait step**, set to *wait until conditions are met*, with the condition being that the contact has clicked any of your ten rating links. Set a fallback of three days so nobody gets stuck in the automation forever.

08 **Add the branch.** Use an *If/Else* on "has clicked link" for the score of 10. On the yes path, tag `score-10` and send the ten out of ten email. On the no path, add a second If/Else for 9 and 8, then a third for 7 and below. You are building a simple tree, three outcomes deep.

09 **On the 7 and below path,** put three actions in this order: *Add a note* to the contact record, *Send a notification email* to the owner and the GM, and only then *Send* the recovery email. The notification is the point. It should hit your phone within seconds.

10 **Add the no-response path.** If the three day fallback fires and they never clicked, send the reminder email in Part Four, then exit.

11 **Set a Goal** at the top of the automation for anyone who books or redeems, so they drop out of the reminder sequence the moment they act. Nothing kills trust faster than a fourth "don't forget your gift card" after they already came in.

12 **Test it on yourself.** Add the tag to your own contact record and walk every branch. Click a 10. Click a 6. Make sure your phone buzzes on the 6. Do not skip this.

A SIMPLER VERSION

If ten landing pages feels like too much, use a form instead: one question, a one to ten dropdown, mapped to the **Last Visit Score** field, and branch on the field value with a *Conditional Split*. It is easier to build. It will also get you roughly half the responses, because one click always beats loading a page and submitting a form. Build the ten links if you can.

Build it in DoorDash

DoorDash has email and text marketing tools inside the Merchant Portal, and for a lot of operators that is the fastest place to start. There is one limitation you need to understand before you plan around it.

THE LIMITATION

You get customer data for **your own online ordering channel**, the storefront on your own website powered by DoorDash, plus in-store loyalty signups. You generally **do not** get contact details for Marketplace customers, meaning people who found you and ordered inside the DoorDash app. Those are DoorDash's customers. If your plan was to follow up with everyone who ever ordered from you on the app, that plan does not work.

01 **Turn on Online Ordering** and put the link on your own website, your Google profile, and your Instagram. Every order that comes through it is a customer whose details you keep.

02 **Open the Merchant Portal** and find the customer list. You will see email, name, order counts, average order value, first and last order dates, and lifetime value.

03 **Use the automated campaigns** for the always-on basics, such as a first-time customer welcome and a winback for lapsed orderers. These are pre-built and they run by themselves.

04 **Use the manual campaign builder** for the sequences in Part Four, or export the customer list and run it through ActiveCampaign if you want the full branching logic. DoorDash's tools are good at sending. They are not built for a ten-way conditional tree.

The honest recommendation: run delivery and pickup follow-up inside DoorDash, run dine-in follow-up inside ActiveCampaign, and get them into the same database eventually. Do not wait for "eventually" to start.

Email and text together

Send both. A meaningful share of your guests will never open the email, and a text gets read within minutes. But the text has a different job, and a different law behind it.

	EMAIL	TEXT
Job	Carries the offer, the rating scale, the detail	Gets them to look at the email, or takes the rating in one tap
Length	150 to 200 words	Under 160 characters including the opt-out
When	10am the morning after	2pm the same day, only to people who did not open the email
Required	Physical address, unsubscribe	Brand name, STOP language, and a registered 10DLC campaign

The scoreboard

Put these five numbers on the same wall as the rest of your standards, and look at them every week at the same meeting.

NUMBER	WHAT IT TELLS YOU	TARGET
Capture rate	Guests with contact details, divided by covers	**30%+**
Open rate	Whether your subject lines work	**40%+**
Rating response rate	Whether anyone is actually clicking a number	**15%+**
Redemption rate	Guests who came back inside 30 days	**8%+**
Sub-9 recovery rate	Unhappy guests you got on the phone	**60%+**

The last one is the one nobody tracks and the one that tells you the most. Every guest who rates you under a nine and never hears from a human is a guest you paid to acquire, disappointed, and then ignored.



PART FOUR

The sequences

Three sequences, three different levers. Pick one and run it for ninety days before you judge it. Do not run all three at once, you will not learn anything.

SEQUENCE	LEVER	COST TO YOU	BEST FOR
A. The gift card	Money, and loss aversion	$25 in credit	Almost anyone. Start here.
B. The one thing	Curiosity, and taste	One dish	Rooms with a signature item
C. The held table	Status, and belonging	One held cover	Fine dining, tight rooms

Why the subject line is the whole game

An unopened email converts at zero. Before you argue about the offer, get the open. Every subject line below is built the same way: it implies something is already yours, and it does not tell you what it is.

Sequence A · The forgotten gift card

This is the workhorse. A meaningful number of guests will spend past the card, which is the part operators miss. Research from the prepaid card industry found that **84 percent of people holding a fine dining gift card spent beyond its value, by an average of $35,**

and 81 percent of fast casual cardholders spent an average of $20 past theirs.

So the $25 is not the cost of the campaign. The $25 buys you a guest in a seat, a check that is usually larger than it would have been, and a second chance to make them a regular. Set the amount high enough that they are genuinely pleased. Twenty five dollars is the floor.

Three subject lines to test

A1	**You forgot your $25 gift card at the table**	*blames the guest*
A2	**We forgot to give you something on [DAY]**	*blames the house*
A3	**Your table left before we could hand you this**	*blames nobody*

Run all three against each other for a month. They are not stylistic variants, they are three different psychological frames, and which one wins tells you something real about your guests.

EMAIL 1 OF 4 SEND 10AM, MORNING AFTER

SUBJECT

You forgot your $25 gift card at the table

[FIRST NAME],

You were in on [DAY]. Thank you for choosing us. You could have gone anywhere.

Here is the part we got wrong. We had a $25 card set aside for you and it never made it to your table. That one is on us.

We would still like you to have it. Show this email at the host stand any time in the next 30 days and we will put $25 toward whatever you order. No minimum, and it works on anything.

CLAIM THE $25

One more thing while I have you.

We do not like to accept anything less than a ten out of ten in this building. So I have to ask, honestly. How was your visit?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

One click. It comes straight to me, not to a survey company.

[OWNER NAME]
[TITLE], [RESTAURANT]
[STREET ADDRESS]
[UNSUBSCRIBE]

ONE THING TO DECIDE BEFORE YOU SEND THIS

The line "we had a $25 card set aside for you and it never made it to your table" describes something that did not happen. It is a pretext. It works, plenty of restaurants use it, and it is also the one paragraph in this guide that a guest could catch you in. If a host gets asked "wait, why did you have a card set aside for me?", your team has to either lie or fumble, and you have just taught them that the standard bends.

If you want the same mechanics without the fiction, swap two lines. Subject: "There is $25 under your name at the host stand." Body: "We keep a small number of $25 cards for guests we want to see again, and we just put one under your name." Both statements become true the moment you send the email. You keep the curiosity, the ownership, and the loss aversion, and nobody on your floor has to cover for the copy.

The rating branch

Everything after the click is where the money is. Three bands, three completely different responses, and the third one is not an email at all.

SCORE	WHAT IT MEANS	WHAT FIRES	WHEN
10	Honored	Thank you, ask what made it a ten, invite them back	Immediately
9 or 8	Good, not the standard	Ask what would have made it a ten, add something to the card	Immediately
7 and below	Handled	Owner alert to phone, recovery email, phone call same day	Alert in seconds

Log everything under a nine, not just the sevens. An eight is a guest telling you politely that something was off. Bring the list to the weekly meeting and read the comments out loud.

BRANCH: 10 FIRES ON CLICK

SUBJECT

A ten. That is the whole job.

[FIRST NAME], thank you. A ten is what we are actually trying to do, and most nights we do not get told when we hit it.

Can I ask you for sixty seconds? What made it a ten? I want to know exactly what we did right, so I can make sure we do it again for you, and so I can teach it to the person who was not working that night.

TELL ME WHAT MADE IT A TEN

Your $25 is still under your name at the host stand. Come use it, and ask for me when you are in.

[OWNER NAME]
[RESTAURANT]

BRANCH: 9 OR 8 FIRES ON CLICK

SUBJECT

What would have made it a ten?

[FIRST NAME], thank you for being straight with us.

An [SCORE] is a good night out. It is not what we are trying to give you, and the gap between an eight and a ten is usually one specific thing that somebody let slide.

So, honestly. What would have made it a ten?

TELL ME THE ONE THING

Whatever you tell me, I will fix it, and then I want you back so I can show you. Your $25 is at the host stand, and I am adding [A ROUND OF DRINKS / AN APPETIZER / DESSERT] to it. Both are good for 30 days.

BOOK MY NEXT VISIT

[OWNER NAME]
[RESTAURANT]

BRANCH: 7 AND BELOW SEND WITHIN ONE HOUR

SUBJECT

I saw your rating and I am not okay with it

[FIRST NAME], this is [OWNER NAME]. I own [RESTAURANT].

I just saw that you rated your visit a [SCORE]. That is unacceptable, and I am not going to send you a coupon and call it handled.

I would like five minutes on the phone. Not a survey. I want to hear what happened from you, in your words, and I want to tell you what I am doing about it.

Reply with a good number and a time that works, or call me directly at [OWNER MOBILE]. If I have not heard back by tonight I will try you once, and then I will leave you alone.

[OWNER NAME], owner
[RESTAURANT]

WHY THERE IS NO OFFER IN THAT LAST ONE

Because an offer in the first message reads as a payoff. You are buying their silence and they can feel it. Get on the phone first, listen first, fix it first. The invitation back comes at the end of the call, in Part Five, once you have earned the right to ask.

The reminders

Two more emails, both short, both only to people who have not redeemed. The Goal step in your automation pulls anyone out the moment they book or come in.

EMAIL 3 OF 4 DAY 10, IF NOT REDEEMED

SUBJECT

Your $25 expires in 20 days

[FIRST NAME], the $25 under your name at the host stand is good for another 20 days.

No catch, no minimum spend. Just tell whoever greets you that it is there.

BOOK A TABLE

[OWNER NAME], [RESTAURANT]

EMAIL 4 OF 4 DAY 27, IF NOT REDEEMED

SUBJECT

Last call on this

[FIRST NAME], your $25 comes off the books on [DATE] and then I will stop bringing it up.

If we got something wrong and that is why you have not been back, tell me. I would genuinely rather know than wonder.

USE IT BEFORE

[OWNER NAME], [RESTAURANT]

Sequence B · The one thing you missed

Costs you one dish instead of $25, and it is more specific than any discount. It also has the advantage of being completely true, which means nobody has to cover for it at the host stand.

B1	You left without trying the thing we are known for	*curiosity, mild FOMO*
B2	Nobody told you about the [DISH]	*implies a staff failure*
B3	We watched you miss the best thing on the menu	*playful, higher risk*

SEQUENCE B EMAIL 1 SEND 10AM, MORNING AFTER

SUBJECT

You left without trying the thing we are known for

[FIRST NAME],

You were in on [DAY] and I am glad you came. But I looked at your check and you did not order the [SIGNATURE DISH].

That is our fault for not telling you about it. It is the thing people drive across town for, and it is the thing I would want you judging us on.

So next time it is on us. No minimum, nothing to buy. Show this email in the next 30 days.

CLAIM THE

Before you go. We do not like to accept anything under a ten out of ten here, so how was the visit, honestly?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

[OWNER NAME]
[RESTAURANT] · [STREET ADDRESS]
[UNSUBSCRIBE]

Use the same three rating branches from Sequence A. Only the opening email changes.

Sequence C · The table we held

No discount at all. This one trades on status, and it is the right play for rooms where a coupon would cheapen you. It costs you one held cover, so only run it on nights you can actually spare one, and be disciplined about releasing the table if they do not confirm.

C1	**We put your name on a table for [DAY]**	*presumptuous, in a good way*
C2	**There is a table with your name on it**	*softer, less specific*
C3	**Are you free [DAY]?**	*reads like a person, not a brand*

SEQUENCE C EMAIL 1 — SEND 10AM, MORNING AFTER

SUBJECT

We put your name on a table for [DAY]

[FIRST NAME], this is [OWNER NAME]. I own [RESTAURANT].

You were in on [DAY]. I would like you back, so I did something slightly presumptuous and put a table under your name for [DAY] at [TIME].

No deposit and no obligation. If it does not work, move it or release it with one click and I will not take it personally.

KEEP THE TABLE | PICK ANOTHER NIGHT

And while I have you. We do not like to accept anything under a ten out of ten. How was the last visit?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

[OWNER NAME]
[RESTAURANT] · [STREET ADDRESS]
[UNSUBSCRIBE]

The text versions

Only to guests who gave written consent for texts, only from a registered 10DLC campaign, and only if they did not open the email. Keep every one of these under 160 characters including the opt-out.

TEXT 1 · 2PM, SAME DAY, EMAIL UNOPENED

[RESTAURANT]: Hi [FIRST NAME], we left $25 under your name at the host stand. How was [DAY], 1 to 10? Reply with a number. Reply STOP to opt out.

TEXT 2 · DAY 12, NOT REDEEMED

[RESTAURANT]: [FIRST NAME], your $25 is good til [DATE]. Just mention it at the host stand. Reply STOP to opt out.

A reply of a single digit is the cleanest rating capture there is, and it runs the same three branches. Make sure whoever monitors that inbox knows a "3" is an emergency and not a typo.

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PART FIVE

The recovery call

A guest rated you a seven or below. An automation has already put it on your phone. Everything from here is human, and it is the highest-leverage twenty minutes in this entire system.

The rules of the call

- **Inside 24 hours.** Same day is better. The speed is most of the message.
- **Owner or GM only.** Never the server, never a shift lead, never a marketing coordinator. Who calls is the apology.
- **Call. Do not text.** You asked for five minutes on the phone, so use the phone.
- **Do not defend anything.** Not the kitchen, not the server, not the wait, not the night you were slammed. Every explanation sounds like an excuse from the other end.
- **Do not lead with money.** No offer in the first sixty seconds. If the first thing out of your mouth is a comp, you have told them you want this to go away.

The script

Use it as a spine, not a paragraph to read. If it sounds recited, you have made it worse.

OPEN

"Hi [NAME], this is [OWNER NAME], I own [RESTAURANT]. Is now an okay time for about five minutes? I am not calling to sell you anything and I am not calling to talk you out of what you said. You rated us a [SCORE] and I would like to hear what happened."

LISTEN

"Walk me through the night, from when you walked in."

Then stop talking. Do not fill the pause, do not correct a detail, and do not say "what probably happened is." When they finish, ask one question: "Was there anything else?" There almost always is, and the second thing is usually the real one.

OWN IT, SPECIFICALLY

"So you waited eighteen minutes for a table you had booked, nobody came by to tell you what was happening, and then your entrees came out split. That should not happen here and I am not going to pretend it was a one-off. That is a follow-up problem on my floor and it is mine."

NAME THE CHANGE

"Here is what is changing on Monday. [THE ACTUAL CHANGE]. I am bringing it to the whole team at our morning meeting, and I am going to tell them it came from a guest, because it did."

THE ASK

"I want one more shot at this. Can I put you down for [SPECIFIC DAY]? I will be in the building, I will meet you at the door myself, and dinner is on me. If it is not a ten you never have to hear from me again, and I will mean that."

After the call

01 **Log it.** Note on the contact record: what happened, what you promised, what date they are booked for.

02 **Bring it to the daily mastermind.** Not the name, the failure. "A guest waited eighteen minutes past their reservation and nobody spoke to them. That is on us. Here is what we are doing." This is what turns one bad night into a standard the whole building holds.

03 **Tell the floor they are coming.** The table, the server, the time. Everyone touching that table knows the history.

04 **Follow up after the return visit.** Personally, not by automation. This one gets a real email from you.

05 **Count it.** Recovered guests go on the scoreboard. This is the number that proves the system works.

WHY THIS IS WORTH YOUR TUESDAY AFTERNOON

A guest who had a bad night and never heard from you tells people, quietly, for years. A guest who had a bad night and got a phone call from the owner inside a day tells a completely different story, and tells it more often. You cannot buy that with advertising and you cannot fake it with a coupon. It costs one call.

The Follow-Up Protocol. Field Guide One, companion to Workbook One: Indoctrination. Thirty Percent LLC, 2026. Internal. Not for distribution.

Not legal advice. Have counsel in your state review your consent language, your list sources, and your text message program before you send.

Sources for the claims in Parts One and Three:

1. FTC, CAN-SPAM Act: A Compliance Guide for Business
2. FTC, Candid answers to CAN-SPAM questions
3. ActiveProspect, TCPA text messages: rules and regulations
4. TermsFeed, TCPA express written consent guide
5. Infobip, A2P 10DLC US compliance guide
6. PaymentsJournal on the First Data Prepaid Consumer Insights Study, gift card overspend
7. OpenTable, Export your Guestbook
8. Resy, Data transfer instructions
9. DoorDash, Email and text marketing for merchants
10. ActiveCampaign, Automation actions explained