



## How Multi Unit Managers Can Execute High Impact Unit Visits

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Last year we interviewed over 500 high-performing Multi-Unit Managers (MUMs) across 28 different chains and brands. While each one approached their business differently, they all had three things in common: 1) a clear sense of which units needed their attention and why, 2) daily coaching phone calls with each GM, and 3) focused and purpose-driven restaurant visits every week at every unit, no exceptions. Why? The unit is where the company meets the customer.

Unfortunately, “average” MUMs are much less focused. They habitually drop in to their units with no plan, purpose or passion, bringing little more than a clipboard and a checklist, and then calling it “leadership.” These mis-guided area managers generically “inspect, correct and direct “ their GMs during store visits in the name of efficiency, but what has really been accomplished? Time saved at the expense of time served? They overlook the fact that they are visiting people, not “stores.” They overvalue direction at the expense of development. There’s a better way. Here’s how the best MUMs plan and execute high impact restaurant visits.



### Before the Visit

The key to high impact visits is *preparation*. A written Quarterly Business Plan, assessing relevant financial reports, along with daily GM phone calls should give you clear insight into which restaurants need your attention first.

- Review the written report and results of your last visit. What was covered then? What were the managers supposed to be working on in the meantime? Any outstanding issues? Review previous key learnings.
- Assess how the unit currently ranks performance-wise in your territory.
- Based on the unit’s performance, what should the focus of your visit be? Sales? Service? Training? Retention? Cleanliness? Marketing? Stay focused. Don’t try to cover everything, or you’ll end up covering nothing.
- Identify pre-work: what are the GMs top three issues/concerns? What are *your* top three issues/concerns?
- Present the purpose of the visit to your GM and how it differs from previous visits.
- Ask yourself: 1) “What—specifically—am I intending to accomplish?” 2) “What does the Manager need from me?” and 3) “What should the team be doing differently as a result of my visit?”
- Set aside time for a one-on-one coaching session with the GM after the visit with no interruptions.
- The focus of every visit is not the “condition of the unit” but the development of the managers and team members.

## During the Visit

Once your pre-planning is complete and you know what you need to accomplish, you're ready to conduct a high-impact visit. MUMs know that the key to effective store visits is to first understand *cause and effect*. In other words, your awareness should *not* center merely on what the operation "looks like" but what *actions or inactions* of the team and managers are *causing* it. You are in charge of developing problem-solvers not just pointing problems out. Spend your time teaching your managers how to think instead of merely "what to do." Here are some basic do's and don'ts that will insure a maximum impact visit:

### Store Visit DO's...

- Thoroughly pre-plan. See the operation from the guest's perspective first, then the manager's, *then* the MUMs perspective.
- Assess the *exterior* of the building, first by yourself and then later with the GM or MOD (Manager On Duty)
- Then assess the *interior* of the building, first by yourself and then later with the GM or MOD
- Use a checklist to assess facilities, people and operations, but don't be merely "inspector" MUM.
- Look for what's being done right not just what's wrong
- Assess staffing and schedule. Aces in their places? Staff appropriate to the level of business? Appearance and behavior up to brand standards?
- Focus on what you came there to do, don't get sucked into working a position as a "quick fix." You're there to coach, not quarterback.
- Move from an "inspect-direct-correct" role to the coach-approach: *Observe, Inquire, Develop*. First, *observe* what's going on with the people, product and facility, then patiently *inquire* with careful questioning to determine if the GM or MOD has the appropriate awareness. Now *develop* their ability to see what you see, through coaching and guidance.
- Spread energy, don't take it away.



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### Store Visit DON'Ts...

- Rush through the store visit. Be patient, teach, and spread energy, don't hurry and act like a clipboard cop.
- Just tell managers what's "wrong," ask questions to determine if they truly understand what the problem is, if they know how to fix it, and most importantly, if they know how to prevent it from happening again.
- Go to your "happy place" and start working a favorite old line position to show the crew you've "still got it." Train, rather than do. Research shows that GMs hate it when MUMs visit only to work a position rather than develop learning.
- Compete with managers for team member affection. When you visit the unit treat the managers like the stars, and refrain from the "when I was a GM" stories as much as possible.

- Just coach the GM. Teach everyone something new on each visit, especially the junior managers. Spread energy and knowledge and you reduce turnover.
- Overlook the importance of great hiring and scheduling. Teach your GMs how to manage the schedule so they manage success. Make certain they have their aces in their places and are hiring tough to manage easy.

There are dozens of additional strategies to consider when executing high-impact unit visits, but space limitations prevent further discussion here. So read Chapter 6 in our best-selling book [Multi Unit Leadership: The 7 Stages of Building High-Performing Partnerships & Teams](#) (available at Amazon.com or Sullivision.com) and visit our website home page at Sullivision.com to download our free High Impact Unit Visit Checklist and free Quarterly Business Plan Quick-template, two great tools that will help you prepare for and execute dynamic and impactful store visits that great results every time.

**Jim Sullivan's newest book and audiobook is called Multi Unit Leadership: The 7 Stages of Building High-Performing Partnerships & Teams. You can order it and get his free monthly e-newsletter of best practices at [www.sullivision.com](http://www.sullivision.com) . For a podcast of this article visit [www.sullivision.com/multiu](http://www.sullivision.com/multiu)**

