



NU Directions is a campus/community coalition whose mission is to reduce high-risk drinking among NU students. The coalition includes students, faculty, staff, and administrators of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln as well as community leaders, members of state and city government, hospitality owners, prevention specialists, and law enforcement.

NU Directions is committed to supporting a vibrant and responsible hospitality industry that serves both the Lincoln community and NU students. Toward that end, NU Directions maintains NUtodo.com, a searchable database of entertainment options for students, and collaborates with a variety of organizations to ensure effective training and compliance programs for alcohol vendors in the city of Lincoln.

We always welcome your comments, concerns, or questions, and hope that we can include your business or organization as a partner. If there's anything we can do to assist you, please contact us at (402) 472-9112, or visit our web site at www.nudirections.org



Responsible Hospitality Safe Celebrations

A Guide for the Hospitality Industry



adults don't crawl.

The birthday bar crawl. The “Hour of Power.” Two college traditions that have led to a whole lot of trouble for bar owners and college students alike. Though research tells us that less than 1/3 of UNL students actually celebrate their birthday with a bar crawl, those who do place themselves and your establishment at serious risk. On the other hand, there’s some great business to be had -- so how can you reduce the liability and still attract business? In the Spring of 2001, NU Directions asked a group of Marketing students at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln to explore the issue and develop some ideas that can reduce the risks and enable you to keep the business -- and profit -- from the many UNL students who become legal adults while here in Lincoln. They’ve identified where bar crawls cause you the greatest risk, and how to protect yourself while staying attractive to customers.

**what happens
when YOUR
place
becomes THE
place for a
dangerous
tradition?**

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Safe Celebration

THE CONCEPT: Your bar or restaurant joins the effort to discourage bar crawling by posting anti-crawl campaign ads in your establishment, offering coupons for drink or food special on another night (refusing entry on the birthday), and signing on to a birthday card distributed by the university to parents that warns students of the dangers of the practice.

THE ADVANTAGES:

- Your bar makes a statement about the crawl and helps educate new patrons on responsible consumption.
- You control problematic consumption by eliminating entry of bar crawl parties, yet retain potential business through the coupon.
- You can control future consumption by offering low-alcohol specials.

THE CHALLENGES:

- 1) As with most prohibition-oriented measures, you open yourself up to patrons who focus their energy on breaking the law -- in this case, "sneaking" the birthday person in and hiding the drinks for them.
- 2) There are no alternatives to celebrating the actual birthday, and many may crawl on another night just as dangerously, keeping your liability high.

The Bar Sprawl

THE CONCEPT: Why Crawl when you can Sprawl? Turn part of your bar or restaurant into a birthday party space that can be sold as a complete 21st birthday party, with a set number or type of low-alcohol drinks, food, music and other features. Birthday packages can be offered at various cost levels, from basic to extravagant.

THE ADVANTAGES:

- You get to book parties and sell FAR more than the typical birthday shots to a set group of people who leave your place ten to twenty minutes after they showed up.
- You also get the golden opportunity to MONITOR and CONTROL the consumption, and
- You get to reduce liability (and cost) of shots by offering birthday specials that sound nasty but limit the alcohol.
- You don't need to rely on college students to pay the bill -- PARENTS have been buying private parties in increasing numbers since they've become aware of the dangers of the bar crawl. Putting together a few packages can mean great sales to parents.

THE CHALLENGES:

- 1) You need to create attractive, exciting and fun party packages.
- 2) Parties require dedicated staff to a single space.
- 3) You may have to convince students not to put the old traditions (high-alcohol shot purchases) into the parties.

The Birthday Buddy Party Pack

THE CONCEPT: Your own “birthday present” to those turning 21 includes coupons for food items, a BAC chart, information on how your establishment treats bar crawls, some small gift from your establishment, the phone number for NU on Wheels, and perhaps an incentive for the student to come back to your establishment another time. Door personnel can give the packs when they check ID’s at the door.

THE ADVANTAGES:

- You let birthday celebrants know how you feel about crawls while still selling them products/services.
- You get a heads up about who is celebrating in your establishment by seeing the box on the table.
- You get to reduce liability by offering birthday food or low-alcohol drink specials.
- You have a chance to keep your establishment in their minds for future business with a take-away item and coupon.

THE CHALLENGES:

- 1) The costs associated with the Party Pack.
- 2) You must still monitor and cut off sales to the group -- there is nothing in the Pack keeping crawl parties from overdrinking.
- 3) Students tend to see ANY information as “preachy” -- you’ll have to be creative and hip to avoid having students ridicule the information.

The VIP Card

THE CONCEPT: Your establishment offers a special plastic card that enables the birthday celebrant the opportunity to “jump to the head of the line” on their birthday night, get special offers on food and birthday drinks, and get all the special attention that their birthday deserves from the bar staff rather than from a group of friends who only want to see them intoxicated. Add a free bright T-shirt that they have to wear, and you’ve made monitoring consumption a breeze. Cards can be made available at the door of the bar prior to the birthdate, or mailed to prospective customers as a birthday card (an entry card can be mailed or filled at the door to create the mailing list).

THE ADVANTAGES:

- Ask the professional vacation hospitality people: CARDS ARE IN. People love the illusion of exclusivity it implies.
- You also get the golden opportunity to MONITOR and CONTROL the consumption by
 - a) forcing the birthday person to show the card, thereby identifying that person to your staff;
 - b) offering birthday specials that sound nasty but limit the alcohol.
- You can make the conditions of the card to match your marketing budget and specials, and can change it as often as you wish without reprinting the cards.
- You add the feature of having students PLAN on coming to your establishment by distributing the cards

THE CHALLENGES:

- 1) The cost of the cards and special items.
- 2) Staff need to make a big deal out of birthdays, slowing service.

The Plan: Reduce the Risk, Increase the Business

This much we know for sure: As a tradition, the Birthday Bar Crawl isn't going away any time soon. Many businesses collectively and individually have tried to address the issue and reduce the risks by eliminating bar crawl cards and free drinks, or by refusing entry to those turning 21 on their birthday. Though effective in reducing the problem, these efforts haven't eliminated it. There are ways, however, to address the specific risks associated with birthday bar crawls. The following ideas all try to eliminate the problems and promote business. They're tested and created by the target population -- students. Your welcome to try any or all of these ideas.

The Birthday T-Shirt

NOTE: This idea did not originate from the Marketing class, but has been implemented in Washington, D.C.

THE CONCEPT: Your bar or restaurant joins others on the "crawl" circuit in creating a signable T-shirt that has each bar's logo and "signature" birthday drink. The cost of the shirts are shared, and t-shirts are given wherever the first stop occurs in the crawl. Each bar's "drink" is a low-alcohol pour, and the drinker must be wearing the shirt, which the bartender signs.

THE ADVANTAGES:

- The T-shirt enables you to **MONITOR** the amount of alcohol consumed **IN** your establishment, as well as gauge the amount of alcohol **ALREADY** consumed before they arrived by the number of signatures on the shirt.
- You control the consumption by offering a low-alcohol "birthday drink."
- You advertise your establishment to others with a shirt that becomes a keepsake item.

THE CHALLENGES:

- 1) Cost of the shirt.
- 2) The shirt encourages crawling, and if too many establishments become a part of the plan, then overconsumption is still destined to occur. There may have to be multiple circuits of 4 - 6 establishments per shirt, and the drinker has to follow the specific "map" of the shirt.

Selling to the NORM.

YOUR MARKET IS MORE THAN ONE KIND OF DRINKER.

According to research conducted at the university, only a small percentage of students (11%) actually celebrate with a bar crawl. Many are looking for a good time and great place to enjoy their first legal drink WITHOUT feeling the need or the pressure to overconsume.

Offering specials that appeal only to the “bar crawl” crowd may actually be limiting your business. One question to consider is, “How can I attract those many students who AREN’T interested in the heavy duty bar crawl?” A few ideas:

- Incorporate food offerings
- Provide alternatives to alcohol and “virgin” drinks
- Provide other forms of entertainment so that drinking isn’t the only/central activity

THE “ADULTS DON’T CRAWL” CAMPAIGN

NU Directions, in collaboration with the UNL Parents Association, have created a campaign for NU students and parents. Using the theme “adults don’t crawl,” the campaign includes:

- A birthday card from the university sent to every student turning 21 that explains the dangers and norms of crawling and encourages students to seek safer alternatives.
- A flyer for parents, distributed in the UNL Parents Association Newsletter, encouraging parents to talk about birthday celebrations and plans.
- A special section of NUtodo to advertise and promote birthday specials from all NUtodo.com vendors.
- On-campus advertising.
- Public service announcements on local radio.

Birthday Bar Crawls: The Five Problems for Hospitality Owners

- 1. Dangerous consumption IS the goal.** The tradition is 21 at 21: consume at least 21 shots of alcohol on your 21st birthday. In some social circles on campus, the current record is 32 shots. In the hour of power, the idea is to drink as much as you can from midnight on your birthday to 1:00 a.m. Whether real or imagined, the expectation for the group taking someone out on their 21st birthday is to get them to consume as much alcohol as they can before they pass out. The fun is in watching the person get intoxicated.
- 2. Tracking drink purchases for the birthday boy or girl.** The tradition is also that everyone buys the birthday boy or girl their drinks or shots, which makes tracking the number of drinks actually consumed by the individual difficult. Often, the birthday person is “hidden” from the sight of the bartender or server on purpose, so that they will not get cut off.
- 3. Ordering shots/drinks for effect versus enjoyment.** Also common practice is the ordering of drinks and shots that are known for their potency or entertainment effect. The more a drink is likely to get someone sick or very drunk, the better. Rate of drinking is also a problem -- often, these drinks come so fast that there isn’t time to process the alcohol, bringing BAC levels up and keeping them there.
- 4. Saying no isn’t an option.** Most students interviewed about the birthday bar crawl talk about the tremendous pressure they feel to comply with their friends. Saying “no” to friends, expressing a concern about what you’re drinking, or simply refusing isn’t an option. The last person to rely on to control the situation may be the birthday person themselves.
- 5. The friends all drink, too.** From a business sense, the good news is that birthday crawls come in groups of customers willing to buy your products and services. The bad news is that the birthday person isn’t the only one becoming intoxicated, adding to the risk of problems.