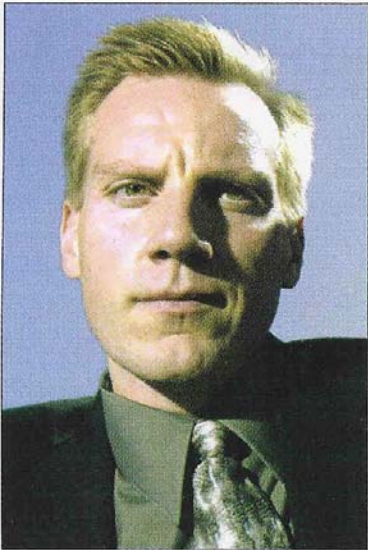


# Get Over It



*Justin Doucette, Food Management Professional, Coyote Café at the MGM Grand and Chairman of Nevada Restaurant Association*

## **Names withheld to protect the innocent ... and fictional.**

Many of you who know me know that I'm generally a pretty likeable person (if I do say so myself). Like most of us, however, I have my share of ... well, let's just say that not everyone in the state wishes to brag about my likeability.

One such detractor recently announced (rather loudly) that he would be terminating his restaurants' memberships in the Nevada Restaurant Association as well as the Nevada Restaurant Self-Insured Group, two boards on which I proudly serve. When asked why he was leaving, he not so subtly eluded to his sordid past with yours truly.

While I am able to understand our specific differences, the whole scene makes me wonder why some people simply can't get over some things. Come on, let's face it -- bad things happen; relationships head south; partnerships dissolve; businesses fail; inequalities exist. So life is not always fair ... get over it. In this particular circumstance, a former member (apparently unable to get over it) was willing to sacrifice representation, membership benefits, financial gain and more to prove his point. Unfortunately, in the analysis of his position, many of us forgot exactly what point he was proving.

As fate would have it, just a couple of months after terminating his memberships, this restaurateur found himself embroiled in an issue with a regulatory agency. After attempts to represent himself in his position appeared to go in vain, he did what I hope many of our current members would do -- he called the Nevada Restaurant Association for help. Unfortunately, in this case, the issue was raised by a non-member.

Permit me to digress. One of the fundamental tenets of the Nevada Restaurant Association is to protect the interests of its members. In some cases, such protection is manifested through association advocacy of specific member issues. For instance, the association has rushed to the defense of more than one member facing issues with a local health district. In other cases, the protection is manifested through indirect advocacy of general-industry issues. For example, in September, the board of directors of the association traveled to Washington, D.C. to alert and inform our elected representatives of upcoming legislative issues that affect our industry. Such issues may be raised or identified by members or non-members alike. In fact, the only criterion for an association call to arms is that an industry issue is identified.

Back to my personal skeletons -- our former member had an issue and asked for association intervention. Had our former member identified a concern that adversely affected the industry as a whole (such as an obesity-related lawsuit), instead of a concern that affected only his companies and his own personal views, the Nevada Restaurant Association would likely have vigorously analyzed the issue. However, if his ego allowed him to retain his membership, the association may have taken action whether or not his issue was personal in nature or industry-wide.

There are a couple of lessons to be learned here. First, think before you act. In this case, the operator acted hastily for personal reasons, only to regret that decision when he learned that the association would not drop everything and come to his aid since he was no longer a member and his issues were personal and not industry-wide. Second, whether you believe it or not, whether you are a member or not, and whether you like me or not, I, along with the board of directors as well as the staff of the Nevada Restaurant Association, will vigorously and actively defend you and the food and beverage industry from actual and perceived threats.