



RUNNING SIDEWORK

LESS SIDEWORK.
MORE REVENUE.

PUZZLES & PINTS



A COMPLETE PLAYBOOK FOR A
FUN, ENGAGING EVENT THAT
BRINGS GUESTS BACK WEEK
AFTER WEEK.



★ THE BIG PICTURE

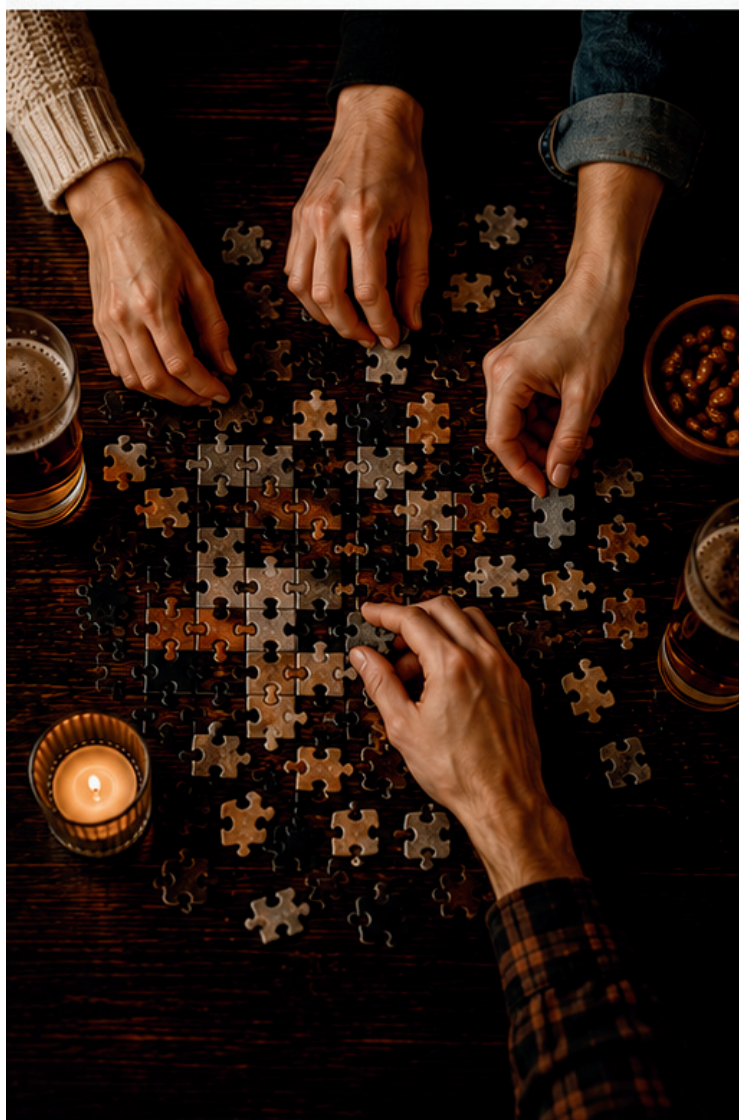
Puzzles & Pints turns an ordinary night out into something people look forward to every week.

It's simple. It's engaging. It's built for connection. Guests gather, teams form, puzzles come together, and your bar becomes the place where neighborhoods compete, laugh, and unwind.

The result? Longer visits. Stronger tabs. Return guests. And a weekly tradition your community talks about.

**YOU BRING THE GUESTS.
WE'LL SHARE THE IDEAS.**





WHY THE PIECES FIT

**IT'S SIMPLE PSYCHOLOGY.
DONE THE RIGHT WAY.**

People want connection. They want a reason to slow down, talk more, and share a good time. Puzzles & Pints makes that happen naturally—without forcing it. It feels easy. Because it is.

**GOOD PEOPLE. GOOD DRINKS.
A GOOD REASON TO STAY.**

“When you create moments that matter, you create customers that stay.”

— KIM, FOUNDER



**NOT JUST A GAME.
A BETTER NIGHT OUT.**

Traditional nights out can feel noisy, rushed, and easy to forget.

This is different.

It's interactive without being overwhelming. It's social without pressure. It's fun from the first piece to the last call.

That's the combination that keeps people coming back every week.

SET THE STAGE.

A great Puzzles & Pints night starts long before the first team sits down. Use these setup details to create an easy, organized, and unforgettable experience for your guests.



01 PURCHASE YOUR PUZZLES

Purchase 8–12 identical puzzles based on the number of teams you expect. Keeping every team on the same puzzle ensures a fair competition from the first piece to the last.

Keep one unopened puzzle as a backup.

02 WRAP THEM AHEAD OF TIME

Have your host or hostess wrap each puzzle before event night using kraft paper, wrapping paper, or another simple covering.

The mystery is part of the fun.

03 SET EVERY TABLE

Before guests arrive, every team should have the following:

- One wrapped puzzle
- Blank cardstock for a team name
- Markers
- Drink menu
- Rule sheet

Everything should already be waiting for them.

04 CHOOSE THE RIGHT TABLES

Reserve tables that are just outside your normal dining flow—close enough for other guests to notice, but with enough space for teams to spread out comfortably.

05 KEEP ONE EXTRA PUZZLE

Have one additional wrapped puzzle in the back just in case a box is damaged, missing pieces, or a late team joins.



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PUTTING THE PIECES TOGETHER

A great Puzzles & Pints night feels uncomplicated for your team and unforgettable for your guests. Here's the flow we recommend.



1.

GUESTS ARRIVE & SETTLE IN

Let people arrive, grab a drink, order some food, and get comfortable.

Give the room 20–30 minutes to settle in and connect.

2.

WRAPPED PUZZLES HIT THE TABLES

Bring every team their wrapped puzzle at the same time.

Keep the image a surprise. The anticipation builds.

3.

THE COUNTDOWN

Get the room's attention and build the moment.

3... 2... 1... GO.

Everyone opens their puzzle together.

The energy in the room changes instantly.

4.

THE PUZZLE COMES TO LIFE

Teams dive in. Conversations start. Friendly competition takes over.

Staff circulates, offers another round, and keeps the vibe high.

5.

THE FINISH

First team to finish calls it in.

Snap a photo, celebrate, hand out prizes, and let everyone know next month's theme and date before they leave.



RUNNING SIDEWORK TIP

The surprise is part of the magic. Don't hand out the puzzles as guests walk in. Let everyone settle in first. When every wrapped puzzle hits the table at the same time and you count down together, the room feels it. That shared moment is what makes Puzzles & Pints so memorable.



RUNNING SIDEWORK

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MORE REVENUE.



EVERY PIECE COUNTS.

A few simple rules keep
Puzzles & Pints fun, fair,
and unforgettable.

Set the stage, explain the rules,
and then get out of the way.
You've done your part.

Now let the night unfold.



01 THE BASICS

2-6 players per team is
ideal. Each table gets
one puzzle. Same puzzle
for every team.

02 WRAPPED UNTIL GO

Puzzles stay wrapped
until you say go.
When you say go,
the clock starts.

03 HOW TO WIN

First team to complete
their puzzle and raise
their hand wins the
round. Staff verifies
completion.

04 HOUSE RULES

Set your rules before
the night begins—hints,
time limits, tie breakers,
and prizes. Keep it clear
and consistent.

05 KEEP IT FUN

This isn't about being
the smartest. It's about
connection, laughs, and
a little friendly rivalry.
Good energy wins.



RUNNING SIDEWORK TIP

Explain the rules before the first round.
Then let go and enjoy the show.
The best puzzle nights feel organized,
not over-managed. You set the stage.
They create the moment.

*Good rules
create great nights.
Keep it simple.
Keep it fun.*





RUNNING SIDEWORK

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THE MISSING PIECE.

Great games get people in the door.
Great food and drinks
make them stay a little longer,
order a little more,
and come back next time.
Build a menu that fits the night—
easy to execute, easy to love.

*Simple. Shareable.
Profitable.*

Think menu items that are easy to prep,
easy to plate, and easy to profit.
Keep it fun, on-theme, and built
for your kitchen—not a cookbook.

THEMED BITES

Shareable plates keep
the energy high and
the kitchen moving.
Think sliders, flatbreads,
pretzel bites, wings,
and loaded fries.

PAIR IT UP

Create simple pairings
that make decisions easy.
A drink and a bite
suggestion increases
the check—and
the experience.

PUZZLE COCKTAILS

Signature drinks give
the night personality.
Use playful names and
puzzle piece garnishes
to tie it all together.

SWEET FINISH

A little dessert share
is the perfect way
to end the night.
Keep it simple and
something worth
sticking around for.



RUNNING SIDEWORK TIP

Feature one or two cocktails,
two or three shareables,
and one dessert.
Keep it tight, on-theme,
and easy to execute.
Your guests (and your staff)
will thank you—and so will
your bottom line.

*Good food.
Great drinks.
Happy guests.
That's the
missing piece.*



THE PUZZLE HELPERS.

Your team sets the tone and keeps the energy high. When they're excited, guests feel it too. Here's how to rally your crew and turn them into the secret to a great night.



GET THEM PLAYING

Kick off your alley rally with a five-minute mini puzzle challenge. Let the winning server pick first shift meal, earn a free drink after work, or win a small prize. If they're laughing before the doors open, they'll carry that energy all night.



GET THEM CUSTOM WEAR

Match the vibe and get your team in the spirit. Puzzle T-shirts, buttons, aprons, or even beer sponsor gear make the event feel official and get everyone excited to be part of it.



LET THEM TRY IT

Sample the featured cocktail, appetizer, or dessert before service. It's much easier to recommend something you've actually tasted.



MAKE IT A COMPETITION

A little friendly competition goes a long way. Consider recognizing:

- Highest check average
- Most featured cocktails sold
- Most event food specials sold
- Most puzzle-night desserts sold
- Server whose puzzle team wins the event



REWARD THE WINS

Celebrate the team that makes it happen. Give the winning server a prize, a drink, or some well-earned recognition. When your team wins, everyone wins.



RUNNING SIDEWORK TIP

A motivated team creates a better experience. Better experience means happier guests—and more returning teams.

*Great events
start with
a great team.*



THE PERFECT FIT.

A great event doesn't have to do everything alone. The right partners can help lower costs, create excitement, and give guests even more reasons to come back. The key isn't asking for money—it's finding businesses that are the *perfect* fit for your event.



BEER DISTRIBUTOR

FEATURED PINT OF THE NIGHT

Create one featured draft for every Puzzles & Pints. Ask your beer distributor to help promote it, provide pint glasses, branded merchandise, or prizes for the winning team.

LIQUOR DISTRIBUTOR

SPONSOR THE COCKTAIL MENU

Your Running Sidework menu already includes four cocktails and a signature shot. Ask your liquor distributor to help print the menus, provide POS materials, donate giveaways, or support the featured drinks.

HOBBY SHOP

SUPPLY THE CHALLENGE

Partner with a local hobby shop to provide the monthly puzzle, sponsor prizes, or offer gift cards. It's a natural partnership that benefits both businesses and brings in guests who already love puzzles.

TOY & GAME STORE

BUILD BETTER PRIZE PACKAGES

Think beyond restaurant gift cards. Board games, puzzles, and family game night bundles fit the event perfectly and create prizes that guests actually get excited about winning.

HOW I'D PUT THIS TOGETHER



A SIMPLE PLAN FOR A NIGHT GUESTS WILL TALK ABOUT—AND COME BACK FOR.

1 PICK THE NIGHT—AND HOLD THE NEXT ONE

Choose a slower night that could use a reason for guests to come in. Puzzles & Pints works well on an open weekday or in place of a promotion that has gone flat.

Pencil in a second date and possible theme now so you have something ready to announce if the first night goes well.

2 SET RESERVATIONS AND TEAM LIMITS

Decide how guests will reserve and how many teams your restaurant can handle comfortably.

Watch the team sizes so you know whether you need two-tops, four-tops, six-tops, or a mix. Once the room is full, close reservations.

3 FIND THE PUZZLES AND SPONSORS

Ask a local hobby or toy shop about sponsoring the night or donating identical puzzles.

Talk to beer and liquor reps about product support, prizes, swag, or becoming the featured brand.

If you are buying the puzzles, order six to eight identical 500- or 1,000-piece puzzles, plus one backup.

4 BUILD THE FOOD, DRINKS, RULES, AND PRIZES

Meet with the kitchen manager, bar manager, and management team.

Choose the featured drinks, decide whether bucket specials make sense, and lock in the main prize.

Set the team rules, competition time, planned break, and any advantage for smaller teams.

Keep the rules simple and explain them before play begins.

5 PUSH THE NIGHT IN-HOUSE AND ONLINE

Treat the first event like the start of a recurring night.

Use table tents, flyers, to-go bag inserts, social posts, and staff talking points.

Make sure every message explains what the event is, how to reserve, and that space is limited.

6 WRAP THE PUZZLES AND MAP THE ROOM

Wrap every puzzle before event night so no team can see the image early. Use themed paper or simple brown paper.

Once reservations are set, build the floor plan around the team sizes and choose an area that works without disrupting regular service.

7 PREP THE TEAM AND EVENT MATERIALS

Have the bartenders test the featured drinks and print the drink menus.

Place heavy cardstock and a marker on each table so guests can choose a team name.

Assign one host or manager to explain the rules, run the clock, call out progress, handle the break, and judge the finish.

8 SETTLE GUESTS IN, THEN START TOGETHER

Give teams time to arrive, order food and drinks, and get settled.

When everyone is ready, place one wrapped puzzle on each table and start with a clear countdown.

Run the full 90 minutes, with the planned break outside the competition clock.

If team sizes are uneven, smaller teams can receive a short head start or catch-up period.

9 FINISH STRONG AND SELL THE NEXT ONE

At the end of 90 minutes, the host or manager judges which team has completed the most.

If two teams are too close to call, give them a five-minute tiebreaker.

Award the main prize to the winner and use a few smaller prizes for categories like Best Team Name, Best Energy, or Hardest-Working Team.

Let every group take its puzzle home and announce the next Puzzles & Pints date before they leave.



MY OPERATOR NOTE

Keep the rules simple, keep one person in charge, and give teams plenty of time to order food and drinks before the countdown starts. The real win is getting guests excited enough to reserve a table for the next one.

MAKE IT YOUR OWN.

The small details make the biggest difference. Use these ideas to add personality, create excitement, and keep guests talking long after the last piece is placed.



03 DRIVE REVENUE

SELL THE EXPERIENCE

Place featured cocktail menus on every puzzle table before guests arrive.

Make sure every server knows the featured drinks, the grand prize, and the next Puzzles & Pints date.

FEATURE DRINKS

Promote a featured pint or signature cocktail.

Create a reason to try something new.

CREATE REASONS TO RETURN

Use your event to promote upcoming events, holidays, and other themed nights so guests keep coming back.

01 CREATE THE ENERGY

LET THE EVENT SELL ITSELF

Place Puzzles & Pints tables near the entrance. Guests will see the fun, ask about it, and come right back to play.

NAME EVERY TEAM

Have each table create a team name before the timer starts. Write it large on parchment paper and display it at the end of the table. The DJ and staff can cheer them on all night.

CELEBRATE PROGRESS

Don't wait until someone finishes the puzzle. Celebrate every milestone and keep the energy high all night long.

02 MAKE IT MEMORABLE

CHANGE THE THEME

Keep things fresh with seasonal puzzles all year long.

LET THEM TAKE IT HOME

When the event ends, let each team box up their puzzle and take it home. It's a souvenir, a conversation starter, and a reminder of your restaurant.

04 LISTEN & IMPROVE

ASK. LISTEN. IMPROVE.

Before guests leave, ask one simple question: "If we do this again next month, what would make it even better?" Their feedback will make your next event even stronger.

A Little Extra Fun

When you want to turn it up a notch, these little extras bring even more laughs, hype, and memorable moments to the night.

- Border Patrol
- Piece Out
- Match the humor to your crowd
- Ask Me for a Hint
- Puzzle Dealer
- Professional Piece Finder
- Missing Piece Match

THEME IDEAS FOR EVERY SEASON

Great puzzles start with the right theme.
Use these ideas to match the season,
spark conversation, and keep Puzzles & Pints
nights fresh all year long.

WINTER

- JANUARY** | The Cozy Cabin
*Snowy cabins, glowing fireplaces,
and warm, high-contrast details.*
- FEBRUARY** | Candy & Sweet Treats
*Heart-shaped boxes, conversation
hearts, and candy collages full of color.*
- MARCH** | Irish Countryside
*Cottages, stone walls, and green
rolling hills full of luck.*

SPRING

- APRIL** | The Greenhouse
*Potted plants, garden tools,
and rows of tulips in every color.*
- MAY** | Farmers Market
*Market stalls piled high with produce,
fresh bread, and bold, busy scenes.*
- JUNE** | Beach & Boardwalk
*Flip-flops, sunglasses, tropical drinks,
and seashells by the shore.*

SUMMER

- JULY** | American Retro Diner
*Neon jukeboxes, classic cars,
milkshakes, and checkered floors.*
- AUGUST** | Amusement Park
*Ferris wheels, carnival games,
rollercoasters, and popcorn stalls.*
- SEPTEMBER** | The Library
*Wall-to-wall books, globes,
vintage touches, and cozy details.*

AUTUMN

- OCTOBER** | The Pumpkin Patch
*Pumpkins, hay bales, corn stalks,
and barns in full autumn color.*
- NOVEMBER** | Food Collages
*Cereal boxes, soda caps, donuts,
or candy bars with fun, clear text.*
- DECEMBER** | The Holiday Toy Shop
*Toy trains, nutcrackers, Christmas trees,
and festive main street storefronts.*



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MORE REVENUE.

THE LAST PIECE.

If you've made it this far, you already have everything you need.

You don't need a massive budget. You don't need a marketing department. You don't need to reinvent the wheel.

You simply need to pick a date, trust the process, and invite your guests to join you. The rest will happen naturally.

Somewhere in the room beside you, friends are laughing over a missing puzzle piece. A server is delivering another round of drinks. New guests are asking what all the excitement is about. Regulars are already talking about next month's event.

That's what Puzzles & Pints is all about. Creating a reason for people to come together. Creating a reason for them to come back. And creating one more night your restaurant won't soon forget.

We hope this playbook gave you the confidence to make it happen.

CREATE CONNECTIONS.

Give your guests a reason to gather around the same table.

BUILD TRADITIONS.

The best promotions become nights your regulars look forward to every month.

MAKE IT YOURS.

Take what you've learned and adapt it to fit your restaurant, your team, and your guests.



THE PIECES ARE IN PLACE.
YOUR TEAM IS READY.
NOW MAKE IT UNFORGETTABLE.