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Automated, but not left alone: mia&noa's Community Barista describes her brand-new job profile



“You bring the cup – we bring the coffee”. It may sound so simple. However, the concept of mia&noa for premium coffee-to-go is based on countless innovative ideas, combined into a new service process. The product and all the ingredients are sustainable, producing no waste and CO₂-compensated. Plus, the purchase procedure is completely contactless. To name a few of the many advantages of the system. A coffee just right for our socially distant times, when on the other hand the awareness for sustainability rises. But how can an automated solution come along with a personal touch and a coffee bar ambiance? Or even heart and soul? Nobody can explain this better than the start-up's first “Community Barista” Diane-Laure Renouard. An Interview by Daniela Konrad.

Diane, as the “Community Barista” you are responsible for managing the first automated coffee bar by mia&noa. Can you explain about the many facets of this brand-new job profile?

First of all, the Community Barista has to make sure that the machine is working technically. I have to ensure that all of our ingredients are fresh and available and that the bar is sparkling clean. As we are serving premium coffee, the quality of our products really matters. Therefore, the aroma of the coffee and the freshness of the milk need to be checked every single day.

Another important aspect of my role is introducing people to the mia&noa world. That involves being physically there at my coffee bar, giving advice to our customers and showing them how they get their perfect “customized” coffee. Additionally, I am responsible for the social media and community management. Which provides another way of communicating the concept of mia&noa and supporting our customers.

Working as a Community Barista for mia&noa combines many jobs. I am the bar manager, barista, host, advisor, ambassador of the brand, a social media manager and even a copywriter and a graphic designer. Most important: I serve as the first point of contact to our customers – physically and digitally. This gives me a 360°-view on customer satisfaction.

How often are you at the bar?

Usually twice a day. There are check-ups early in the morning and in the afternoon. This involves activating the machine, cleaning it, filling it, checking the ingredients, testing and of course tasting. All of this is necessary to provide the perfect coffee experience to our customers.

As you mentioned, a very important part of your work is digital, like the social media & community management. Which are your specific tasks in this respect?

I am in charge of managing the social media accounts of mia&noa on Instagram and Facebook. This implies the planning and creating of social media content, including graphic design and copywriting. On the other hand, as the community manager I am also directly communicating with our customers on the respective channels and via the mia&noa app. So far, Instagram is the most important tool for us. But we are planning to get more active on other social media channels as well.

At the same time, our clients are also becoming more and more engaged themselves. They create great content, sharing their coffee experiences and favorite cups.

What is your professional background? How does it help you in your daily business and with managing this fulltime job involving such multiple tasks?

As a first degree I studied communication and advertising.

I also did a lot of hostess jobs and worked at several events promoting all different kind of brands. Due to this experience, I am used to being in direct contact with clients from a variety of industries and cultures, explaining to them about a new product. This experience is extremely helpful.

Was there anything totally new for you? Skills you had to be trained on?

In fact, I have never worked as a barista before. When starting to work for mia&noa, I was given a two-step initial Barista training. It included a theoretical introduction to coffee and a two-day barista foundations training with our coffee roaster Blasercafé in Bern. We serve one of their organic fair-trade blends at our bar.

In the training, I learnt a lot about different types of coffee, the grinding degrees, brewing techniques and so on. After the foundation level certification, I can now move ahead to the next training levels which will also include Latte Art. The knowledge I acquired helps me understand the coffee bar and what makes a good coffee, so that I can control the mia&noa coffee experience correctly. Let's say it opened the door to the interesting universe of coffee, as I was almost clueless before.

I admire the work of baristas in coffee shops and this is a great inspiration for my daily work and interaction with customers. The training immersed me in their very particular world of aromas very quickly.

I also got an introduction by Schaerer, the producer of our coffee engine. Most of the technical knowledge comes with experience though, since our coffee engine is brand new and completely tailor-made. As the barista, you really need to “understand” your machine.

Which are - in your view - the biggest advantages of mia&noa?

There is so much innovation combined in one product: zero-contact, zero-waste, zero-plastic. A fun fact: mia&noa is what I call a “heaven for introverts”. You can get your individualized coffee in silence. Without talking to anyone, not giving your name to be written on the cup or being called out in the coffee shop. It is also possible to invite somebody for a “remote” coffee. Just buy a coffee via the mia&noa app and send the QR code.

One of mia&noa’s guiding principles is “automated, but not left alone”. That means, I watch over it and can be contacted to assist our customers getting their perfect coffee. This is why we also have the barista-chat function in the app.

How does the mia&noa app work?

At first, you have to download it in the Apple store or PlayStore. With the app you can choose your coffee and customize it. We have a huge variety on offer – from the standard americano or espresso to cappuccino, latte or seasonal specialties. You can add cow or oat milk and choose the amount of sugar you would like to have. Then you get the QR code. With this on your mobile phone you can go to the coffee bar any time, scan the code, put in your mug – ready!

As the Barista in charge you have to ensure the quality of the products. How much coffee do you have to drink on a daily basis ;-)? Which is the “bestseller” at the moment? And which is your favorite coffee?

Every day, I have to taste the espresso as a reference or base and the two kinds of milk to ensure freshness. Our bestsellers are the cappuccino and espresso – but I think it is too early to see a proper trend. My choice is the “flat white” – with quite a lot of milk. After getting the machine ready, that is my personal treat in the morning.

The design of the automated coffee bar is truly unique. What about your “working clothes”?

At mia&noa, we have “uniqueforms” – individualized clothes embracing the mia&noa corporate identity and spirit. They have been created by a young local designer from Geneva, reflecting another of mia&noa’s premises: being close to our local community and supporting each other.

Thank you very much for the interesting insights, Diane!