



Gaining a Return on YOUR REGULARS

Listening to your best customers can be the difference between winning and losing in the market-share game

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In a world where everyone seems to take pleasure in telling you what you're doing wrong, or what you could do more of, letting your best customers tell you what you're doing right might just be the key to building your business and feeling great while doing it.

Talking to your best customers helps you learn what matters most to them. What these key customers know for certain is what brings in most of your business. Armed with this knowledge, you can focus on what they love about you – and eliminate what they don't – to drive top line growth.

Simply stated, not all customers are created equal. You make money on some,

you pay the overheads with others, and as hard as it is to admit, there are some you would be better off without.

While your heavy users, or regulars, might represent only one in every 10 customers you serve, they come more often than others and can therefore represent between 20-50 per cent of your sales. A few people do indeed make a very big difference.

Two issues ago, we looked at the effects of a market share game on restaurants over the next five years. Simply, a market share game is played because there are not very many new customers to be had. Most customers are the same ones you and your competitors already serve: the ones who love or hate you, and everything in between.

“When you need to steal market share to grow, your best customers can really pay off,” says Margo Jay, chief insight officer at Hidden Truths. “Your best customers most clearly tell you what they are really buying from you, giving you both the insight and tools needed to attract more visits from the rest. Your

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best customers give you the necessary focus and help identify the actions you need to take to impact sales fast.”

Over and above what your regulars tell you, you can learn even more from talking to your competitors’ best customers. They can tell you where you and your competitors differ and what really matters to win.

“Your best customers can also help you attract new business,” explains Denis Hancock, who works with Wikinomics author Don Tapscott. “Word of mouth referral can drive sales growth. The benefits of meeting your best customers’ expectations to earn their endorsement, and the risks of failing to do so have never been greater now that people are

getting information they trust from social networks on the web.”

Marketing’s job is changing. The old saying “marketing brings the customers in and operations brings them back” worked well when the industry was growing rapidly. Marketing’s job is now more focused on taking guest counts away from other restaurants, in many cases with the help of customers you already serve.


So if you want to take your marketing to the next level and drive growth in guest counts, find out what your most loyal customers think about you. What you learn will not only help you separate yourself from your competition, but drive your topline growth.



Read more on great marketing ideas, tips and programs for foodservice professionals.

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