



Commentary: 10 restaurant marketing tips for 2012

By Linda Duke, CEO, Duke Marketing LLC, and editor, Restaurant Marketing Magazine. Ten restaurant marketing trends and tips for the New Year. 1. Quest for survival. The great redwoods are hundreds of ...

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Ten restaurant marketing trends and tips for the New Year.

1. Quest for survival.

The great redwoods are hundreds of years old and without a devastating forest fire these trees cannot release their seeds and would never have new growth. The redwood fire is a perfect analogy for today's restaurant brands. The restaurant industry has been through a devastating forest fire all its own. There will be some restaurant brands that will never come back.

Case and point, how many restaurant chains have declared Chapter 11 and shuttered locations this year? There will be some new growth on the old trees, like the old restaurant brands reinventing themselves for today's consumer. We are seeing this with IHOP and Denny's creating new hybrid brands along with Red Robin, PF Chang's and others following suit. And there will be completely new growth that we have never seen before, just like some of the new restaurant brands that are popping up all over — particularly in the fast casual space. Which tree is your restaurant brand? Never to be seen again or reborn?

2. Reinventing your brand for today's consumer — the new consumer mindset.

The new economy is creating a new consumer paradigm. Consumers that were once wary and kept their wallets closed may have to keep them closed for another year. All economic indicators still show consumers are not spending as much as they used to, and restaurant operators have felt this cutback firsthand. Unfortunately only the strong will survive and today's restaurants are seeing a shake out of those brands that are weak and can't survive, and those that can reinvent themselves, still will be profitable, and will dominate.

In case you haven't noticed, there is a new consumer mindset. Spend less, save more, don't use credit and whatever you do, don't indulge. Maybe not every guest you serve, but