

Mavenisms From a Restaurant Marketer, Part 2

Attract new customers and build loyalty with a creative marketing plan.

As PMQ's resident marketing maven, I have compiled a list of 10 "mavenisms," or key strategies that can be implemented to improve your restaurant's overall marketing plan. I presented the first five mavenisms in last month's issue. In this issue, I'd like to offer five more.

MAVENISM #6

Think of your restaurant as a venue.

Your establishment can serve as a venue for many types of events that will draw additional business and boost your image with the general public. Here are some ideas:

- Offer to host a fundraiser for local nonprofit organizations. Return a portion of your revenue to the organization—they eat and pay, and you give 20% back to them.
- Invite social groups, such as the Red Hat Society or clubs for mah-jongg players, bridge players or car enthusiasts, to use your restaurant for their regular meetings.
- Get feedback from your customers by hosting an in-restaurant focus group. Select a certain day and time—preferably a Saturday afternoon—and bring in 10 to 15 customers to be interviewed about your food, service and atmosphere. Offer an incentive—such as a free entree card or complimentary menu

item—for their participation. Try to get clear responses on customers' preferences and perceptions and solicit their ideas on what creates an emotional connection to your brand.

MAVENISM #7

Spend your food instead of cash.

Instead of spending money on advertising, use food samples—such as pizza, an appetizer, chips and salsa or even signature menu items—to entice new business and drive catering sales. You can make a big impact just by taking samples to targeted businesses or groups and getting your food in their mouths! Also reach out to radio DJs and provide free meal coupons that they can give away on the air, or offer to cook one of your signature menu items on a local TV morning show. This strategy—which is easy to implement but too often overlooked—makes people want to try your restaurant or reminds them to come back again.

MAVENISM #8

Practice socially responsible marketing.

A vision for your business may be necessary for success, but it is no longer sufficient—having a "social vision" is also imperative, and restaurant operators must get with the program. Green marketing and socially responsible marketing have become major focuses for businesses and consumers alike. Talk to your distributor about locally grown or locally manufactured products as well as other companies that specialize in organic foods and sustainability practices. Many distributors already have sources for organic and sustainable lines.

How does this approach benefit you? It's good public relations. Use menus, signage, check presenters and word of mouth to spread information about your socially responsible efforts, and, in turn, your actions will generate good will, attract more loyal customers and turn your guests into "ambassadors" who are willing to share your story with others.

MAVENISM #9

Get on the LSM Diet.

Restaurant operators should focus their marketing efforts within a radius of three to five miles and create their own niche. Community involvement is the glue that holds all marketing and advertising efforts together and makes them effective. It's also your best chance to compete against the larger chains that can



afford mass media and advertising. But local store marketing won't work unless you make a commitment to change behaviors and habits. I call it the LSM Diet, a philosophy for understanding the importance of local store marketing and how it can provide ROI—that is, "return on involvement."

Any restaurant operator can follow the LSM Diet, and it can be implemented at any time. But the plan will be different for each operator. You'll want to create your own LSM Diet plan and schedule time to step beyond your four walls to interact with the community, schools and local nonprofit companies. If your restaurant is located near a hospital or a business park, for example, start there. Adhering to the LSM Diet takes time and effort, but it's worth the trouble. You will benefit from a strong return on involvement in the form of guest loyalty, frequency and sales success.

MAVENISM #10

Inspiration is the secret ingredient!

In today's economic climate, if you think nothing has changed and you can simply wait for guests to walk through the door, you're wrong. It's a new world for restaurant operators, and you'll be left behind unless you find a way to inspire and motivate yourself and your crew. Be creative in developing new tactics for driving sales and encourage that same creativity in your staff. Success will come to those operators who develop and implement creative marketing tactics that reap return on involvement.

Finally, following my top 10 mavenisms is a great start, but you should also take inspiration from them and develop original ideas of your own! 🍕



Linda Duke is the CEO of Duke Marketing and author of *Recipes for Restaurateurs* (marketing-cookbook.com), a "cookbook" of marketing ideas for restaurant owners. She publishes a quarterly industry resource, *Restaurant Marketing Magazine*, and an educational program, *LSM-U, Local Store Marketing University*. Find out more at dukemarketing.com.

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