

Food & Beverage - 7 Ways to Help Customers Spend More With You - By Ken Burgin

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When money is tight, nothing should come between a customer and their purchase.

But there can be small ways that we make it harder for them to spend - they may have made sense in boom times, but they don't now.

The sales term is 'grease the slide' - removing any friction that stops a customer completing a sale. Check this list for possible bumps or roadblocks:

Take more Credit cards: If you are taking them, do you accept the whole range? Sure, Amex fees are high, but 'no Amex' rules get some people offside - now's not the time for that. Still avoiding cards? Don't make it hard for people who don't have enough ready cash in their pocket.

Accept Debit or EFT card payments: They're welcomed by many retailers but less often by restaurants, cafes and bars - why? There are a quite a few people who don't have a 'credit' card, maybe because of their credit history or income level. But they do have money in the bank and want to access it with a card - be nice to them.

Side note: is your credit card slip configured to allow for tips? I've eaten at two small businesses recently that presented a credit card slip to sign without the Tip line - it's a silly oversight that can be quickly rectified.

Fax-through Order or Confirmation Forms: if you're in catering or events, make it easy for people to fill out an order and fax it through with their credit card details. Keep refining the format if mistakes are made when people fill out the form.

Allow Ordering online: Setting up e-commerce online is an investment that may be worth considering - talk to your bank about costs. If you handle standard catering products, it's almost essential these days. PayPal is an easy way to get started - it's widely used by the public, driven by the popularity of Ebay. Setting yourself up with a PayPal business account is straightforward.

Accept Event Payments Online: if you're promoting entertainment or special events and don't have e-commerce, set up another payment option with a service such as EventBrite. It's available in multiple currencies and is widely used - the service fee isn't much different to your credit card merchant charge, and you save on paperwork.

Sell Gift Cards and Vouchers: yes, we remind people about this a lot. Join up with one of the services that manage the payments and administration for you, or set up your own. At the simplest, have a fax-back form that can be returned with credit card details. A restaurant experience is perfect for the person 'who has everything'.

Sell Food & Drink in Advance: Here's a typical deal offered by clever cafes: 'buy 10 coffees now for the price of 8' - the customer hands over \$20 and gets 10 coffees normally worth \$25. And you have a nice boost for the cashflow. Large groups like Starbucks will load up a card with any prepaid amount - this is the small business version.

Finally, review the credit you offer: If you have businesses running accounts with you, now's the time to review what's outstanding. Are they backed up by a valid credit card? Everyone's tightening up - you should too.

Profitable Hospitality offers management and cost-control systems (Manuals & CD-ROMs) for restaurants, cafes, hotels, bars and clubs. The systems are based on the extensive consulting and operating experience of CEO Ken Burgin, and enable busy owners and managers to set up complete operating and cost-control systems in minutes, not months. Profitable Hospitality also runs regular management training workshops in the areas of kitchen profit & efficiency, restaurant marketing and functions management. A free monthly e-newsletter keeps you up to date on the latest industry management issues. www.profitablehospitality.com.

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