



*Café Scene combines the industry commentary of Rita Srblin, Australia's first café-coach, Home Barista Institute trainer and well respected industry advocate with the peerless knowledge and insight of the one and only Nathan Wakeford, Managing Director of Sorage Fine Foods, lecturer in entrepreneurship at RMIT and business consultant. This unique pairing reflects our total commitment to the hospitality industry in offering you unrivalled expertise opinion and insight.*

# Café strategy

If you've read the news or watched it on TV then you'll know that the world economy is currently suffering, people's assets are decreasing in value, consumer confidence is down and people in general are spending less. Inevitably in this environment, businesses are going to experience some trying times and the stark reality is that some will fail. But this doesn't have to be the case, or at least it doesn't have to be the case for you, as long as you take some measures to make your business more secure.

The basic ways to make your business more secure are to increase both the number of customers coming to your store and the amount they spend each visit, or by reducing costs associated with each sale you make (thereby increasing your profit margin). The good news is that with some creative thinking, some hard work and with the right guidance, all of these things can be achieved.

There are a number of strategies to battle this and we will be looking at them over the coming weeks in BeanScene.



## STRATEGY 1 WITH RITA SRBLIN: LEARN THE BASICS

Everybody loves it when they can walk into a café and ask for 'the usual', or when the owners know your name and greet you personally when you walk in, right? Well it's the same with kids, too! They just love it when they can go to a place and get treated like they're special, it makes them want to come back again and again.

So how do you have kids ask their family to come to your place? First let me share with you an interesting fact: Did you know that the choice of a café is often decided by children?

Many times a couple will decide to go out for a meal. They'll announce that they are going out to eat. And ... the kids start screaming for a particular café that they would like to go to!

They don't always win, but most of the time the parents do give in.

And, if you play your cards right the café the children ask for is your café! How?

Because you know their name, you made them feel special last visit, you showed the family, especially the kids, that you cared enough to pay attention to them!

Whenever a child is seated find out that child's name, and offer a free babyccino accompanied with marshmallows that every child loves. Most parents won't mind, they will actually love the idea, as will the children. In fact, the results might surprise you! When your staff acknowledge the child and call them by their name, they will become fans of your café.

Let's analyse this by looking at what you've done:

1. You've just made the child feel important by knowing his/her name.
2. You've just made the child feel special by offering them a treat.
3. You've shown the parents you care about their children.
4. You've treated the family like guests not as customers.

These are the four important reasons why the family will come back again.





So what may appear a little thing or insignificant actually plays a vital role in building your repeat business. More importantly, it makes your café different from those that offer nothing more than a cold and sterile environment. Remember nothing of worth comes without hard work!

Next time the parent asks the kids if they want to go out for a meal, they just might choose your café.

Try it, you will be pleasantly surprised.

## STRATEGY 2 WITH NATHAN WAKEFORD: IMPROVE THE VALUE FOR WHAT YOU OFFER

In a shrinking market where consumers are spending less, many would make the automatic assumption that you need to think about reducing your costs and spend less. The truth is you do, but not at the expense of the quality of the product you offer; this will only turn more customers away. In fact, you need to do the opposite and increase the quality of what you offer without significantly increasing your costs. You need to make your business more inviting than your competitors, or offer a completely different experience that they enjoy.

Is this possible? Definitely. There are ways to reduce costs without negatively affecting the quality of your offering; in fact you can even improve your value proposition while reducing costs (a value proposition is the service / product /

appearance of your business that you offer in exchange for money from your customers). Here's how!

Start with the right attitude. In my experience as a café reviewer and salesperson who has visited hundreds (possibly thousands) of cafés and restaurants across Australia and New Zealand, I have seen that many cafés

## CAFÉ SCENE AIMS TO HELP YOU, THE BUSINESS OWNER ACHIEVE YOUR BEST.

(a large majority, even) can do the fundamentals of their business a whole lot better. The sobering reality is that if you haven't undertaken training recently to improve your skills or looked at what other businesses are doing, you are probably getting left behind by the businesses that are doing just that. It's arrogant to presume that what you are doing is better than everyone else if you haven't taken the time to see what else is out there!

Make a list of successful businesses to visit to get some ideas on how they are making themselves successful. Go

for what the general public considers to be the best, travel to the other side of town if you have to. During my time in the industry I have come to realise that successful businesses share a lot in common. Most of it comes down to doing the basic things very well. In a café this relates to service (speed, professionalism and friendliness), appearance (ambience, aesthetic appeal and cleanliness), quality of product (tasty and visually appealing food and coffee) and reputation (word of mouth, a favourable awareness of your business). Now is the time to be humble and take an objective look at how other businesses are doing things better. You can find these cafés by looking at café reviews in industry magazines and websites, asking people in the industry, or by speaking to your coffee roaster, coffee trainer or other sales reps that may visit your business.

Certainly some things to ponder and consider when looking closely and analysing your own business and where you stand in relation to your customers and competitors. Café Scene aims to help you, the business owner achieve your best. With the help and advice of industry advocates like Nathan Wakeford and Rita Sriblin, we have no doubt that your business will directly benefit.

Look out for our next Café Scene where we continue with tips and strategies to improve your business and to beat the global recession.