

Food & Beverage - Don't be Boring: 12 Quick Ways to Shake up Business - By Ken Burgin

2009-03-10

Boring means tedious, dull, tiring, predictable - not a winning strategy in 2009.

We asked a bunch of members for their 'instant facelift' experiences and received some great suggestions. Most cost time, not money, with an extra serve of energy.

If you can't afford 'spend money' marketing, there are plenty of other ways to make your business look lively, fresh and welcoming - the real meaning of hospitality. Just don't be boring!

12 Quick Business Makeovers...

1. We use a cheap digital camera to take customer photos every shift, then put them on our photo page at Flickr.com - there are now more than 300. The web address is stamped on the back of the business card - a good reason for people to take it!
2. We realized most customers came as singles or couples, so our tables were larger than needed. We replaced some with small round tops, cut others down and added some cheap IKEA stools for variety. We now have 6 more tables in the same space which gives us more sales at peak times and makes me happier when I count the till.
3. Ditch the tired black aprons that always looks washed out (and usually have a liquor company brand). Now we have a dark beige that looks fresh and still doesn't show dirt.
4. Our colorful function room is now available free for neighbourhood association meetings. Most didn't know it existed and we've had some good referrals as a result.
5. A blunt customer said our email news was 'a boring sell-job'. I asked around and others agreed - ouch! We now make it focused on customer and local news, with just one sales pitch. Getting lots more responses and some nice comments.
6. Nothing like getting rid of the old cream and white look! We asked a designer friend to suggest new colors - we now have a fantastic feature wall in aubergine-purple. Customers even ask where they can get the paint from - we tell them of course, as they are sure to tell their friends. He has given us more shades to change the wall regularly - one is pumpkin and another a wonderful green.
7. My sister loves to sew - she now makes Hawaiian shirts for staff to wear on special nights, from a bolt of cloth that only cost \$1 per metre! When they wear these, the party feeling is automatic!
8. Use your iPod - several of our staff are very knowledgeable with music and have put together special mixes for evenings, weekdays and weekends. We upgraded the speakers with 2 pairs (very cheap) from eBay and now the sound is 500% better - and attracts good comments.
9. Instead of buying 5 different cheesecakes from the wholesaler, we now make 2 with fresh cream cheese - one lemon and one mocca-chocolate. The recipes are ridiculously simple, cheap to make, and sales are up more than 50%.
10. Most people couldn't read our outside menu at night! We found an aluminium frame from the stationery warehouse and pointed a reading light at it from under the awning - total price less than \$30. Plus reprinted the menu with larger type - I'm sure more 'browsers' are turning into customers.
11. We now make our own tomato relish and strawberry jam. The new chef suggested it - cheap tomatoes and frozen strawberries, and the taste is definitely 'home made'. It gives service staff something to be proud of.
12. We use a lot of pineapples and oranges for juice, and used to keep them in a back store. Now they're stacked in large baskets near the bar - instant colour, and they tell our 'quality story' better than words. We plan to use more produce as decoration...

One more: Earth Hour on Sat 28 March has become a world-wide event. It's simple to organise and everyone loves candle-light.

More details on the [Earth Hour website](#). Why not be the first in your area...again.

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