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How to run a successful pizzeria: four key elements

There is no one single secret to running a successful pizza operation. Opening and maintaining a pizzeria requires a great deal of hard work, discipline and dedication, and demands a lot of organizational skills. The pizza industry is highly competitive. Pizzeria owners must be prepared to meet the demands of their customers and willing to work hard to achieve and maintain success in this demanding industry. Here are four key elements to running a successful pizzeria, standing out from the competition and keeping your customers happy.

1. YOUR TEAM IS AN ASSET

Excellent décor, design and layout are only effective if the service is up to the same standard. The most important thing to remember is that your customers keep your door open. Most people are extremely busy and don't like to wait. Customers like to receive immediate attention: the better and faster service and food they get, the more likely they will be to continue coming to your restaurant. The employees who make up your team have just as much to do with the success of your pizzeria as your pizza does. Make sure customers are always served by skilled staff – and the right staff. You cannot run a pizzeria alone; therefore, you should train and coach your staff all the time so that they can still perform properly on your day off. Having great staff members who provide friendly service will translate into long-term repeat customers.

2. CREATE GREAT ATMOSPHERE

The ambiance and atmosphere of your pizzeria should be enticing, be consistent and set the stage. Simply put, bare walls in a restaurant are unappealing, but you need to remember you have a pizzeria and not a nightclub. If you are looking to provide

a place where your community can come, relax, and enjoy your pizza, it's best that you invest in good quality tables and chairs and other comfortable furniture pieces. Tables should have enough space between them so that customers are not on top of each other.

The colours you use should fit your concept, and the colours in your branding should be consistent with those of your floor, walls, window treatments and furniture. Proper layout and traffic flow path, music, lighting, food presentation, and artwork are elements that will create comfort. Make cleanliness and organization priorities in the front and back of your pizzeria, and keep bathrooms clean. You should also pay attention to the exterior appearance of your building as well as landscaping and signage; these are the first things customers notice.

3. FIND YOUR NICHE

Your pizzeria restaurant has to stand out from the other restaurants in order to succeed. Why would you want to be the same old, same old pizza restaurant in your neighbourhood? What makes your restaurant better than or different from the competition? Be a quality fanatic and create something unique in your community – provide something that no one else provides.

One major mistake many pizzeria restaurants make is trying to sell too many different products. Develop a niche: learn to do a few things and do them extremely well. For example, you could use and actively promote an authentic Neapolitan pizza or an old family pizza secret. You could add an online storefront and sell your unique, deluxe and gourmet pizza through the Internet.

You also could differentiate yourself from the competition by offering top-quality pizza to a growing number of people who

have food allergies. Consider offering some low-carbohydrate, non-GMO and no-salt-added, organic or vegan pizza, made using only fresh and natural ingredients. Selling niche pizza will set you apart from your competitors.

4. BUILD A WEBSITE

Your customers turn to the web to find out which pizza restaurant they want to try. If they can't find you, they will likely buy from one of your competitors. It is more important than ever to have an online presence to help boost your visibility and legitimize your business.

When designing your first website, make sure all necessary information is easy to find and that the site is uncomplicated, user-friendly and responsive. It should look as good on a smartphone, tablet or laptop as it does on your computer.

You will need your logo, branded colours; telephone number; business address with a link to Google Maps; hours of operation, specials and upcoming promotions and events; photos of your pizzeria, staff, and food; other appealing content; and your current pizza menu. Don't worry about other fancy things like newsletter and social media links – you can always add them later.

Choosing the right domain name is one of the most important decisions you will make when starting your website. Make sure your domain name is your pizzeria name. For example, if your pizzeria name is Slice of Heaven, then your domain name should be www.sliceofheaven.com. •

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