

Profit Solutions



Janet Cam, President & CEO, Janet Cam Consulting LLC

The pandemic has a silver lining. Whatever weaknesses in your business, there is a light shining brightly on it. As events have slowed business, now is the time to assess your business and re-set the mission statement from which all decisions flow. We can no longer “just hang out the ham and they will come”. With slim margins and fierce competition this is a punch list to consider:

RELATIONSHIPS

The first is with you. What is your motivation? Hospitality is one of the most challenging businesses. If one is not passionate in nurturing and serving people it will show. The key to success is authenticity and community. Efforts are rewarded in the pleasure of doing, friendship, loyalty, support and money. Relationships build the core of customers that will fan out with word of mouth beyond what the spark of a public relations campaign will do.

Build a relationship with your banker. Let them know who you are as a person and your business concerns. Acknowledge them as part of your “family” not just on seasonal holidays but sharing the highs and lows of your business.

A relationship with a lawyer specializing in real estate leases is a necessity. In the rush and excitement of opening a new business, often legal advice is overlooked. Remember the lawyer is only as good as the client is. Read the lease carefully and make notations of what you want to achieve. Don’t run the clock with “thinking out loud” if you have not done the homework. Search to find a good lawyer www.lawyers.com is one of several sites or search for attorneys who wrote articles on the matter you need help with. For example the Google search “food safety laws Virginia esquire” revealed this lawfirm <https://creekmorelaw.com/dont-get-burned-virginia-food-and-restaurant-laws/>

If you don't own the building, the landlord is a relationship to establish. In searching for a location to build my restaurant, I chose a new building looking for tenants. The owners of the building were partnered with a construction company. I chose their construction partner to build out my unit which cost more than other bids that I had received for the work. During one of the construction company's inspections, it was determined that the membrane installed on the floor was insufficient. It was their company that did the work and I authorized a second membrane. Five years later, I was notified that water was dripping from my second floor restaurant onto the bank computers below and that we were responsible for the damages. I reminded the landlord that their construction company had done all the work on the restaurant. The water ran in a gap between the restaurant and an adjoining unit on the second floor. There was a source of the water; however, the restaurant was not liable.

SAFETY

To enable staff and customers to return to the restaurant, both must feel safe. Develop a safety protocol to include: temperature taken and recorded, wearing masks, washing hands and sanitizing hands often, maintaining distance entering and seated in the restaurant are a few of the very basic considerations. Details include onetime use of menus, perhaps bottled water to minimize staff interaction on the table. Kitchen staff may be arranged for each cook to produce a dish start to finish. Half the dining room will be in service. Depending on State and local laws, parking lots may be a dining area option marked off for safe distancing. The options for dining in the parking lot could be tables, chairs, and linens; drive-in movie mode with trays attached to the car door and window; and possibly tailgating where guests can stay in their car.

PROFIT

Now that you have shored up the foundation of your business, consider the profit center often overlooked – wine. Wine and beverage choices can help convey your values – organic, women winemakers, small terroir driven wine producers to name a few. Some of the best values for money wines come from the Old World wine regions i.e. Spain, France, Italy, Greece, Portugal, Georgia, and Austria. Often wineries have been in continuous production for many centuries within families – they own the land and build upon the knowledge of terroir and technique to produce the best wines possible. A small producer with limited production is an opportunity to discover wines tasting far above their cost. In turn, the wine list markup favors the owner and remains a good value to the diner. Look for importers who support artisanal, family-owned and operated wine estates are Kermit Lynch, Peter Weygandt, Terry Theise, Kysela Pere et Fils, and Rosenthal Wine Merchant Mad Rose Group.

Janet Cam is a Culinary Strategist who is working with a restaurant group to establish safety protocols to reopen and a fresh approach to wine lists. Janet can be reached at (202) 669-8896 or janet@janetcam.com.



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