The Catering Institute™

45 Rockstar Marketing Tactics for Restaurant Caterers

Partners in Education:

MONKEYMEDIA™ SOFTWARE

PEPSICO

CATERING INSIGHTS™
Driving Relevant Catering Data to Restaurants

Getting the word out about your catering program can be a challenge. As a different business than your retail or delivery operation, it has a different customer profile. Understanding the motivation of your catering consumers is vital in creating a coordinated, consistent, and effective marketing approach. Your specific catering message will be used in all areas of your business and must be focused on the benefits that are important to your customers. 80 percent of your customer base lives or works within a ten-minute drive of your location. This means your store's physical environment is a key marketing tool for your catering business. 20 percent of your marketing dollars should be spent inside your four walls.

The following are some basic marketing strategies for your physical locations:

1. Place catering menus prominently on tables or in other areas along your guests' pathway.
2. Display catering menus at a dedicated take-out register.
3. Ensure table tents and POP are provided for all stores and are consistently displayed.
4. Include a catering menu with all take-out orders.
5. Place catering signage along the drive-thru lane and at the window.
6. Use digital or curbside signage to promote catering.
7. Ensure all staff uniforms have buttons that promote catering, such as "Ask me about catering!"
8. Provide magnetic signage for all delivery and catering vehicles.
9. Add active scroll or other prominent catering information to your website homepage.
10. Add catering language to all company email blasts and social media posts, including a "Let us cater your next meeting or event" signature at the bottom of all company emails, with a link to the catering page on your website.
11. Add catering messaging to all of your retail customer receipts.

The idea is that everywhere your guest turns they are made aware that your company can cater their next event! This markets your catering business day in and day out to your existing consumer base.

© Catering Institute. All Rights Reserved.

Responsible Catering

It's not the customer's responsibility to remember you, it's your responsibility never to allow them to forget you!

Earn trust with predictable and reliable service every time! This means across your brand. You want your customers to be comfortable ordering from any location or area because they know that the meal and service they receive in Dallas will be just as good as what they received in Chicago.

12. Order placement should follow a consistent format– this ensures all necessary information is gathered at the time of ordering by knowledgeable employees who have the ability to upsell high-profit items such as beverages and desserts.

13. Shared services are a necessity to the serious catering program. This is the call center that receives all catering calls and orders. By having a centralized order intake point, you can ensure your clients will receive a consistent, positive experience from staff members who know your catering offerings and services intimately. The orders can then be routed to the stores in the most efficient manner possible.

14. Follow up with a call from the manager. This gives the customer the feeling that you care about each order… and you do! Any unresolved issues may be addressed and future business discussed.

15. Conduct surveys. Often customers will be more honest on a survey. By asking specific questions you will get feedback on any part of the process that isn't working as well as it should.

16. Keep in contact. No one likes to feel like a number and staying in touch with your customers on a regular basis keeps your service top of mind.

17. Don't forget sleepy clients. These are the ones that order less than once per month. It can be easy to forget to touch base with them, but they will actually make up a good chunk of your revenue, especially around the holidays. Contact them with special offers to entice them to order more frequently.

18. Reward loyalty with a rewards program! B2B catering is big business and these customers spend a lot of company dollars on catered meals. Having a formal rewards program lets them know that you recognize how valuable they are to your catering business. This program can sometimes be a determining factor between you and your competitors!

19. Say 'Thank You.' It sounds really simple, but rarely do customers get thanked for their business. Make your business standout by specifically thanking each catering customer and rewarding them in some way, either with a special offer or other teaser to draw them to your business again.

20. Turn the negative into a positive. If a customer does have a negative experience, let them know you acknowledge that experience and accept responsibility for it. Then convince them to give you another chance with a deeply discounted offering.

Loyal customers outspend other customers 13 to 1.
A 5% increase in customer loyalty can increase your profits 25% to 85%.

Internal Customers

Your internal customers are your employees and staff members, including those in catering, retail and delivery. If correctly cultivated and compensated, your current employees can become a powerhouse catering sales force!

At the end of the day, it's your people that you count on, not your strategy. Employees are your best marketing tools, but in order to understand how to get their help in promoting your catering business, you must first understand how to engage them.

21. Compensate employees for catering sales. It's common to find that retail employees don't know, or care, about a new catering initiative. And why should they when they don't receive any additional incentive to ensure it succeeds? If you expect employees to get on board, you have to give them a positive incentive.

22. Hire the best attitude, not just a warm body. A restaurant manager's most important job is to find the right person with a great attitude and work ethic, not just the first person available. Having an individual that drags down team moral and work ethic is disruptive and can have devastating effects on every part of the business, especially catering. Catering relies on relationships and the building of repeat sales. If your customers consistently have a bad experience due to an employee with a bad attitude, it can seriously hamper your program.

23. Employees can be the best live 30 second ad your catering program will ever get. Show them they are valuable to the catering program! Training is essential for your employees to really understand what catering is all about and once they understand it, they can convey it expertly to customers. This includes your retail people, delivery drivers and even the management team. They will be talking to customers and answering questions whether you train them or not, so it's up to you to harness this opportunity and teach them what they need to know.

24. Create a positive employee contest each month or quarter that rewards their catering promotion efforts. A simple chart on the wall will tell the whole team who is promoting catering the best by the number of orders they get each week. This can, and should, be a fun (as opposed to cutthroat!) competition with monthly prizes for those who perform well. The prizes don't have to be big — it's all about the fact that they are being recognized for their efforts that really counts.

25. Hire dedicated sales staff. Store managers just don't have the bandwidth in their day to approach and close many catering sales. Having a trained and dedicated professional will give you a professional presence to conduct presentations and sales meetings, and it will not take away from the retail side of the business.

26. Create formal B2B training. Although catering is a simple sale, a sales person needs to be trained in order to engage large corporations and make your brand a preferred vendor.

Get Out!

This includes not only small business owners, but corporate decision makers who use catering for numerous meetings and employee functions throughout the year.

27. Join your local chamber of commerce and then actively attend these meetings and functions in uniform to meet other business owners and leaders.

28. Have plenty of business cards on hand and gather as many business cards as possible from others. This can be done easily with a contest they can enter by dropping their card in a fishbowl.

29. Get data on new businesses opening in the area and comb through the current chamber directory to add to your database.

30. Get involved with local charities by offering your parking lot for team signups or other organized events. Event examples might include:

- Kids Inc. sports signups
- Susan G. Komen Cancer Walk
- American Heart Association 5K
- Blood drives
- You might even trade the use of your parking lot for sponsorship placement on the event
- T-shirts and marketing materials

31. Cross-market with other local, non-competing businesses. For example: leave a contest fish bowl at a dry cleaning business to collect interested customer contact information and they could do the same at your business.

32. Network with other vendors. Not only do these vendors also need catering, but they provide necessary items to the businesses you want to work with. For example: you might network with a rental company that provides tents, awnings and chairs for parties and functions. They can bring more business to you and you can bring more business to them.

33. Delivery coordinators can be utilized for much more than delivering and setting-up an event. They can canvass other businesses with preset scripts to qualify the leads and then gather contact information for future sales.

34. Store managers should network, too. Managers can spend one hour per week targeting a highly populated business area by introducing him or herself to people who order catering from you and solidifying that relationship.

35. Samples sell. One of the best ways to entice new customers is by taking samples to several businesses that use catering. This can be done during off hours when your staff has the extra time.

Drive Data Capture

Data capture is key to your future catering business. Customers have specific needs and buying patterns that allow you to more closely pinpoint what they need. Being able to mine your sales information and other data for marketing opportunities is essential. It's also essential to gather contact information from other sources to serve as leads for more sales.

36. Use print materials to drive customers to your web- site to capture email, phone and address information. They can sign up for special offers or take surveys in exchange for discounts and freebies.

37. Announce free offers that require data entry. For example, you might announce on Facebook that you're giving away a free dessert to the first 100 people who go to the website and vote on the name of the new dessert. This allows you to utilize your social media to get more data from customers.

38. Run contests offering a free catering party for up to ten people if they answer a short survey about how they use catering in their business.

39. Provide consistent data gathering at the point of order. This is essential to track orders and build a strong database.

40. Evaluate data and develop metrics and benchmarks specific to your catering business.

41. Ask existing customers for referrals. For example: you might ask a doctor's office for 15 or 20 business cards

from pharmaceutical reps in exchange for an offer of discounted catering for ten people. Don't miss the opportunity to ask if your customers know others who might be interested and then get their contact information.

42. Pictures sell. Feature photos of your great catering menu offerings on your website and via social media. The more people see it, the more they will want it.

43. Go viral by adding a click button to allow people to "share" with their other social media friends.

44. Update, update, update. Keep your website and social media fresh by offering people a reason to come back. One way would be to do a monthly scavenger hunt and give hints every Monday as to what they need to search for and where it might be. Once they have all the clues they can enter them into a form and the winners get something for free.

45. A final word of catering wisdom: Engage your customers in conversation Whether it's in person, on the phone, or through social media networks, conversations build relationships and relationships drive sales. Get to know your customers and earn their trust. When the orders come in, deliver excellence time and again.

Now Get Catering and Grow Sales!™

Marketing can be as creative as you allow it to be and we encourage you to frequently ask your own staff to submit great marketing ideas. Often some of the best tactics come from those on the front lines. Don't hesitate to get employees involved in the creative process – and, of course, reward them!

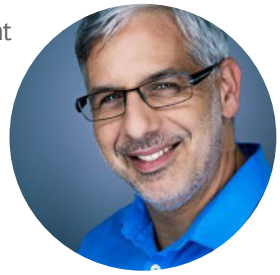
About The Catering Institute

The Catering Institute is a leading educator in takeout, delivery and catering, providing training, certification and consulting to restaurant operators and their teams.

The Catering Institute is a private, independent academic institution. Led by founder and CEO Erle Dardick, the faculty at the Catering Institute is passionate about helping brands excel at feeding their customers where they Live, Work & Play™.

Learn more:
www.cateringinstitute.com

About Erle Dardick



Erle Dardick is a restaurant catering veteran, business turn-around expert and author, best known for helping multi-unit restaurant executives create successful catering revenue channels. Erle founded both MonkeyMedia Software and The Catering Institute. He is also the Author of "Get Catering and Grow Sales! A Strategic Perspective for The Multi-Unit Restaurant Executive."

Get Catering and Grow Sales!™

A Strategic Perspective for the Multi-Unit Restaurant Executive

By **Erle Dardick**

Partners in Education

MonkeyMedia Software | PepsiCo FoodService | Catering Insights

As Partners in Education, MonkeyMedia Software, PepsiCo Foodservice, and Catering Insights work with the Catering Institute, to help restaurant operators grow sales and increase profits by educating them to become experts at feeding their customers where They Live, Work and Play™.

The Catering Institute™

© Copyright Catering Institute. All Rights Reserved.