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Strategies every offline business should implement



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INTRODUCTION

Many offline business owners have experienced a rude awakening upon realizing that staying in business entails more than just offering good food, cold drinks, and a sleek environment. To really thrive in hospitality requires getting customers in the door, and more importantly, getting them to come back again and again.



Gaining repeat and eventually loyal customers goes beyond just offering a good product and experience. Restaurants need to stay top of mind and give customers a reason to return. They also need to make customers feel a personal connection to the business. None of these things are easy.

In this eBook, we'll discuss 6 strategies for getting customers in the door and keeping them coming back with as little effort as possible.

NOT JUST DINNER

It's a known fact in the hospitality industry that repeat and loyal customers are essential for the survival and growth of a business.

The 2013 [National Restaurant Association Industry Forecast](#) found that sales from repeat customers made up more than half the sales in every restaurant category. Repeat customers make up:

- 71% of sales in quickservice restaurants
- 68% percent of sales in fast-casual restaurants
- 64% percent of sales in casual restaurants
- 63% percent of sales in family focused restaurants
- 51% percent of sales in fine-dining restaurants

Providing an outstanding experience when a customer first arrives at a restaurant or bar is the first step towards creating a loyal customer who returns. To accomplish this, you need to keep three things in mind.



KNOW YOUR AUDIENCE



It is critical to understand the demographics of your customers and what matters most to them in terms of the entire customer experience, including service, menus, and events. To become familiar with your intended audience, you should use two main sources of research:

- **Any Available Market Research**
- **Your Current Customers**

As you research your ideal customers, look for information that indicates why customers come to your establishment and what they seek in their dining or drinking experience. For example, are they looking for a date night away from their kids? Do they want a place where they can get good food but still bring their young children?



No one restaurant or bar can make everyone happy, so focus instead on identifying your target audience. Find ways to categorize your customers into a few ideal personas. These categories should cover the background and motivations of these main types of customers, helping you to better target your message.



As you speak with your current customers, be sure to leverage every resource you have available. That means not only handing out or mailing occasional customer surveys, but also using email and social media to speak to customers informally and build relationships. Encourage conversations on your social media pages surrounding what customers would like to see from your restaurant. Use email to conduct polls about upcoming events or specials and solicit feedback about recent changes or upgrades. The more information you gather about your customers, the better you will be able to speak to them through your marketing and retention efforts.

STAND OUT

There are countless restaurants across the country, but the ones that people remember tend to have something unique about their service and experience that makes them stand out. Turn to your ideal customer personas for inspiration and brainstorm ideas that will make your establishment stand out in their minds.

You might cater to your audience by hosting events that fit well with your customers' interests, such as game nights, live entertainment, or wine tastings. You may be able to attract them with happy hour specials, sports events, or holiday buffets. Whatever it is, you need to discover it.

Offering amenities that extend dwell time and make your restaurant a habitual destination can also be a fantastic way to attract attention. Offering free WiFi to your customers might not initially sound like an amenity that can help attract customers, but [one](#) survey found that 61% of people spend more time in restaurants and bars with free WiFi and 50% spend more money. Consider offering such a feature to help draw in new customers, while also encouraging existing customers to come back.



ASK FOR FEEDBACK

Customer reviews carry tremendous weight. According to Nielsen, 84 percent of customers will pay more attention to reviews offered by third parties than advertising produced by the brands themselves. Finding ways to correct any issues and ensuring that patrons leave with a positive feeling about the restaurant can also be valuable when looking to establish a positive reputation online.

Customers appreciate knowing that their opinions are solicited, so if you spot a problem, make sure to address it before the person goes home. Doing so on the spot often helps solve the issue at hand and helps limit the risk of someone posting poor reviews on major review sites, such as Yelp or TripAdvisor. Customers who realize you genuinely care and are doing your best to offer a great experience will also be more inclined to rate your establishment higher.

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Summary

Repeat customers are essential for establishing and growing any restaurant. When you create an experience that goes beyond just serving dinner, you're already off to a great start. Identifying

precisely who your customers are and what they look for in a phenomenal dining experience will allow you to provide them with a night they will remember. By soliciting their feedback immediately, you let them know that they matter, improving the reputation of your restaurant even more. These are the three steps to building a successful and memorable bar or restaurant.

STAY TOP OF MIND

Once you've successfully provided an outstanding experience the first time around, you still have to stay on customers' minds to convince them to return. Otherwise, you run the risk of customers loving your business, but forgetting about their experience once they have left. Fortunately, technology provides you with several tools that make staying top of mind as easy as clicking a button.



Segment Your Customers

Have you ever walked into a restaurant where the hostess knew your name or the bartender immediately served your favorite drink without you even needing to ask? This type of service makes customers feel completely at home in your business, which makes it a surefire way to let customers know how much they matter and how glad you are to see them back.



There are many ways you can personalize the service you offer. For example, if someone makes a reservation indicating that they are celebrating a birthday or anniversary, the hostess should note the event in the schedule. When the party walks in, they should be warmly greeted with a “congratulations” before they even have to say a word. You should also record this information in your marketing materials, so when the date comes along the following year, you can send out a birthday or happy anniversary card. Your wait staff should be attentive to any preferences noted by customers. If allergies or dislikes are mentioned, they should be noted by the person taking the order and recorded in the guest database. Should the guest return in the future, their preferences can be immediately attended to, without them needing to remind the restaurant.

But here's what you need to remember: Personal service doesn't end in the restaurant or bar. You can also tie in this personal attention with any marketing materials you send post-visit. To create an even higher level of personalization, consider having the messages arrive from the host or hostess who was responsible for greeting the guests when they arrived. This will help build the relationship between the customer and a specific face at the restaurant.



Send Timely Emails

Email has been discounted by marketers who fear that their messages will end up in the spam folder and do little to improve engagement with the brand.

However, given that there are over 3 billion email accounts open in the world, and that 91 percent of customers who have email addresses check their inboxes at least once per day, email remains a highly effective way to engage with customers. The key is to ensure that the message is timely and properly tailored to the recipient.



One of the biggest mistakes restaurants and bars make in their email marketing efforts is sending the same email to everyone on their email list. This type of email blast will be spam or junk for most of people because it has little to do with their personal motivations for going out. Instead, remember the ideal customer categories or personas you established for your restaurant. Break down email lists according to different types of

customers. One type of email might fit best with your early bird crowd, while another is better suited for your late night visitors who regularly come for live music or trivia nights.

You can also segment your email addresses according to recent behavior, which will further increase the chances of sending the right email to the right person. For example, you can send a welcome email to first time visitors after they leave the restaurant. Then you can send a welcome back email to second time customers to thank them for coming back. These types of emails will make the customer feel that you know them personally, which increases the likelihood that they'll open and read your message.



Engage Via Text Messages

If you have access to your customers' phone numbers, sending occasional deals and promotions through text can also be a great way to engage and encourage them to return. Similar to email messages, you want to make sure that you do not spam people's phones and only send relevant and timely information. When used appropriately, text messages can be highly effective. In fact, an estimated 95 percent of advertising text messages are opened and read in the first 3 minutes of being sent.

Watch the time and frequency that you send the messages and make sure to only send texts containing relevant information to the receiver. For example, a bar and restaurant might invite patrons to a Friday night trivia night early Friday afternoon, when many people in the intended demographic are discussing their plans for that evening.



Summary

Creating a memorable experience is only the first step in a successful marketing plan for bars and restaurants. Remember to extend this experience into your marketing post-visit, so every piece of communication your guests receive reminds them of how much they love your business.

PROVIDE REASONS TO RETURN

Now that you've created a fantastic experience and marketing campaigns that help you keep in touch with customers after they leave your business, you need to give them a reason to return. You might be surprised at what a simple request can do!



Run Promotions and Deal

Promotions and deals are effective at getting new customers in the door and encouraging past customers to return. These types of deals often give customers a way to try something new at your establishment or help them enjoy a night out without feeling that they have to spend a ton of money. Deals don't have to go overboard—consider a free drink or appetizer on the house. The goal is to bring customers back and remind them of how much they love your business. Your email marketing efforts should advertise any upcoming promotions, especially to those customers who haven't visited in a while.



Engage on Social Media

Customers enjoy using social media as a means of engaging not only with their friends and family, but also with their favorite brands. When you establish a strong social media presence, you give yourself a great way to speak with your customers and also learn about them and their interests.

Social media is extremely cost effective, as the platforms are free to register for and use. It also serves as an excellent source of free advertising. When your followers interact with your brand, it automatically shows up in the newsfeeds and streams of their friends. For example, if a customer comments on an upcoming event that you post on your Facebook page, their friends will be able to see the event as well when they log into Facebook. Since people regard advertising that comes from third parties as more reputable than ads that come from the brand itself, social media is an automatic way for your biggest supporters to help grow your business.

When people see their friends and others they trust vouch for a restaurant or bar through social media, they will be more inclined to try it for themselves. Social media also provides an excellent way to speak directly with your customers and invite them back. Ask them to come and join you for an upcoming special, event, or deal. It's always harder to say no to a personal invitation.

Reward Loyalty

There are plenty of ways for you to reward customers for their loyalty without spending too much. For example, you can offer a drink on the house for those you recognize or provide a free dessert for those who respond to your social media postings and come to advertised events. You can also establish loyalty rewards programs for those who regularly come to your business.



These programs are an effective way to make customers feel appreciated and recognized without adding too many costs to the house. Customers who receive a free appetizer or drink are likely to go on to order other food or beverages, which means that your small investment will often result in sizeable returns. When customers know that their visit is appreciated and likely to be rewarded, it will also make them more inclined to come to your restaurant or bar when they decide to head out for an evening.

Encouraging customers to come back is the final piece of the puzzle when it comes to building a strong and loyal customer base. Customers who feel loyal to their bar or restaurant of choice will regularly return and will provide recommendations to friends and family, helping the business expand even further.

Summary

So remember, first you have to create and grow a memorable business. Then you have to stay in contact with your customers, so they don't forget who you are. And then you have to give them reasons to return. Do all three and you're on your way to a profitable business!

LEVERAGE IVN Smart WiFi

Zenreach by IVN WiFi makes it easy for restaurants and bars to connect with guests and encourage them to return. The first step is branding your WiFi portal, so it not only gives guests relevant information about your upcoming events, but also collects their email addresses. Once guests sign on to WiFi, you're able to start marketing to them based on who they are and how often they visit.

Zenreach by IVN WiFi makes it easy to send personalized and timely messages to every single one of your guests. First time visitors receive a welcome message. Loyal visitors receive a message for loyal customers. And lost customers receive a message inviting them back.



All you have to do is write the messages once. Zenreach does the rest, while also providing you powerful insights and metrics on who your customers are and how often they visit. You'll see everything from age and demographics, to how much each customer visits.

Zenreach makes it possible for you to turn an expected

amenity—free WiFi—into positive ROI. There's no reason why you shouldn't extend your brand's experience into your marketing, so don't make the mistake of acquiring customers only to lose them after they visit once.

ABOUT US

[Intervista Networking \(IVN\)](#) has worked with local businesses across the country under the O1 name since 1998, and Intervista Networking prides itself on delivering innovative telecommunication solutions, IVN Smart WIFI, and superb customer service....to go the extra mile to surpass our customer's expectations. Our support team is always available to answer your questions, and our local presence means we can deliver true, white-glove service with hands-on assistance.

The scope of services under our enterprise retail division continues to grow and evolve, but with the same foremost commitment to serving our customers. The name "Intervista" implies a clear inner view, and so does our vision for how we can best serve our customer's need. We have won numerous amount of awards throughout the years and have a nationwide footprint.

Our customers range from restaurant groups managing multi locations to your favorite mom-and-pop café on Main Street. On average, they capture 5x the number of emails they received prior to Zenreach by IVN WIFI. Better yet, one-third of "lost" customers return within one week of receiving a message. We don't just show local businesses email click-through rates. We show you how many customers walk back through your door.



**Try What People Are Calling
"The Best Marketing Decision I Made Last Year"**

Learn more at www.ivn.rocks