



Local Store Marketing is a Must

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You are ready to open your newest restaurant location. You've upfitted the space, painted, installed, and polished, hired the counter workers, and now you're just waiting on the customers. The first day is pretty good but business isn't what you wanted it to be. Rather than write it off to being the new kid on the block, get out and bring the customers in, so says Linda Duke of Duke Marketing.

National ad campaigns may be great for the big guys, but for most operators, marketing will come down to the three to five mile radius around the unit. That means that operators must get out of their stores and show off what they have to offer.

"Get food in people's mouths," says Duke.

Local store marketing comes down to introducing your product and concept to your neighbors. Duke says that one of the best ways to do so is visit area businesses with samples. The exposure, she says, far outweighs the costs of the food.

Duke also counsels operators to join their local chamber of commerce. Some of her clients question the wisdom given the time commitments involved, but the key reason for doing so, she says, is to get access to the list of your town's most influential people. Invite your fellow chamber members to lunch, and you open up your own PR channel.

While it is tempting to use a standardized plan to market your store, Duke says it is better to tailor your marketing to your needs in your area. She also recommends testing and implementing one program at a time to keep from overwhelming yourself, your employees, and your customers.

Another effective method of local store marketing is keeping local media members informed of what you are doing. Duke says that editors are always looking for story ideas and though they might not always give you press on everything, keeping a relationship with them will insure that you will be covered at some point.

Local store marketing sounds simple, but the time and effort it takes can be daunting to operators. The time and effort may make the difference between succeeding and merely surviving.