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Strategic Insights On:

Restaurants

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Restaurants

There is nothing tastier than record breaking sales and increased traffic. Our seasoned team of restaurant marketing experts have created successful award winning campaigns.

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HOW CAN RESTAURANTS LEVERAGE “NEAR ME” SEARCH OPTIMIZATION?

Have you ever been traveling in your car and wondered what restaurants are nearby? Well, it seems that a lot of people are doing just that, as Google searches for “near me,” “nearby,” “closest” and “nearest” have increased by 300% from just a few years ago, with 80% of those searches coming from a mobile device.

Consumers are using their mobile devices to find businesses nearby, and not just restaurants and coffee shops, but jewelry stores, bank and furniture stores and everything in between. Google has responded to this need by putting the technology in place which gives consumers accurate and relevant search results. As a restaurant, you need to know how to get your location at the top of the list for these “near me” searches.

Website Optimization

The first factor in SEO Ranking is to make sure your website is mobile friendly as most of the searches are being done by mobile devices. If your site is not easy to use, the consumer will move on. Click-to-call buttons and an address on every page makes it easier for consumers to find you. A strange, but very effective local SEO marketing strategy would involve adding these keywords to your website. For example, if you are a Mexican restaurant, you can add “Mexican restaurant near me in Sanford,” or “closest Mexican restaurant in Sanford.” You will want to add this to your Title, Meta Description, Copy and to Alt Tags too. This might sound a little strange in your copy, but will be successful if it is included in your local SEO marketing.

You should also include structured data markup on your website which will help define your exact location. This is important for the “near me” searches as location is key to getting in the top spot. More SEO ranking factors include making your website content comprehensive and relevant to your customers, page load speed and backlinks.

Google My Business

The best thing to happen to your restaurant would be to have the top position in the three-pack of results after the ad listings when someone searches for “restaurants near me.” How do you get your restaurant in that position? First you need to create your Google My Business page — this listing is free of charge, you just need to create it.

When you set it up, include yourself in all possible categories to make sure you would be included in all searches. The secret to getting the top is to make sure Google knows where you are located, that your information is always up-to-date and including high quality photos in your listing. Another top strategy is to have activity on your listing — the more you interact, the more relevant and important Google thinks you are.

Your listing page allows you to respond to customer reviews and you should do this as much as possible as conversations post activity to your page as well as boost exposure to customers. Also share updated information or events taking place at the restaurant on this page, again the more updates to the page, the more Google will promote it in the searches that are relevant to your business. When the search results come up for the consumer, Google is making the experience more user friendly for them by providing NAP (name, address and phone) in all searches so be sure your information is always up-to-date.

Purchase Ads

The easiest way to ensure your restaurant will get the top position in a search is to also purchase an ad. If the qualifications are met, the search will put your business in the top three spots before the three-pack. You will also be listed on the map and the consumer can easily click and find you. These are charged by the CPC (Cost-per-Click).

Maps/Location

To ensure your business is at the top of the “near me” searches, you need to make sure your spot on Google Maps is accurate and keep this up-to-date. If Google does not know where your restaurant is, it cannot include you in a “near me” search. Then, you can purchase an ad that will come up when you are relevant to the search.

Business Directories and Links

If you have a local blogger or company that provides directories, make sure you are included in these directories and keep information accurate. Add yourself to local Yelp directories and make sure you are detailed in the description. Do not just add a link or you will get lost in the listings. Google will pick up on the information in these directories to put you in the top search. Link your page with other businesses in your area that complement your business. For example, if you are a healthy café, you should link to a local gym in the area or if you are an upscale restaurant link to the local Broadway theater.

Reviews

Reviews from your current customers are some of the most powerful forms of advertising as a restaurant because customers are looking at what others think of your restaurant and use that to decide if they want to try it or not. On Google My Business, you can respond to all reviews your customers give. This will increase your position because you have activity on your page.

Social Media Marketing

Don't forget your social media in your local marketing efforts. You need to set up your Facebook page just like your Google Business listing, making sure the information is consistent and using your city and state in your title.

Customers will review your restaurant on Facebook and Twitter so don't forget to stay on top of these to know what they are saying about you and respond to these posts. People talk about business, new developments and products on Twitter, Instagram, Facebook and more. All these social mentions find their way to Google's sensors as well. The search engine will pick up on positive or negative sentiments and use these to help them rank your local business. If a lot of people talk about your business and/or link to your website, you must be relevant. Monitor these mentions and engage.



SO YOU THINK YOU KNOW THE RESTAURANT INDUSTRY?

Technology is changing the world we live in, and the restaurant industry is no exception. Restaurants need to change how they market to their customers in order to stay in business. They're offering farm to table, open concepts, rotating menus, and online ordering all to cater to the ever-changing needs of their consumers. Americans want more convenience, healthier options, and unique spaces.

Tips for Owners

Restaurant owners need to know the importance of using social media as a way to increase their customer base. They need to stay on top of all online ratings and reviews on TripAdvisor, Yelp, and Google and respond to all of these reviews, both positive and negative. If you receive a bad review, the best thing to do is respond positively and even offer a discount to come back. Potential customers look at responses from restaurants and will try your restaurant even with a bad review-if you handle it correctly.

Knowing what people are saying about your restaurant also gives you feedback to make changes and improve the experience you offer to your customers. As owners, you can also write articles or submit recipes for your local publications. If they publish this, it's free advertising for you. Attend local community events and promote a discount or special to get the attendees to try your restaurant. You can attend a local 5k or other "fun run" and give all runners a discount on their next meal. These are great ways to reach new customers for little cost.

Knowing the Customer

Your potential customers have a variety of food restrictions and will be attracted to restaurants that cater to their special needs. Customers are looking for local, sustainable meal plans, gluten-free and vegetarian and vegan dishes just to name a few. As a restaurant, you might not be able to offer dishes that would cater to all of these needs, but you can offer customers a complete list of all ingredients in your dishes so they can choose one that meets their needs.

New technology like the TouchBistro POS system makes it easy to provide your customers with ingredient lists to help them make educated decisions about their orders.

Customers also are interested in loyalty programs that offer an incentive to return. Start a program, and your customers will return twice as often. Customers also desire convenience and ease of use, and mobile apps are giving this to customers. They can access your app and get your food on their table quickly and easily.

Advertising Approaches

Paper advertising is a thing of the past—technology gives restaurants low cost, effective, and easy ways to advertise to your customers. If you have not updated your website and graphics in a while, consult your ad agency.

Your customer is addicted to their mobile device. When they search your restaurant, your website should be easy and user friendly. Take time to look at your website on your phone, and ask yourself, “Is this easy for my customer?” Work closely with your advertising agency to make sure your restaurant shows up first in local searches. If you are a Mexican restaurant, you want to be the first Mexican restaurant when someone searches for local Mexican food. You also want to be first if someone searches for local restaurants, so make sure your location is accurate on all search engines.

Videos are very effective in promoting your restaurant on social media outlets. When you make a video, make sure it appeals emotionally and has very eye-catching graphics to capture the attention of your customers. Facebook is a great way to use your video content.

Lastly, make good friends with your neighboring businesses. Working together will be mutually beneficial for getting new customers. If your restaurant is next to a gym with 100,000 followers, that’s a great a way for you to get your name out to their customers. They, in turn, can promote their gym to your customers. It is a win-win for both at very little cost.



HEALTHY EATING: WHAT IT MEANS TO MILLENNIALS VERSUS BABY BOOMERS

What makes food “healthy?” Is it the caloric value? Or the way it makes us feel? Through the decades, the definition of healthy eating has drastically changed, so much so that those questions would draw out vastly different answers from a Baby Boomer and a Millennial. But that’s not all that has changed. Let’s dive deeper into healthy eating patterns through the years, and how our modern-day lives have shaped everything from the way we snack to restaurant menus.

How Our Food Has Changed Over the Decades

Not long ago, the milkman would deliver fresh milk to your door, and you would visit the local butcher to get your meats. If you did not live close to these options, you would raise your own livestock. For most of us, that’s no longer the case.

The bread you eat today is definitely not the same that our parents and grandparents consumed years ago. That’s because most of the food we have access to is genetically and hormonally altered to keep up with mass production. Back in the 70s, people ate more red meat than chicken, drank more whole milk and only used refined sugars. However, growth hormones, antibiotics and genetically modified feed were never given to animals. So, while it may seem that our recent ancestors ate too much of these “bad” foods, they were typically consuming the healthiest kinds of animal products — those fed with grass, kept outdoors and raised humanely.

What It Means to Be Healthy

Just like the foods we eat, how we define healthy eating has shifted over the years. The vast majority of Baby Boomers view healthy eating as counting calories, eating certain foods and lowering sugar content in their diets. Most Millennials, however, are more focused on organic, farm-to-table and fresh foods, and how those foods make them feel. By these findings, Boomers are more likely than Millennials to be interested in health benefits associated with foods such as weight management, cardiovascular health, and digestive health, while Millennials are more likely to be interested in benefits such as mental health, muscle health and immunity associated with foods.

Fast Foods for Busy Lives

These days, “busy” is the word on every person’s lips when asked how they’re doing. Our fast-paced lives demand fast-paced foods, and it’s much more common for people to eat alone, playing catch-up on our hand-held devices.

This busier lifestyle also leads to more snacking throughout the day, and while some opt for healthier snacks, including fruit and vegetables, many do not. According to consumer insights firm, The Hartman Group, only 1 in 10 consumers avoid snacking multiple times throughout the day. Food marketers have also aided and abetted the constant grazing by offering an array of portable foods which allow consumers to continue tackling their ever-expanding to do lists.

How Restaurants are Adapting

To be successful, most restaurants need to market to both Millennials and Baby Boomers. This means offering a mix of traditionally healthy options, as well as focusing on fresh, organic foods for their menus. But, through their pointed differences, both Millennials and Boomers like to be loyal to a brand and want to support restaurants that offer great service. Both of these populations prefer restaurants that offer options so they can customize their food and get it the way they want it, and, although health is a main focus, comfort and luxury foods are also important when celebrating or enjoying a night out.

Let's not forget about the power of social media. Both Millennials and Boomers use social and mobile devices to collect advice, including where they should dine through apps like Yelp.

At the end of the day, every person simply wants to feel their best. From Baby Boomers to Millennials, healthy eating means having the energy to enjoy life and all of its flavors.



HOW SMALL RESTAURANTS SURVIVE IN A BIG-CHAIN WORLD

Over the last five years, a phenomenon has taken place within the restaurant scenes of cities with high tourist traffic. As hungry travelers and local foodies of different cultural backgrounds become more prevalent in places like Austin, Las Vegas, St. Petersburg, Florida, and even Orlando, the gap for more unique and tasteful restaurants needs to be filled.

With such diverse markets, these and other cities have become meccas for independent brands and start-ups to test launch their restaurants.

Meals On Wheels 2.0

Cities have developed in the mobile food market. As the wave of new mobile and brick-and-mortar restaurants take over, chefs have enhanced the quality of their ingredients and are supporting the farm-to-table movement now more than ever.

Utilizing the freshest seafood, and local produce, chefs have upgraded their menu offerings to reflect the seasonal availability of nearby ingredients. This has become a main feature in most restaurant kitchens. These innovative and unique restaurants are what tourists and locals are constantly looking for.

A Local Look at Orlando

As one of the top travel destinations in the world, Orlando has succeeded in establishing a diverse culinary community with foods from different countries and cultures. Malaysian food from the award-winning Mamak restaurant, African food from the Nile Ethiopian restaurant, and The Sanctum Cafe, which offers plant-based, sustainable cuisine, are just a few examples of all the unique flavors available in Orlando.

The city has also been the birthplace of award-winning restaurants that re-create the classic American eatery. Since it's opening in 2009, 4Rivers Smokehouse has become the most successful BBQ chain in Florida. John Rivers, founder of 4Rivers, continued to be successful in Orlando and opened The Coop, a southern-comfort restaurant in Winter Park that has gained popularity for it's traditional southern menu that is made from scratch daily.

Cask and Larder, another southern-style restaurant in Winter Park, gets its recognition from being a neighborhood gathering spot that abides by the traditions of whole cookery by curing their own meats and canning their own preserved fruits and vegetables.

The Bigger Picture

But what does this new age of culinary mastery and start-up restaurants mean for the big food chains that still fill the streets of many major cities around the country, including Orlando? Will local and iconic burger joints lose clientele to the convenience McDonald's? Do the southern-comfort neighborhood restaurants stand a chance against KFC?

While larger chains have extreme advantages to the market: more spending on advertising, easier operations, and a growing popularity of the QSR industry, start-ups that launch have the advantage of being part of the local community. The neighborhood spots attract tourists and locals because of their sense of community, healthier choices and local support.

Independent restaurants choose to test launch their stores here because of the thousands of people visiting from around the world and the thousands more that call their respective cities "home". It is a place for opportunity and where a restaurant can become an integral part of the community.



HOW THE FROZEN AISLE IS STANDING UP TO THE HEAT OF FOOD TRENDS

It's 8:30 p.m. and you're just now getting home from work after a long day. You're starving and cooking up a meal from scratch is out of the question but your lack of time isn't an excuse to settle for a lack of flavor or nutrition. What do you reach for? A few years back, the idea of heating up a frozen dinner sounded like a quick way to undo a day of healthy eating. But with the significant shift in food trends towards freshness and quality, frozen foods have started to heat up as a healthy alternative to quick service.

Grocery markets have taken a recent turn in fashion from not only catering to busy moms and dads, but to Millennials who are hungry for a solution to their independent lifestyles and diverse tastes. Foodies are driven by worldwide flavor profiles and fresh ingredients and many manufacturers of frozen foods are taking action. As manufacturers sizzle up their marketing strategy, it is of no surprise the ecommerce sales of frozen foods increased 13 percent by the end of last year.

Natural Always Wins

Marketers are looking to the frozen aisle to satisfy customers' desire for more natural foods without added preservatives while avoiding the "junk food" aesthetic. According to the International Food Information Council in Washington, DC, the sale of frozen food, including the word "natural" on their packaging, has increased. Consumers look for recognizable, wholesome ingredients in their meal choices. Nowadays, the nutrition facts panel determines whether the consumer decides to purchase the product or keep walking. Moving these flash terms like "natural" and "fresh" to the front of the packaging can help secure a sale by giving the consumer a sense of security in their meal choice. Many have also introduced new diet trends like "gluten-free" or "paleo," which have also started to make an appearance on package faces.

Choosing Frozen for Flavor and Freshness

The argument stands firm that frozen foods can be marketed as just as flavorful and nutritious as their fresh counterparts. USDA physiologist Dr. Gene Lester told Eating Well magazine that some frozen vegetables may be considered just as (if not more) nutritious frozen as they are raw. Frozen fruit is becoming a popular addition to shopping carts, as their sale increased 35 percent online in 2015. Fruit is a perfect example of packaging approach to all-natural ingredients, as many fruits can be preserved with little to no additives at the peak of their freshness, and their wrappings reflect the simple nutrition inside. Callouts to "fresh" qualities on packaging can become a real success for frozen food manufacturers looking to preserve a spicy or cultural-specific flavor profile. Frozen foods can better preserve spices and marinades in meats, which helps a consumer to stretch the time period they have a flavorful meal on hand. In-store advertisements and circulations that nod to the "fresh" nature of a frozen meal can direct consumers towards the product, since a frozen meal satisfies their desire to stick to their diet plan, but still have dinner ready in under 30 minutes.

The Convenience Factor

As always, Americans are becoming increasingly busy as the workday increases and time at home decreases. Many millennial minds work double hours, straddling school and work, and few have the time to plan or prep meals ahead. Manufacturers have capitalized on this idea by marketing fresh foods that can be made quickly as a meal, or that can be paired with foods that are already prepared. The freezer aisle offers a helping hand for the home cook with the same ingredients that they might use themselves. Additionally, foods that are labor intensive to make or recipes that are far outside the usual fare become accessible with frozen foods. Hispanic and Latino food is extremely popular in the American market, and makes a firm stand in most grocery freezer aisles already. Competition for that square foot of freezer space can be challenging for many smaller companies to buy out, but foods that include the aforementioned freshness and brand awareness can begin to knock competitors off the shelves.

Manufacturers can look ahead at the frozen food market as a resource. If brands position frozen foods as a pause on nature's ripening process, they can keep up with the pace of freshness and quality trends in the market. The convenience and diversity of frozen foods can feed a business opportunity—despite the challenges of shelf space in the packaged food industry.



SERVING UP WHAT MILLENNIALS WANT: HOW QUICK SERVICE AND FAST CASUAL RESTAURANTS CAN GAIN THEIR LOYALTY

Millennials may have grown up dining in quick service and fast casual restaurants, otherwise known as QSRs, but now that they're making their own choices, the experience they want isn't the same as what their parents favored. The industry now faces the challenge of attracting, engaging and retaining the loyalty of these coveted consumers, who bring their generation's distinctive values to the table.

QSRs and fast casual restaurants that succeed at winning the hearts and stomachs of millennials can earn some of the impressive \$1.3 trillion in discretionary spending power wielded by this group of 80 million people. Discerning the millennials' mindset and aligning marketing and advertising accordingly is essential to creating and maintaining a strong brand.

Contrary to popular belief, millennial consumers aren't more fickle than those of other generations. They do tend to be more demanding, however, and research their options online to determine which best suits their needs. Their determination to not "settle" for something because it's the cheapest option or most convenient shifts the obligation onto restaurants in these categories to deliver the right brand experience.

Marketing strategy consultant Jeff Fromm, co-editor of MillennialMarketing.com, sums up the challenge as follows:

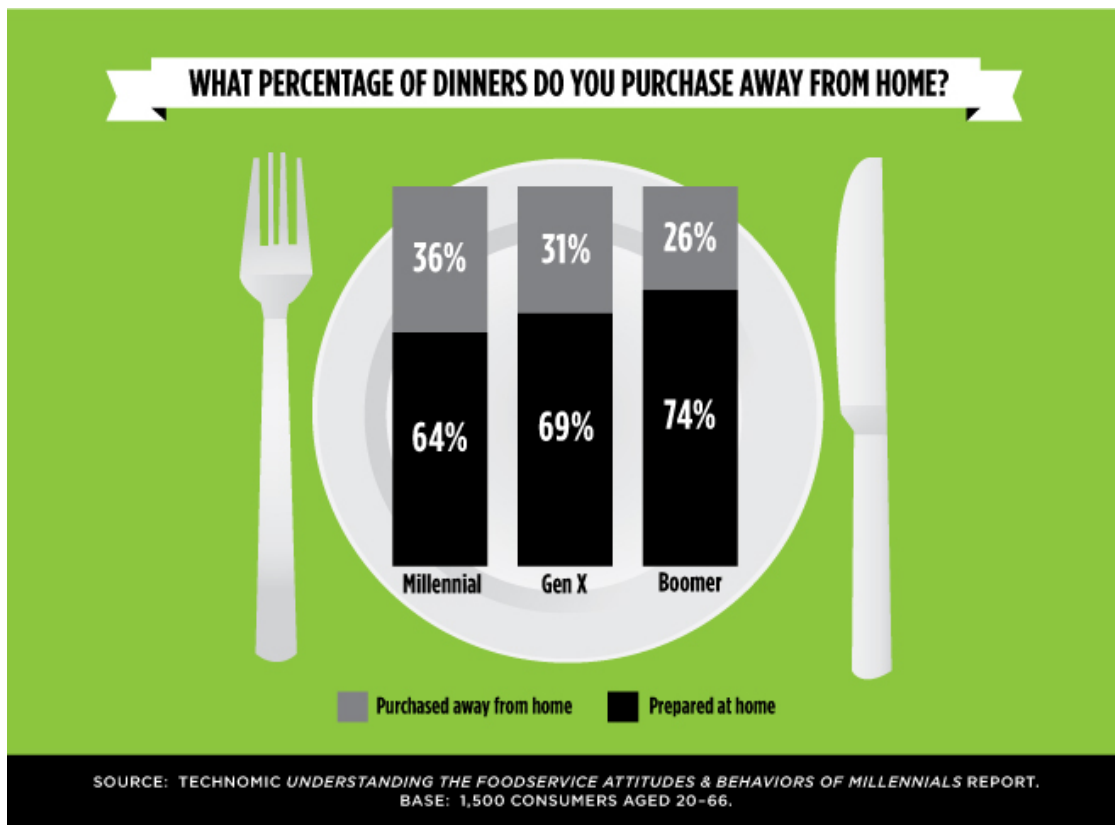
"If someone has a more efficient, more interesting, more unique, more authentic experience or product, millennials are willing to switch. They are not disloyal, they are savvy, because they'll stick with who they switch to if they like it."

The industry's leading brands are addressing this market by focusing on how to efficiently optimize menus, tell compelling stories and establish one-to-one loyalty programs—which means that every restaurant competing for millennials' business needs to do likewise.

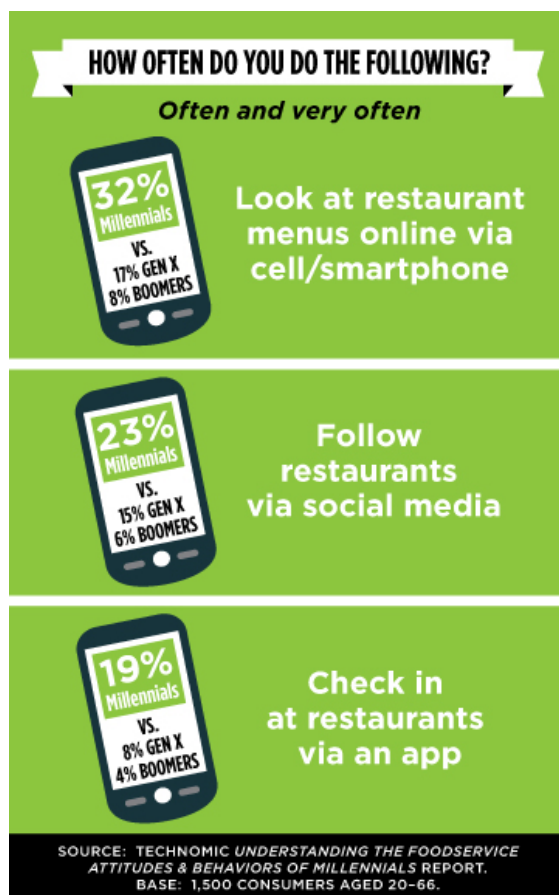
Starting at the Source: Optimizing Menus

Given that millennials value authenticity, simply coming up with a clever marketing or advertising campaign won't be enough to get them through the doors. QSRs and fast casual restaurants need to get down to basics.

According to market research company GfK MRI's Survey of the American Consumer®, the percentage of millennials who frequent value-priced QSR burger or sandwich chains has decreased since 2011. In contrast, the percentages going to leading coffee-branded QSRs (such as Starbucks) and fast casual chains based on healthy selections, such as Chipotle, have increased. Industry data reveals that over the past few years, a growing number of millennials have been adopting healthier lifestyles—a movement that may be responsible for this major shift.



For chain eateries with 20 or more locations, having to comply with the FDA's regulation for posting nutrition information for all menu items by the December 1, 2015 deadline means a new level of transparency. This is a good time for chains affected by the regulation to take a look at their menu and optimize accordingly with more nutritious offerings that appeal to this health-conscious demographic.



Live Your Story and Share It

Storytelling is the essence of content marketing—especially when price, quality and flavor are close among competitors. Fromm notes that the dominant marketing model has shifted from creative excellence to creating content that brands advocate and embrace. Content that is co-created with fans (such as user generated videos based on a theme) represents a high level of engagement, giving customers a sense of ownership in the brand. The purpose is to achieve loyalty, rather than deliver a hard sell message.

From there, storytelling needs to advance to what Fromm calls “storyliving:” the actions taken by a brand that prove it “walks the walk.” Millennial customers are quick to spot contradictions in what a brand says it does and what it actually does; and they’re even quicker at spreading the news throughout social media. Brands must be transparent and demonstrate their commitment to causes in which their millennial customers believe, which in turn can generate even more content and opportunities to form a connection. For example, videos featuring an organic farm that supplies a restaurant’s produce, or a 5K fundraising race for a selected non-profit organization.

WHAT MATTERS MOST TO MILLENNIALS?

- 1 Being honest
- 2 Living life to the fullest
- 3 Taking responsibility for your own life
- 4 Respecting your parents
- 5 Standing up for what you believe in

HOW MILLENNIALS EAT

Born 1979-2000

MILLENNIALS WANT VARIETY & DIVERSE FLAVORS.



55%

Prefer communal tables in restaurants.

Was it any good?

Yeah, you should go!

68%

Ask friends before selecting a restaurant.



87%

Will splurge on a nice meal even when money is tight.

40%

Will order something different every time they visit a restaurant.

MILLENNIALS EAT OUT THE MOST AT LUNCH AND TEND TO EAT FOUR SMALLER MEALS A DAY AT NON-TRADITIONAL TIMES.



30%

Eat foods that are certified organic.

COMPARE THAT TO 21% OF GEN X-ERS & 15% OF BOOMERS.

THEY PREFER **Whole Foods** TO OVER PROCESSED FOODS. THEY WILL SPEND MORE ON **Ethically Sourced Meats** & **Farm-to-Table EXPERIENCES**.



80%

Want to know more about how the food is grown.



Prefer to go grocery shopping in groups.

DIY FOODIES ARE SPENDING MORE ON PREMIUM INGREDIENTS AND STARTING SUPPER CLUBS. THEY'RE MORE LIKELY TO OPT FOR SMALL-BATCH HANDCRAFTED BEERS AND ARTISANAL CHEESES THAN THE BIG BRAND NAMES.

It's not just about nutrition.

MILLENNIALS VIEW FOOD AS ENTERTAINMENT & SELF-EXPRESSION.

SOURCE: DATA COMPILED BY SPLENDID COMMUNICATIONS

Creating Loyalty

One-to-one loyalty programs that deliver personalized rewards can be very effective in winning millennials—as long as the incentives are relevant to the customer’s own preferences. Brands must also be sure to connect with these customers through their preferred way of receiving information: text, email or social media. With the millennials’ online shopping via smartphone increasing a whopping 14 to 25 percent between 2013 and 2014 (according to GfK’s FutureBuy® 2014 shopping report), any loyalty program must be mobile optimized to succeed.

The Take-Home Message

The strategy to attract—and keep—millennial customers takes a different approach from other target demographics. But considering that the millennials are here to stay, brands that invest in earning their loyalty can enjoy a great long-term competitive advantage.



FINDING YOUR STYLE

Finding Your Style and Wearing It Out

How your style, or lack thereof, can create a bad brand experience. Style is more than a personal statement, it is an essential indication of how a business operates both externally and internally—and ultimately can be the beginning or end of its success. Be it traditional, retro or cutting-edge, the main thing style needs to be is consistent and true to the brand experience. If those two things are accomplished, success might occur, and if not, hey at least you looked good while trying.

Many individuals who venture into business don't really give much thought to their brand style either short or long term. Some let it evolve organically—much like the architect who put in the sidewalks last by paving the paths that people left naturally. While others try to paint the picture they believe the public wants to see, like Britney Spears—and end up with a huge disconnect and the eventual unraveling of a brand. Don't get me wrong, styles, images and enterprises have every right and are encouraged to change with the times like Super Target and McDonalds Bistro. The best brands evolve with their target and have specific styles and messages to appeal to multi-generations. But the one common denominator is consistency of messaging and its style and the all important, brand experience that serves as the follow through or promise.

Why It's Important:

I think the best way to answer the question, “Why is it important, is to answer the inquiry, ‘What will happen if you don't waste your valuable corporation's time worrying about style and just move forward, well, doing business’?”

The top 13 reasons why “no style” hurts you, using Moe's Southwest Grill as an example:

1. **Confusion.** Let's say for example, you walked into Moe's and they didn't shout the requisite, “Welcome to Moe's,” you might be quite confused. So much so, that you might ask yourself, “Have I accidentally stumbled into some other taco stand?”
2. **Fear.** After the onset of confusion, fear might actually take over. Your animal instinct may actually smell a stick up or hold up, not just burritos.
3. **Inconsistent messages and/or brand experiences from venue to venue.** What's going on at my favorite neighborhood southwest grill? The one near work is always spot-on consistent. Without even realizing it, your impression is becoming negative—and you're not even up to the beloved counter yet.
4. **Error prone.** Upon arriving at the counter and greeting your favorite Moe's burrito bro, you determine that a simple mistake or oversight has occurred and they're not actually being held at gun point. But hey, if they forgot to say, “Welcome to Moe's, will they also forget my much-needed extra guac?”
5. **Unprofessional.** Yes, a fun place can still be professional, it's all in delivery. And the lack of proper delivery, even if said delivery is a shout out, it's unprofessional to omit a greeting.

6. **No brand affinity.** Risk losing share to competition who has it all wrapped up. If by chance all the Moe's associates lose their voice for weeks on end, the brand affinity will deteriorate and leave a gaping hole for a competitor to fill. And they just might fill it with, "Welcome to Joe's!"
7. **Lose potential customers.** So, voice or no voice, the Moe's associates might not even be able to welcome their potential customers because they are now dining somewhere else (remember this is all hypothetical, we're sure they're still dining at Moe's they can't tell us for certain since they're mouths are full with Joey Bag of Donuts).
8. **Wasted impressions if all styles and messages vary greatly—or even a little.** If one Moe's says, "Welcome to Moe's," while another doesn't...and this sort of inconsistency continues in all aspects of their marketing initiatives, each impression is an optimized opportunity lost.
9. **Instills apathy/indifference internally and externally.** These impressions will instill a sense of indifference. No longer will potential clients even care that their betrothed Moe's has totally gone two, three and four-faced. They will fondly remember the good ol' days, but look to someone else to break tortilla with tomorrow.
10. **Didn't deliver to pre-determined or previously experienced expectation.** Even if the food was wonderful, as it always is at Moe's, the failure to shout the expected greeting tainted the entire experience and in effect didn't deliver on the customer's pre-determined or previously experienced expectation. And what did this do? It left them empty, not full.
11. **Time/money waster (fixing errors takes away from the business at hand).** Even if you take the guilty Moe's associates aside, backing up the line of customers, and gently remind them that it is customary to greet each and every person who enters Moe's with a friendly, "Welcome to Moe's," you have just wasted so, so much more money and time than even reading this White Paper. The actual calculation is hard to determine, but it encompasses the guilty party, times the customers waiting in line, to the power of everyone they tell.
12. **Lack of credibility.** If the brand promise isn't delivered even in what might seem like a minor aspect, the credibility of the entire corporation suffers. Obviously, this takes time, but a little erosion here and there will make for an eventual landslide, avalanche or collapse.
13. **Suspicion (don't trust them).** Let's say, you go to Moe's and instead of shouting, "Welcome to Moe's," they accidentally say, "Welcome to Maurice's." After all, Moe is an accepted nickname for Maurice. You would be suspicious of who they really are and what you can expect from their service, products and overall brand promise.

The previous 13 reasons why inconsistent style hurts you can easily be fixed—and the existence of a few will not kill your business, but it's important to know what could happen if such things are allowed to occur, again and again. Once is acceptable, but twice is onetime too many.

Trends show companies doing internal training to create a unified brand experience: This concept has always been popular with quick service restaurants, but is making its way into more corporate environments like healthcare facilities, learning institutions, resorts and financial institutions. Consistency is key. One bad experience with a brand or one of its ambassadors can not be repaired with all the marketing efforts in the world.

Where to Begin:

Create a simple (or elaborate) brand and style guide. Like most entrepreneurs do when they're about to dive off the deep end of "Open for Business," get your hands on your prime competitor's brand and style guide (or business plan) and see what they're doing. Think I'm kidding, I'm not. Look at things like their common acronyms to their long format boilerplate text for the bottom of the press release, and the key attributes to the font package they use on said computer keyboard. Each element of your style—written or graphic communication—or even the feeling the prospective consumer takes away—are all pieces of your whole picture, your brand is the perception, not your campaign.

In the mean time, here's a good place to start:

Your name, no joke, but any recently married woman who changed her name can tell you the expense and confusion (or quite frankly identity crisis that can follow). Or ask the 408, aka the East West Expressway what happened when they went numeric-only. Or what “lack of forethought” Universal Escape/Studios/Orlando would recommend.

Next, decide on a simple greeting that is consistent among departments, locations or divisions. A great example is, you guessed it, “Welcome to Moe’s.” Select office and/or associate attire (Target – I always know who to ask for help). Email signature (nothing worse than those personal sayings like “My office is hell with florescent lighting—really, and you think I should do business with you Sunshine, why?”) Mission, Vision, Values and 5-year business plan.

Determine your style 101:

1. Name and abbreviations
2. Contact Information Phone Number (dots or dashes) and Address (use of punctuation)
3. Email signatures
4. Greeting (phone and in person—keep it consistent—call any JCC nationwide and you’ll hear, “Shalom, thank you for calling the Jewish Community Center, how may I help you?”)
5. Slogan and tagline
6. Spokesperson
7. Font Package (font usage in various places – headlines, body copy, etc.)
8. Color – Owning a color: UPS Brown, Pepto-Bismol Pink, Victoria’s Secret owns Pink too!
9. Correspondence (style guide – pick one, share the selection with all associates and circulate a style guide to those who will be sending out internal and external correspondence)
10. External style and/or correspondence
11. Words that you associate yourself with (key attributes, personality or adjectives or emotions that describe you/your business)
12. Words you WILL NOT use (hotel vs. resort or customer vs. target)
13. Photos OR Drawings, black/white OR color, product OR lifestyle

Conclusion:

If you want people/associates to represent your company how you would, you need to tell them exactly what to say and how to say—hell, even tell them what to wear while doing it. Remember, your style can evolve with your brand, but determining a few key graphic and text style guidelines is key to establishing a consistent, memorable and successful company, brand and image.