

www.**stuff4**restaurants.com

where the hell are **you** ?

How to avoid the mistakes most restaurants make
with their signs and marketing



I want you to play an imaginary game with me.

I want you to imagine it's lunch time and I'm shouting (well, I did say imagine) your job is to choose the restaurant, and, oh yeah!, the restaurant can't be yours.

I want you join me in this imaginary exercise to discover how a potential diner is forced to make their dining decision, later we will look at some low cost techniques to influence their decision.

A major problem facing most business owners with all this marketing and advertising stuff is: they only see these exercises from their own perspective. Many restaurant owners find it extremely difficult to come to grips with the fact that the food and all the other operational stuff they spend most of their time juggling, is not the stuff that drives a customer's decision making process.

GREAT FOOD AND GREAT SERVICE ARE MERELY A BASELINE EXPECTATION.

They are not something unique enough to differentiate your business from the opposition. If I were to ask every one of your opposition, they too will tell me their food and service is great, so you can no longer rely on self-proclaimed bragging about your great food, quality and service, to build sales.

As we play this imaginary little game, we should remember, today's consumer is a far less susceptible to advertising than even two years ago. Today, we have all been forced to "turn off" from the overwhelming volume of advertising messages that are thrust upon us. The combined disappointments resulting from a plethora of "Stay Sharp Knives", tortuous gym equipment, pet rocks and rejuvenating gloops and tonics has made us extremely cynical of "Brag and Boast" advertising.



Our Quest Begins...

Let's go jump/squeeze into my fabulously subtle new executive limousine "The Yellow Canary" and go find ourselves a restaurant.

As we drive along, chattering on about our mutual interest in 17th century stamp collecting. You ask what sort of food I prefer, and I respond with an evasive degree of indecision, Now, just like a huge number of other potential customers, with no specific location in mind, we are "Up for Grabs".

We flash past a number of signs similar to those displayed to the right, all of which go totally unnoticed. Unnoticed because they say absolutely nothing that interests us or offers us any form of solution to find a lunch venue.

Now just think about this for a moment, this type of sign cost their owners many dollars to erect, light, and maintain, and they do little more than tell passing traffic the name of their restaurant. That's O.K. if I am looking for that specific restaurant, however it does nothing to tell me why I should consider this particular restaurant if I'm "shopping around"



Logos and Tombstones...

This “restaurant name first” layout is derisively known as the tombstone layout technique, it makes the fatal mistake of putting the business name and logo at the top. It is a mistake made by many businesses in all fields, and wastefully used in and on all forms of media.

I know, “It works for McDonalds!” Yes, This “Branding” technique does work for companies like McDonalds, because they spend more than 42 million dollars a year (in Australia alone) promoting their brand. So when we see the mighty “M” we automatically associate it with the T.V. and press offers we have been brainwashed with. Mere mortals like us, can’t get away with this type of visual shorthand, we have to make our signs do all the work.

I know you are proud of your restaurant name, and your family and well meaning friends do notice it, and even tell you how good it looks, Your name is very important to them, unfortunately, it means nothing to me or to any potential customers you are trying to attract.

Whilst making the name of your business the dominant feature of your sign may help in telling customers who are looking for you, where you are, I would strongly argue, the prime objective of your exterior signs is to convert passing traffic into customers, and your business name, should play a very big second to this function.



I can't be bothered trying to understand...

Another reason many of these signs don't work is:

They are impossible to read. As we flash along in my "Yellow Canary" we get only a fleeting moment to read and comprehend the message. In that fleeting moment, your sign has to grab our attention, give us a compelling reason why we should choose you, and tell us who and where you are.

Now all that is a seriously "Big Call", so stop making it impossible by using type styles, colours and layouts that make it even harder.

Black lettering on a white background is the easiest to read, Yeah, Yeah, I can hear all the aesthetic gurus howling how "BORING" this will look, and even I begrudgingly agree that this rule can be a little too rigid, however, be warned, every time you break these proven rules of communication, you will drastically cut the number of customers arriving at your door.



Stop sending YOUR customers to the opposition...

These signs have impact, they do grab attention. Unfortunately, that's where their message ends, One tells me it's a Chinese restaurant, The other Italian, these signs are merely generic.

The very real danger here is: they have spent their promotional money selling me on buying Chinese or Italian, but have failed to tell me why I should choose them, they have failed to tell me what they have, or do, that is special for me, So, I may well decide to eat Chinese or Italian, with their opposition.



Are they joking or just plain dumb...?

Here's some more road side clutter, no wonder the councils crawl all over this stuff with their interfering legislation

These are just plain tacky, my first impression is: if they don't care about their external appearance I can't help but wonder about the things I can't see, like the state of their kitchen.

I can't even be bothered trying to read this stuff, as we flash by in our luxury appointed "yellow canary" we simply can't and don't want to absorb any of that. How much do they care?



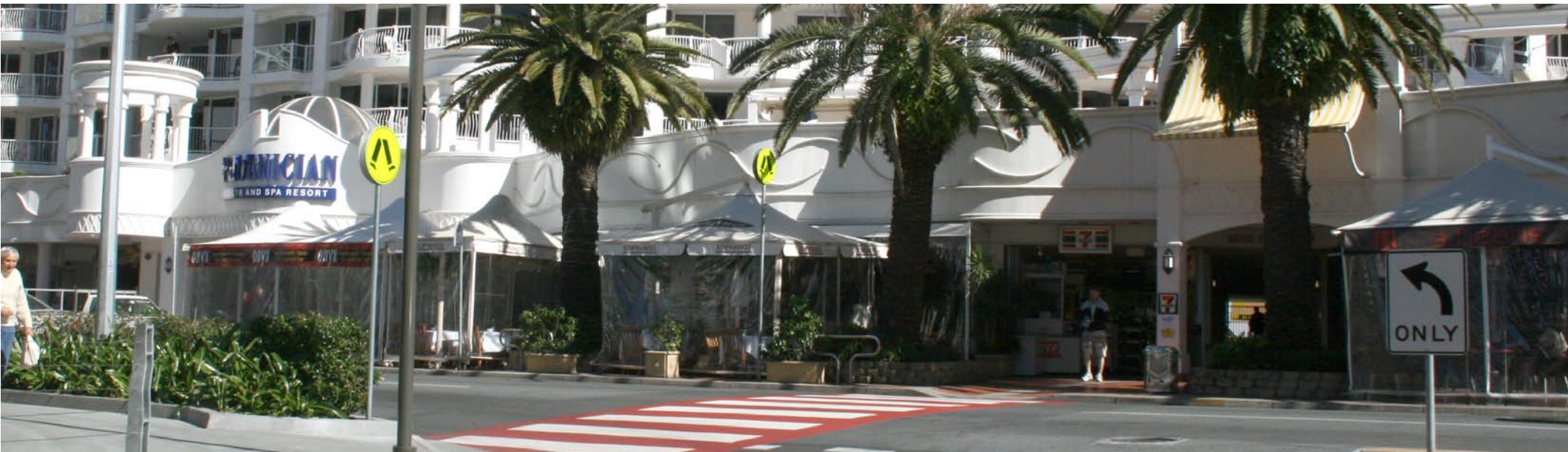
The Drive Past...

O.K. so far we have managed to travel across town without being seduced by any specific restaurant, so we will head for an area where we know the street is lined with restaurants, we know we will find something to our liking there, so we gun the “Little Yellow Canary” and head for the local restaurant precinct.

Well, see for yourself, what here is saying anything? Those few who are communicating are merely whispering, and again, they are only telling me their name, mostly, in typefaces too hard to read.

I know many of you are constricted by onerous rental agreements that dictate how much and what form of signage you are allowed, but our job is to discover new and unique ideas that make us STAND OUT from the opposition, not blend with it.

Advertising is a “winner takes all” game, not a game of “cookie cutter” similarity.



Burning the shoe leather...

In our quest to find a lunch venue, we are now forced to do a “walk past”, we need to “have a look around”.

Now this is where it all gets very, very competitive; suddenly we are confronted by acres of chalk boards and menus on church like podiums, all attempting to entice us in.

In this highly competitive environment the majority have resorted to offering substantial price inducements, “all we can eat for \$12.95”, “Buy One Get One Free”, etc. etc.

We started this quest with no thought as to price, now, the signs have encouraged us to become extremely price conscious and even more indecisive. Just as we think one restaurant may be worth trying, yet another sign catches our eye with an even more competitive offer.

So finally, to make our decision, we are forced to walk both sides of the street absorbing, rejecting, being tempted and becoming even more indecisive.



Lunch at last...

Finally, out of sheer frustration and now with an overwhelming need to tame our ferocious pangs of hunger, we make a choice, we force ourselves to take a gamble, we enter, and are welcomed with polite but predictable hospitality, we are seated, order, and enjoy our lunch whilst conducting a convivial conversation on love, life and politics.

The meal ends, we pay (oh sorry, I did say it was MY shout didn't I), I pay, and am warmly thanked by an attentive and efficient staff member. We leave and return to our offices to get on with the rest of our life...



THE

SOLUTIONS

NOW LETS HAVE A LOOK AT THIS WHOLE IMAGINARY EVENT AND THE OPPORTUNITIES THAT WERE LOST.

Let's see if there is a better way to communicate with your potential customers. Let's see if we can initiate strategies that have a greater impact upon them before they are subjected to the now fiercely competitive marketplace.

Let's go back and have a second look at some of those signs I was so dismissive of before, let's see if we can mess around with them a bit and make them work a little better.

For hundreds of NEW solutions and great ideas go to www.stuff4restaurants.com

The early bird... you know the rest

The greatest (and lowest cost) opportunity for a Restaurateur to influence buying decisions occurs before we get into the car. And I don't mean by using lots of expensive advertising stuff.

If a friend had said to us "you must try the ...(YOUR)... restaurant, I went there last week and etc.etc. Look here! they gave me a cards for my friends, you'll even get a free bottle of wine.

That simple conversation would have completely wiped out the need for expensive signs, having to offer everyone a discount, and the risk that we would be seduced by an opposition restaurant.

If you do nothing else I recommend both here and on my site, do some of this "Friend invite a Friend" networking stuff.

It is by far the most powerful and least expensive promotional activity you can do.

REMEMBER: It's all about influencing buying decisions BEFORE your opposition do.



Every customer should be given several V.I.P. cards like this every time they come to your restaurant... then sit back and watch the power of WORD OF MOUTH ON STEROIDS begin to work... I personally GUARANTEE IT!

How to grab the attention of your “drive by” traffic

To influence traffic flows you need to make our signs communicate better and do stuff that gets your message firmly planted into the minds of your potential customers.

Let’s fiddle with some of the signs we looked at before and see if we can improve them.

For this exercise I have purposely used existing signs, my recommendations are not the perfect answer, they are merely an attempt to demonstrate that with a few inexpensive tweaks, the effect of even existing signs can be vastly improved.

Shift the name from the prime “Tombstone” position and replace with a headline that conveys a benefit to your customers



If possible, the head line should be changed to suit the time of day.

How to SUPERCHARGE your chalk boards to grab the attention of your “walk by” traffic

Now that we have done everything we can (you have, haven't you?) to influence as many as we can before they get to the restaurant, their remains plenty of recalcitrant non believers wandering past our door that are still “Up for Grabs” so let's go grab em...

Chalk boards are O.K., they do work, so how can you “SUPERCHARGE” yours

Human attention simply can't resist certain things: movement, bright colours, flashing lights, smells, eye contact from another person or life size photo, and interesting, bustling or abnormal activity.

The more of these elements you include in and around your restaurant the more attention you will get.

Tie Helium balloons to your chalk boards. Hang bright coloured flags wherever their movement will draw attention away from your oppositions offers etc etc.



This roadside sign has it all...

The message is specific to the time of day and it is short and precise enough to be read at a glance.

The boy makes direct, friendly eye contact whilst his green hair adds an element of surprise.

The message says US, not the opposition.

Note the white border to the picture, it ensures the picture is separated from its background, and the whole thing is capped off with colourful, helium filled balloons which dance in the breeze to catch attention.

It doesn't need a restaurant name, once the reader has decided this is the place to go, the signs on the adjacent restaurant do the rest.

This sign is guaranteed to convert drive by traffic.



Be different, be **REMARKABLE** or be ignored...

The following are just a few of ideas to get your imagination excited from my web site at stuff4restaurants.com they all fall under the category of stunts. Their prime function is to grab attention away from and before the opposition. Even more powerfully, they have been specifically designed to break through the clutter of mediocrity, often with wry humour, to get people thinking, talking and buying from you.

Some are a little off the wall, and that's the whole point, no great advertising idea, ever came from merely copying what everyone else does, copy by all means, we all do, but don't copy exactly what your opposition are doing, copy from other types of business and from other areas, and change ideas to reflect the uniqueness of your business.

This is THE game of business,
"CREATING CUSTOMERS"
it's fun, and the rewards are enormous.



Strategic alliances

or as the self appointed GURU'S now call it... Host Beneficiary Relationships

Here is a powerfully great way to tap into the existing customers of business's all around you. Simply make THEM (the other business's) the hero of a STRONG offer and you will get the opportunity to attract the "Life Time Value" of a new customer, at far less than the cost of any other form of advertising.

Plus, you also win the support and custom of local business's, their friends and families.

Every time we use this type of simple devise it pays for itself many, many times over.

The key to this promotion is: Look around for business's who already serve the type of customers you want, and be generous with the incentives you offer.



A really GREAT “Ripp-off” ...

The age old “Tear off” concept revived with good humor and bright attention grabbing colour.

It was originally done for a European Dentist and we loved it so much we suggested one of our Singapore food franchise clients trial it.

The results were both immediate and astounding. Each tear off tooth contained an incentive offer and the contact details. It received thousands of extra dollars of FREE publicity when both T.V. and Newspapers ran it in their news programs. *I can't imagine who tipped them off :)*

For a total cost well below \$50.00 for 10 locations, the return on investment would make even a Donald Trump blush, well almost...

You are stark raving mad NOT to try this... It could be done dozens of different ways to suit your image.

Please remember to tell about your results.



Now they love you, Don't lose them and their friends and families

Your prime objective should be to turn every existing customer contact into an enthusiastic promoter of your business.

DON'T WASTE THIS VITAL INVESTMENT, invite them back often and make sure you give them devices like the "Friend of a VIP customer cards" (as shown on page eleven) that make it easy for them to recommend your restaurant to their friends and families.

There is no advertising process known, that is more economical or powerful than friends inviting friends. However this technique must NEVER be left to chance, you must continually be looking for reasons and techniques to drive word of mouth promotion.

I know of a number of highly successful businesses that have a different reason each week to (usually a traditionally quiet night) invite existing customers to attend and provide incentives for them to bring their friends.

They have Birthday parties for themselves, the restaurant, their team, their clients, end of winter, etc. etc. This way, they have a real reason to stay in touch with their clients, they are not just sending them endless and unwelcome advertisements. They are treating their customers as true friends, and their customers, like true friends, willingly and enthusiastically respond.

About the Author...

Lindsay Polson is the founder and sole owner of stuff4restaurants.com, a unique web site which provides, FREE, the latest and best advertising techniques for restaurant, cafe, bar and nightclub owners, from all around the world

Lindsay has successfully founded and managed publishing, marketing and advertising agencies throughout New Zealand, Australia, and South East Asia. In addition, he has worked with a number of leading International Hotel and Food Franchise groups

Currently, he splits his time between public speaking engagements for companies and organizations, sailing, oil painting and most recently, the writing and publishing of a set of comprehensively illustrated books on advertising and marketing techniques for small business owners.

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His latest eBook (the one you are looking at right now) "Where the Hell are you" is available for FREE as a download, to visit his web site [CLICK HERE](#)

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