

Mini Food Truck Business Guide

How to Start, Run, and Succeed In Your Own Food Truck Business

How Expert Press & Bruce Stimson

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Introduction

You have a dream of opening your own food truck and cooking amazing food for everyone in your city to enjoy. What foodie doesn't dream about turning their passion into a business and a career?

There's a lot more to running a successful food truck than serving great food. A food truck is a small business, and like all new businesses, it's going to take over your life at least for the first few years. Food truck owners work long hours, so it's important to love what you do.

This book will take you through all the steps you must go through to get to your grand opening and beyond. You're going to be working on several of these steps at the same time: for example, you really can't make a financial plan unless you've given some thought to the entire process of setting up the business.

Do some preliminary research about all the steps before you start working on your project in earnest. There may be some local regulation in your city that may not be acceptable to you, and it's better to find out about it sooner than later.

Once you've decided to go ahead with your project, the first step is to make sure you've got a great product to sell.

Chapter 1 – Plan Your Menu

Some people say that the food itself is the easiest part of the food truck business. However, the menu is going to be your inspiration and your business's entire reason for being, so you need to know what kind of food you plan to serve before you start.

Food trucks used to be all about fries, burgers, and hot dogs, but in urban centers today there's a much bigger emphasis on gourmet, exotic and healthy foods.

To have a recognizable brand, it's important to find a niche. It's a good idea to build your menu around a theme, or even around a signature dish or two, especially since food storage and preparation space is going to be limited.

Maybe you inherited your grandmother's amazing samosa recipe and live in a city where authentic samosas are hard to find. Add a few more snacks and some killer chai and you've got a working menu.

It's important to be unique, to a point: there's probably a good reason nobody is selling blueberry lobster strudel in your town. But it's also a good idea to learn from the successful food truck operators in your target area. When you look at what's offered, is there anything that you wish was available but isn't?

Maybe you've got some new ideas for what to do with waffles or bacon. Maybe there's not enough vegetarian

food available. Or maybe everything's gotten so gourmet that nobody is doing basic hand-made burgers and fries anymore.

You also need to consider whether you will be selling in the presence of other food trucks or on a street where you are by yourself. This may be hindsight, but if you've got a lot of competition you should focus on a narrower menu with unique items to stand out. If there's not much competition, you'll probably benefit more from offering a wider range of choices.

The next thing to think about is where you will buy your ingredients. You will need to be able to find good quality, fresh and unique ingredients at an affordable enough price to turn a decent profit.

Some ingredients can come from places like Costco that specialize in bulk and wholesale. Consider other wholesale food distributors in your area and see what they have on offer.

Farmers' markets are another great source of fresh, local ingredients. In some cases: for example, if you want to sell ostrich burgers or some other unusual product buying directly from the farm might be the way to go.

There's not much storage space on a food truck, so you will need careful planning to determine how much of each ingredient to buy. Renting storage space in a commissary may end up costing you more than buying in smaller quantities.

Once you've got your menu and you know where you'll be getting your ingredients, it's time to open your test kitchen. Invite as many friends and family over as you can and cook them up a sample menu. Be sure to include people who will give you honest opinions!

It's important to use the same ingredients that you plan to use when you open your business, because you're trying to get an authentic sense of what the final product will be like. You will figure out how big the portions need to be and how much each item will cost to make. See how your test subjects react to the prices you plan to charge.

As a rule, if you're serving an unusual fusion of cuisines or an unfamiliar ingredient, people should love it the first time they try it. Sure, coffee is both a lucrative product and an acquired taste, but plenty of people have already acquired it, and you're not solely responsible for creating the demand. Customers may be willing to try a weird-sounding food combination once, but they won't come back unless it's love at first bite.

Serve everything up the same way you will when you're selling from your truck. If the plastic forks you've chosen don't work with the dish, you'll find out. You will also learn how to present your food so that it looks as delicious as it tastes. It's much easier to make food look good on real dishes than it in take-out containers.

Now that you've got a product to sell, it's time to tackle some of the specific details.

Mint Pesto and Lamb Kebabs

Ingredients:

PESTO

- A cup of packed mint fresh leaves
- 1/2 cup of packed cilantro fresh leaves
- 3 tablespoons of pine nuts
- 2 1/2 tablespoons of fresh and sliced Parmesan cheese
- A tablespoon of fresh made lemon juice
- 2 peeled moderate garlic cloves
- About 1/2 coarse teaspoon of kosher salt
- About 1/2 a cup of virgin olive cooking oil

KEBABS

- A tablespoon of virgin olive cooking oil, as well as, more for brushing
- 5 big minced garlic cloves
- 3 coarse teaspoons of kosher salt
- 1 1/4 teaspoons of coriander seeds, powdered by use of a mortar and pestle
- 3 pounds of boneless trimmed leg meat of a lamb, chopped to 1/4 inches cube
- 2 big orange bell peppers, well sliced into squares

- A big red bulb onion chopped to squares cubes

SPECIAL EQUIPMENT

- 8 to 10 metallic skewers

Preparation:

PESTO

Make a mixture of the first ingredients in a blender to a rough puree. While the blender is running, progressively pour in 1/2 cup of the oil, puree till the combination is smooth. Relocate the pesto into a bowl. Flavor using salt as well as pepper.

KEBABS

Mix a tablespoon of oil, coriander, garlic, and coarse salt, into a moderate bowl. Stir in the lamb then toss over and coat. Place the lid over and wait for about 2-4 hours.

Place lamb onto the skewers flavor with peppers as well as onions. Put them on the baking leaf. Cook barbecue on moderate heat. Sprinkle with the oil and with the pepper. Then cook to your desired softness, remember to turn frequently, 5 to 7 minutes for side to side each.

Assemble the kebabs onto your plates. Brush every kebab slightly using pesto and then serve the rest of the pesto on the side.

Ratatouille and poached eggs

Ingredients:

- 2 tablespoon of olive cooking oil
- 1 1/2 big bulb onion well sliced
- A thinly sliced and deseeded orange pepper or either a red one
- 3 finely sliced garlic cloves
- A tablespoon of sliced rosemary
- A diced zucchini
- 2 diced eggplant
- 400g or can sliced tomatoes
- Around 2 tsp of balsamic vinegar
- 5 big eggs
- A handful of basil leaves

Method

Preheat the olive oil in a big sauce pan. Put in the sliced onions, rosemary, garlic, and the pepper, then continue to cook for 6 minutes, while stirring regularly, till onions have softened. Now stir in the

eggplant, and the zucchini and continue cooking for more 4 minutes.

Put in the tomatoes, and fill your pan with water, leave it to boil while covered, then cook for more 40 or so minutes, checking regularly after every 20 minutes, till the water is reduced to pulpy.

Add in vinegar to the ratatouille, and make spaces around for the 4 eggs. Crack each egg to every hole then flavor with the black pepper. Place lid over, and cook for more 3-6 minutes' till it is soft or decisively as you want. Sprinkle the basil then serve with crispy bread to wipe up the fluids.

Chicken Enchilada

This delicious meal, includes chicken that is in spicy sauce, a squeeze of lime, lettuce, and tortilla chips.

Ingredients:

- A medium size onion chopped to half-moons shape
- A tablespoon of olive cooking oil
- A can of 10 oz. of enchilada sauce
- A cup of canned grated tomatoes
- 1 1/2 can of 15 oz. drained and black beans
- A teaspoon of dry Mexican oregano
- Minced and canned chipotle chill
- 2 tablespoons of packed brown sugar

- 4 cups of sliced rotisserie chicken

NACHOS

- coarsely crushed 8 ounces of tortilla chips
- 1 1/4 cups of shred cheddar cheese
- 3 cups of shred lettuce
- 3/4 cup of cilantro sprigs
- Hot sauce as well as Lime wedges

Preparation

Make the sauce by frying onions in olive oil in a big saucepan over moderate heat till they soften, this takes less than 7 minutes.

Stir in the enchilada sauce, oregano, beans, tomatoes, sugar, chill, and then cook, as you stir occasionally, till hot and marginally reduced, 5 minutes are enough. Add in the chicken then cook till it is boiling, 5 minutes will be good.

Bring together the nachos: Distribute chips into different bowls, add the chicken combination, cilantro, cheese, and lettuce. Serve hot sauce with the lime wedges.

Beef with Bacon Chili

Like many of the chills, this one can even be better made at home or at the camp.

Ingredients:

- Finely chopped 3 slices of thickly cut bacon
- 1 finely chopped big onion
- 1 minced big garlic clove
- 1 1/2 pounds of ground beef that is lean
- 1/2 tsp. of chili powder
- 1 1/2 teaspoons powdered cumin
- 1 1/2 teaspoons of sweetened and smoldered Spanish paprika
- 1/2 teaspoon of cayenne pepper
- A tsp. of salt
- A can of about 14.5 oz. minced of roasted tomatoes
- A can of about 9 oz. of tomato sauce
- 1 cup medium-bodied beer
- A teaspoon of Worcestershire
- A can of 14.5 oz. of drained pinto beans
- cut up green onions, sour cream, coarsely sliced cheddar cheese meant to top

Preparation:

On a big, heavy-bottomed saucepan place over high heat, cook the bacon, while stirring till it starts to brown, this should have taken 5 minutes. Put in the onions, reduce the heat to medium, place the lid over,

cook as you stir occasionally, till transparent, for about 5 to 8 minutes. Uncover and then add in garlic while you stir and cook for 2 more minutes.

Raise the heat onto high then add the ground beef, use a wooden spoon to break it and then stir moderately till it has lost its raw color, this will have taken around 6 minutes. Add in the spices and a tsp. of salt then cook for 1 more minute. Stir in Worcestershire, tomatoes, beer, and the tomato sauce and then leave to boil. Moderate the heat to medium, cover, and then continue cooking for about 30 minutes more.

Now put in the beans and then cook for about 10 minutes, while it is uncovered. Add salt to your taste. Serve while it is warm, making sure that toppings are arranged to the side of the plate.

Italian-Flair Hobo

A classic camping meal in a small foil bag which gets a stern upgrade in fresh form. For start, prepare meatballs before leaving home. At the camp, you will require grilling gloves, a heavy foil, long tongs, and of course a fire pit as well as cooking saucepan.

Ingredients:

- Almost 5 tbsp. of olive cooking oil
- 1/4 cup of dried Italian-made bread crumbs

- 1/4 cup of milk
- 1/2 cup parmesan cheese grated, and more pieces of parmesan to serve
- About 4 tablespoons of sliced, leaf parsley and full leaves to serve with
- Sliced fresh basil, 4 tablespoons also leaves to serve with
- A teaspoon of kosher salt
- A teaspoon of pepper
- 2 tablespoons of sliced Calabrian chilies or 1/2 tsp. of cayenne
- 1 or 2 pounds of minced turkey thigh meat preferably
- A pound of minced Italian sausage from chicken but turkey can also do
- Medium red potatoes chopped to portions or halves
- A big onion chopped to thin wedges
- 4-5 small carrots, cut diagonally
- 5 teaspoons of cornstarch

Preparation

In the fire-pit, make a fire of wood diameter same as wide as your cooking pan. Let the fire burn to ensure low flames or you can use charcoal. chop sheets of your heavy foil to about 18-inches. Now brush and center each with very little oil then set on your working surface.

Into a big bowl, mix the breadcrumbs, chopped parsley, milk, basil, and grated parmesan. Add in salt

together with pepper, as well as sliced Calabrian chill. Put in the minced turkey as well as sausage. Stir till it is equally blended, now shape it to balls, and transfer to dish or plates.

Place the meatballs in the middle of every foil sheet, divide the potatoes, the onions, and then carrots among each sheet. On a medium bowl, mix remaining amount of oil, the cornstarch, 1/2 cup of water, and then salt as well as pepper; divide over the already cooked ingredients in the foils, stir the broth for a few seconds.

On every roll, bring two different sides of the foil at the same point then fold to create a layer. Fold the layer once again, and fold flat into a packet. Fold the ends 1 more-time in., then redo it again to cover securely.

Set packs on the grill and then cook, while turning over by use of tongs 10 minutes apart, till the vegetables become tender while the meatballs are also cooked adequately, this should take 30 minutes, check by using a knife to open.

Protecting your hands by use of grilling gloves, now open the packets, or cut off the foil ends with a pair of scissors and then put your food on plates. Slice the parsley as well as basil leaves at the top and then serve with chilis and the sliced parmesan.

Chapter 2 – Licensing, Permits and Laws

This is probably the least enjoyable part of the process for everybody, but it's important to research this thoroughly. The state, county, and municipal levels of government each have their own rules and regulations that you have to follow in order to sell food.

Different types of vehicles and venues also require different authorizations, so you may still be applying for permits even after you open your business. And don't forget to trademark your business name!

Every municipality in the country has its own rules, and some of them can be deal breakers. For example, New York City has a quota and will only issue a limited number of permits at any given time.

Other cities will not allow you to set up in a metered parking space even if you keep putting money in the meter all day. In Los Angeles, you need to be located near public toilet facilities if you plan to stay in a single location for more than one **hour**.

As well as business permits, you will also have to learn about and comply with health regulations. Your truck and your kitchen (if you have a separate food preparation area) will be subject to inspection. If you are going to be crossing state or county lines with your food truck, you will need permits in all the areas where you do business.

Unfortunately, there is no single place you can go that will tell you everything you need to know about licensing and permits. Start with your local government offices: The Health Department, the Chamber of Commerce, and your city's chapter of the Small Business Administration.

These offices may have all you need available online, or you may have to visit in person. There may be a food truck association in your city if you're lucky; this would be a great resource for you to use. Otherwise, there are lots of online resources available. As with most things in life, there's even an application for that.

This process is a slow, but if you know you've got great products you can keep drawing inspiration from the enthusiasm your test subjects had for the food you served them.

Running a food truck requires that you adhere to local laws and regulations. However, long before rolling down the street for business, food truck vehicles and kitchens need to be approved for operations. That means that your truck is not road ready until your kitchen has passed initial health and safety tests. This should be of no surprise because every food establishment must be inspected before it is approved to serve meals to customers.

But just because you're mobile doesn't mean that the inspections end there. Gourmet food trucks must undergo surprise health inspections usually at the most inopportune time. If you've ever owned or worked in a restaurant, you know that health inspectors will just show up unexpectedly.

And because of the fast-paced workflow of food truck businesses, the mere mention of a health inspector can put added pressure on an already stressful workday. The anxiety felt when a health inspector shows up is common and you shouldn't feel like you're being singled out. However, there are things you can do on a regular basis that will help you pass an inspection with less stress of failing.

There can be several mandatory health inspections throughout the year. You must adhere to the rules to ensure that your food truck doesn't violate any health codes. In the United States alone, there are over 2,000 state and local organizations responsible for inspecting food trucks.

Some of the most basic regulations require that gourmet food trucks have both hot and cold running water, a temperature controlled refrigerator, and a way to dispose of solid waste as well as wastewater.

As of now, there aren't necessarily universal standards for food trucks so it's best to check with your state and local laws specific to your area. Industry leaders believe that there may soon be a standardized checklist for all food trucks to follow no matter where they operate.

The best practice is to come up with a cleaning schedule and post these procedures visible for all staff to see so the task is easily manageable. Once an inspector arrives at your truck, it's too late to clean up! The last thing you want is to be shut down. Just one shutdown could really hurt your brand and reputation.

Preparing a Self-Inspection

One of the things you can do to be ready for the health inspector is to perform your own self-inspection at regular intervals. There is a slight chance that a health inspector will give notice when they will visit your truck but chances are most visits will come unannounced. So it's best to always be ready for the dreaded health inspector!

Here are some of the top things you should be looking for when you are inspecting your own food truck.

Food and Supplies - This includes all your raw ingredients, food preparation areas and food storage systems. You want to make sure all the food you have onboard is clean and safe for your customers to consume. Inspectors will check to make sure all your food is stored at the correct temperatures, especially those items that need to be kept cool.

Raw meat needs to be kept away and not touching foods that have already been cooked or raw ingredients. This can lead to cross-contamination and is a major problem if the inspector finds this issue. Be sure that foods aren't left out for long periods of time especially if they need to stay at certain temperatures.

If you store foods in containers, be sure to label and date them so you know when to dispose of them. Unused containers need to be cleaned and sanitized. These containers also need to be kept in a clean area until ready for use.

Cooking Equipment - As mentioned in the previous section, cooling units like refrigerators and freezers need to be kept at the correct temperatures. There should be thermometers either on the inside or temperature display mounted to the exterior of these appliances. This is an area the health inspector will focus on because it directly relates to the safety of the food you are selling.

Inspectors will also inspect your plumbing system. Your fresh water tanks must be cleaned and sanitized on a regular basis to avoid contamination and foodborne illness. Water tanks in food trucks are meant to be used over a short period of time which means they must be emptied and refilled regularly to help prevent standing water and bacterial growth.

There must be a dedicated sink for hand washing along with soap. Your dishwashing water needs to be at the correct temperature for proper cleaning. Commercial sinks have 3 compartments and the first sink with the detergent must be at 110 degrees. If you are sanitizing with only water in the third compartment, the temperature in that sink needs to be 180+ degrees. Of course, check with your local regulations in case they are different than what is presented here.

Your truck must have adequate ventilation and the proper equipment to move air inside your truck. Cleaning products must be kept away from any foods and you must employ a commercial kitchen or commissary for any type of food preparation that is not allowed onboard your vehicle.

Sanitary Conditions - When it comes to food preparation, all cooking and preparation surfaces must be clean and sanitized. There should be no signs of pests inside your truck. Your floors and countertops need to be cleaned daily to avoid build-up.

You must also have proper methods to dispose of your garbage both inside and outside the vehicle. In your sink, if any compartments get too saturated with food or detergent levels run low, they must be changed and refilled to proper temperatures. Used dishes and cooking tools need to be kept away from clean serving containers or dishes. And lastly, make sure countertops, floors and sinks are in good condition.

Required Paperwork On-Hand - You may also be asked to present the legal operating paperwork for your food truck. This means having all licenses up to date with the proper permits for operations. This may include the license and registration to the vehicle itself. The inspector may ask for a schedule of your cleaning routines and a visual inspection of the cleaning products you use. Hand washing posters should be posted above the hand washing sink.

What Else Will the Inspector Look For?

The inspector will most likely check to see if your employees are following proper hand washing procedures. They will also be observing whether employees can answer questions about proper food and cleaning practices. Employees must be wearing proper attire and protective gear if necessary.

If you do your own self-inspection once or twice a week, you should be well prepared for when the health inspector suddenly shows up at your truck. Even though you may be in different locations every day, they will be able to find you the same way your customers find you. Eventually they will locate you for your inspection!

Many food truck owners have come to the harsh reality that doing business on the streets just doesn't provide enough revenue to sustain an existence. It's a sad reality but a lot of food trucks must find additional sources of revenue in order to remain profitable and survive.

One of the ways food truck owners have tapped into additional revenue streams is by offering catering services. Finding events to cater is a very effective way to make use of the resources you already own to grow your income. This is particularly a smart business practice during the quieter months where business often slows down. Usually this happens in the winter but that doesn't mean you can't do catering year-round.

One thing to remember is that catering is a well-established industry and it is very competitive so you need to figure out where you fit in the best. Not every event is going to be well suited for a food truck but there are many that would be a natural fit! But you need to be able to provide services just as good if not better than the traditional catering companies. That means you can service different capacities and have the equipment and staffing needed to successfully cater an event.

Before You Start Catering Services

Even though catering services is a great extension to your food truck business, there are some considerations you need to think about. The workflow is going to be entirely different than a regular service on the streets. You may need to revisit your business plan and train your staff for the additional workload and procedures. New permits and licenses may also be required before your first catering appointment.

Catering events will require that you review and thoroughly understand the requirements of offering a catering service in your area. Chances are that you already have the proper things in place to start but check local regulations in case you need additional permits. Your local health department or chamber of commerce is a great starting point for these conversations. Talking to other food truck owners and mobile food organizations is also a smart way to begin. You may want to talk directly with different venues where you want to offer your catering services. They'll also offer you requirements before you can even show up on their grounds.

Where Do You Want to Cater?

After you've had some initial conversations and figured out whether you need additional permits, it's time to start thinking of the different types of venues that could be suited for your truck. There are many corporate events and private parties that you could offer your services. You may want to try to service various types of events or you could focus and specialize in certain themed events only.

Either strategy can work but make sure it works with your business plan and the direction you want your business to be headed. Here are some of the events you could consider for catering.

Company Retreats

Weddings

Bridal Showers

Birthday Parties

Company Lunches

Seminars

Fundraisers

Sporting Events

Bar Mitzvahs

Bat Mitzvahs

Graduation Parties

Rehearsal Dinners

Block Parties

Backstage Concerts

Movie Sets

Parent/Teacher Conferences

Retirement Parties

Product Launch Events

Grand Openings

Etc.

As you can see, there are many instances where you can set up catering services. These are just a few. Almost any event where there's a gather of people can be an opportunity for new business.

Getting Set Up

Once you're determined to offer catering services, you will need to set up some foundations and your pricing structure. When you enter into an agreement with a party, they become a client that requires much more attention than a customer walking up to your truck on the street. You should nurture a relationship with that client and exceed their expectations. It's important not to promise more than what you can deliver. If you do, you are setting yourself up for trouble and a poor experience for you and your client. Sometimes accepting a catering gig means you will miss some of your regularly scheduled street services so you will have to weigh the revenue potential of each event. A signed contract means you are bound to provide the

services you promised. It is very important to have a backup plan in case any issues arise like an employee getting ill or mechanical or supply problems.

Menu

If you have an extensive menu, you might want to pare it down and only offer the most popular items for your catering clients. That way you can stock up on only the most used items so you can prepare those dishes on a massive scale. These days you will have to consider the possibilities of offering some special items for those with allergies or even gluten free options. That is not always possible but it is your job to inform your client if you cannot provide those types of options.

Staffing

You will also have to consider the size and pacing of the event you are catering. A large corporate event that lasts several hours may be fast-paced and you will need additional staff to handle the demand. This could be like the lunch rush on the streets where the customers are constant until the lunch crowd dissipates. On the other hand, if you are catering a smaller event like a bridal party, the pace at which food needs to be prepared might be a bit slower.

At larger events, it might be smart to have someone on-call that can run errands and deliver additional

ingredients in case you deplete supplies sooner than expected. You can't easily just shut down at a catering event when you run out of supplies. This will help create a seamless experience for your client and their guests.

Pricing Your Services

Even if you haven't started to offer catering services, you need to consider how much you're going to charge your clients. Are you going to offer packages or ala carte type pricing? This is where a contract is necessary. You may have to consult with a lawyer to draw up the contract for your clients to sign. This will protect you and your client in case any issues arise.

Many established caterers offer packages for their clients. By bundling up your services, it makes it easier for your client to decide what they want to buy from you. You also limit the choices for the client and you get to steer them in the direction that makes the most sense for your business. Attractive packages are those that offer a variety of price levels and services so the client know exactly what to expect. Of course, there can be deviations to the package so you will have to adjust your prices accordingly or charge an add on fee. You can even list add on items so that the client can see that you can accommodate their requests.

To help with pricing, call around and get prices from other caterers and food trucks. Usually you will be discounting your regular prices a bit because the client is purchasing in bulk from you. But you also

need to consider your time, staffing costs and any other expenses incurred when determining your prices.

What to Include in a Contract?

If you've never worked with contracts before, it would be a good idea (if possible) to get a hold of some contracts from your competitors and consult with your lawyer. The information in this section should not be taken as actual legal advice but rather just suggestions on what to consider when drawing up a catering contract.

Deposit Amount

One of the first things you need to come up with is the deposit amount you will require from your client to hold a date for them. The deposit tells you that your client is serious about hiring your company for services and it can keep them bound to their commitment to you. The deposit can be made refundable up to a certain date but you have the option to make it nonrefundable if they cancel too close to the event date. Last minute cancellations can cost you money by missing other paid events and even costs of supplies needed for the event if you've already started purchasing some.

It's possible that you can hold a date for your client without a deposit but you should limit the time you

will keep that hold for them. You don't want to miss other opportunities or leads that are more solid.

Liability

This is a conversation for your lawyer, but you need to include in writing who is responsible for damages or other unforeseen accidents. Accidents can and will happen eventually so you need to make sure you are covered for this. Your business insurance can help pay for damages but you don't want to have to pay for something you are not ultimately responsible for.

When you provide services at a venue, most places will require that you own liability insurance. This proof comes typically in the form of a Certificate of Insurance before you are allowed on the premises. There should also be policies on who is responsible for clean-up after event so there are no surprises between any parties involved.

You should also state clearly what happens if you are not able to show up to a scheduled event where all deposits have been paid and guests have been booked. However, everything in your power should be done to fulfill your commitment to your client. If you do not show up for even one event, your reputation could be permanently damaged. Well planned backup plans need to be in place for the most extreme situations.

Marketing Your Catering Service

Long before you launch the catering side of your food truck business, you will have to come up with a plan to promote your additional services. A lot of the marketing strategies and materials will be completely different than how you announce your daily locations throughout the city.

Networking is a key activity for any entrepreneur and you need to build connections in the community so that other businesses and individuals are aware of what you offer. Meet with chamber of commerce members and attend their meetings. Feel free to introduce yourself to others and proudly explain what you can do for them and the community.

You should also call and visit the different venues around town that can host events and explain how your food truck would be a great partner with them. This can include hotels, convention centers, churches, festival groups and even event organizers. If you can get on a preferred vendor list, these venues can help promote your services whenever they talk to their clients.

One strategy is to provide a complimentary sampling of your food to the office staff so they can be amazed at what you create. You don't need to go overboard by providing food to a huge office but a good taste sampling can go a long way with decision makers. If you provide an enjoyable experience, they're sure to

remember you next time catering services are required.

Another place you can advertise your catering services is on social media. This way you can use your fans to help spread the word. Occasionally, send out reminders on Twitter, Facebook, Instagram and other social media services you are signed up with. You might also share pictures from events you've catered so your fans can get a glimpse of your food truck in action at a catered event.

And finally, you will need some printed marketing materials that you can give out to people that visit your truck. You might be surprised how many people inquire about having food trucks cater an event they're planning. Often, the popularity of your food and brand is enough for people to ask but you really need to be proactive to get the word out.

Providing additional services like catering is not easy work but the payoff can make it worthwhile. You can generate additional revenue during times when business is slow. You can fill in some of the hours when your truck is idle and not serving customers.

Chapter 3 – Getting a Truck

This is going to be your most important asset, so you must make sure you're getting an appropriate vehicle for your needs.

One of the appeals of a food truck over a brick-and-mortar restaurant is that the truck seems like a lower risk investment. You may be tempted to think that you can start small and cheap, upgrading the vehicle as you expand and build your customer base.

While it's true that a truck costs less than a full-sized restaurant, don't underestimate how much work and money is going to go into fitting up your truck for your business, decorating it, installing the kitchen fixtures, and making sure it is roadworthy. You are not likely to have the time or money to upgrade any time soon.

You may only have a few signature entrees, some drinks and a couple of sides on your opening day, but when you choose your vehicle, make sure it's appropriate for the menu you will have for a few years after your business is in full swing. In other words, right from the beginning there should be some room to expand.

How much actual cooking are you planning to do in the truck? Depending on what kind of food you sell, it may make sense to do most of your prep work in a real kitchen.

For example, if you are selling pierogis or Chinese pot stickers, you will almost certainly be making them ahead in a kitchen and frying or boiling them in the food truck right before serving. A business specializing in salads and sandwiches, on the other hand, may be able to do most prep work on site.

Used or New?

There are advantages to buying a used truck. You can probably get one that is already fitted up with a kitchen and will need little work before you can start using it. As with any used vehicle, you can save a lot of money by buying used too.

However, used vehicles come with risks, and you're almost guaranteed to spend more time and money on repairs and maintenance than if you go with a new truck. Make sure that a licensed mechanic fully inspects the truck before you buy it.

A new truck is a safer bet when it comes to the mechanics of the vehicle itself, but you may have to wait a long time for customized installations of kitchen equipment. However, if you can't find a used vehicle with the exact equipment you need, you may prefer the option of start from the beginning.

You can save some money up front by leasing a truck. Just make sure that you get a lease deal that gives you the option of buying the truck, or at least renewing, when the lease runs out.

One piece of advice that you'll hear from food truck owners is that you or someone involved with your business should know something about truck maintenance. Too often, entrepreneurs forget about the "wheels" side of their restaurant on wheels until they start having to deal with breakdowns and malfunctions. If you're not mechanically inclined (or not interested in learning about mechanics) it might be best to buy a newer truck.

Chapter 4 – Your Business Plan

Now that you know what your costs will be, you should start formalizing your plan. If you are looking for a loan or for investors, you will have to present them with a detailed business plan.

In fact, even if you are financing this enterprise out of your own savings, you need a formal business plan. About 50 percent of businesses fail within five years. A solid business plan can mean the difference between success and failure.

Here is what your plan should include:

Executive Summary: This should be a brief introduction to the business plan, including such information as your own background and experience, your products, your target customers, your financing needs and your goals for the future. It's usually easiest to write this once you've finished writing the rest of the plan.

Business Description: Here's where you will get into the hard facts and details; such as your company name, date that it started, details about your products and customer base, and a description of what makes your business special. List your long and short-term goals, and describe your business philosophy and mission statement.

Market Strategies: Describe how you will break into the current market and make a name for yourself. How will you advertise, and how will you keep your customers coming back? Describe how you can expand to meet new demand and compete with existing restaurants and food trucks.

Competitive Analysis: Talk about the size of the food truck industry in your area and in general, and how much it is growing. Describe the products currently sold by food trucks, and the size and location of your target customers. How are you providing customers with something they want but is not currently available to them?

Operations and Management Plan: Describe the responsibilities and qualifications of each member of your team. What job description does each person have, and how are they qualified to fulfill their duties? If you have a financial advisor or lawyer, list them as well.

Products and Services: Here is where you get into the details of all of the products you will be serving. Describe how and where your products will be made, as well as any trademark recipes or ideas you will be using (and apply for copyrights if necessary). Do you plan to expand into catering, more trucks or a permanent location at some point in the future?

Financial Projections: This is where you make projections for your costs, income and losses. Do this for your first year and then for the next 4 years. Some

of these numbers are going to involve a lot of guessing, which is fine. Just indicate which numbers are projections and which are known quantities.

Financing Request: How much money do you need right away and over the next 5 years? How will you use money that is lent to you, and how do you plan to repay it?

Appendix: This is optional, but it's a good place to put any leasing agreements, permits and other relevant documents that may influence an investor.

There is plenty of information available online to help you with this step. You can also hire someone to write up your plan professionally if you don't have great writing skills. A well-written plan is going to give you a lot more credibility when you go looking for financing.

Chapter 5 – Getting Financing

With your business plan completed, you've almost finished calculating your startup costs. The final step is to determine your personal expenses. Starting your own business is a full-time job and then some. You won't be able to continue whatever you were doing before to earn money, and you have to factor this change into your expenses.

You may think you know how much money you spend in a month, but make an itemized list that includes; bills, groceries, rent, loan payments, health insurance, entertainment, and discretionary spending. You should count at least six months of living expenses as part of your startup costs.

There are many ways you can finance your new venture.

Your own savings: For many of us this is simply not an option, but if you've saved up enough money or if you've received an unexpected windfall you may be able to finance yourself. The advantages are obvious – you won't end up with a massive debt to repay if your business goes under.

There are also disadvantages, though. People are often tempted to be less careful about planning and budgeting when they don't have to justify their methods to a lender or investor, and their business strategies may be riskier and less effective as a result.

Also, make sure that you can really afford to lose the money, and don't spend your retirement savings on a business that may fail.

Crowdfunding: It sounds so simple to put your idea up on a site like Kickstarter or Indiegogo and watch the donations pour in. The reality is a lot more complicated than that.

You need to have great pictures, a good quality video and plenty of incentives for your potential supporters to choose from. Crowdfunding is a big job requiring daily attention for the duration of your campaign. There's no guarantee of success.

If you've already got a following – for example, if you've been producing an artisan product that's available in shops and you're looking to expand into a food truck business – crowdfunding may serve you well. It also helps to be social media savvy and have lots of friends and family to help you get the ball rolling.

Crowdfunding, if you do it too often, can end up annoying and alienating the friends and acquaintances that should be your biggest supporters. It's probably best to keep this option in your back pocket in case you have a small shortfall in your financing that needs to be filled.

Loans and Investors: This is the route that most entrepreneurs will go when they need financing. With a good credit history and some collateral, you should be able to get a bank loan. Without collateral or with a bad history, you may need a co-signer.

You might also want to check out the 7(a)-loan program from the Small Business Administration (SBA). Rather than lending you money directly, this organization offers guaranty programs for loans from banks, credit unions and other potential lenders.

You may be able to borrow directly from a relative or friend, though this can end up being dangerous to your relationship with that person if the business doesn't succeed.

Chapter 6 – Insurance

What exactly you need will vary depending on where you live and the nature of your enterprise, so you need to do your research.

You will need to insure your vehicle as soon as you buy it. Even if you don't plan to open your business until several months later, the truck must be insured before you can drive it anywhere, and it should also be covered in case something happens to it while it is parked. So, right away you will need commercial auto liability insurance.

When choosing your policy, find out what exactly is covered. Usually you will be covered for collisions, theft, and accidents such as fire, medical expenses due to vehicle accidents, and protection in case of an accident where the other driver isn't properly insured.

You may also be able to get coverage for vehicles other than the main truck when used for business purposes: for example, if you get into a collision with your car when you go out to get supplies.

Auto insurance may or may not cover the restaurant equipment inside your truck, so you will also need to insure your business. You will need both liability insurance to protect you from lawsuits and property insurance to cover you in case of damage to your kitchen equipment, business equipment, and any off-site kitchen space you own or lease.

If you have employees, even on an occasional basis, you will also need worker's compensation insurance. This will cover medical expenses and lost wages due to an injury at the workplace, and it will also protect you if you get sued.

Chapter 7 – Parking, Cooking and Storage

In most cases you're going to need a real kitchen to do some of your cooking in, as well as a place to store ingredients and supplies outside of your truck. And for sure you will need a place to park it when it's not in use.

Your first step is to look at what the health department in your area says about these issues. Any kitchen that you use to prepare and store food will be subject to health regulations and inspections. In some cases, you may be able to modify your home kitchen, but in most places you need to use a dedicated commercial kitchen.

The same is true of parking. Depending on local rules, you may be able to park outside your home or you may be required to park in an approved facility that offers electrical connections and refrigeration.

A commissary, or commercial kitchen, can be your answer to many problems. You can rent or lease kitchen space, including storage and parking, from a commercial kitchen that caters specifically to food trucks and other mobile food services.

Another option is to use a restaurant kitchen outside of their business hours, which can often end up saving you money. And if your business really starts to expand, you may even consider leasing your own private commercial kitchen. While this can be

expensive, at least you will have complete control over the space and you'll never have to deal with scheduling conflicts.

There are advantages to using a commissary even if you could probably get away with not using one. Extra storage space means that you can save money buying food ingredients and other supplies in bulk. It's much easier to do elaborate food preparation in a decent sized space, which means you'll be less limited in what menu items you can offer.

You may also have access to communal supplies such as napkins and some staple food items. And you'll have somewhere to park your truck, recharge the batteries, and get rid of troublesome waste such as grease.

Be very careful when choosing a commercial kitchen. These facilities are also subject to health inspections, and if your commissary loses its license, you will be unable to operate until the problem is resolved or you find a new home for your food truck enterprise.

Also, when your business depends on sharing facilities with other people, you want to choose a situation where people are cooperative and respect each other's needs.

Chapter 8 – Building Your Brand

Finally, it's time to get creative again! Of course, you'll continue working on your brand and your marketing as your business goes forward, but you need to have some sense of brand identity before your opening day.

Build your identity around the one thing that makes your food truck unique. By now you've done some market analysis and you know what kind of competition you're facing.

You probably also know whether you'll be selling in the presence of a number of different food trucks (such as at festivals) or you'll be the sole provider of food truck meals in your immediate area.

Try thinking of a single word that captures the feeling you want people to associate with your business. Here are some you might use:

- Fun
- Healthy
- Decadent
- Comforting
- Badass
- Hip
- Retro

If you're serving fried gator with suicide sauce, you're probably going for a badass vibe, while cupcakes and

pastries may be decadent, traditional or comforting, depending on which way you want to take it.

You can even mix things up and sell cupcakes with an urban graffiti design, as long as you use your theme effectively and consistently.

Once you've got your basic vibe, you can start to build on it. Put yourself in the shoes of a hungry person on the street approaching your truck. You want to catch their eye in an appealing way and set up an expectation.

If they come to your truck, the menu, the service and the food itself should fit their expectation. Every aspect of your food truck from the name to the logo to every item on the menu should be consistent with your brand identity.

Name: Come up with something memorable that stands out and reflects your main product.

Design: When you picture yourself opening your new food truck, you probably already have an image of the truck design you want. Take your theme and some pictures of other trucks that you like to a graphic artist.

If you're lucky, you have a talented friend that will work for freebies and/or a small fee; otherwise, you may be able to get a good deal from a young artist or student. Going full professional may get you the best result, but it will also cost more.

Menu: Make sure your menu reflects the theme of your truck. If you're serving organic, local vegetarian ingredients, look for juices and natural soft drinks rather than products from big multinational drink companies.

Environmentally friendly packaging is always a good idea if you can manage it, but it's especially important if you're promoting a healthy theme.

Customer Service: Of course, it should go without saying that you and your employees need to be friendly and welcoming to every customer and potential customer. You can up the ante with colorful uniforms that match your truck theme.

Share stories with your customers that show your passion for the food you serve (within reason: if there's a long line you need to keep things moving.) Offer free samples and always have business cards available.

Prices: Your brand should reflect how much you charge for the food you sell. If you're charging higher prices for quality food, your branding needs to emphasize the quality so that people understand what they're paying for.

If you're producing affordable fast food for everyone, you don't want a brand that looks too upscale or your target customers may not even bother getting close enough to read the prices on your menu board.

You have to wear a lot of hats when you start a business like this. You're a chef, auto mechanic, marketing expert, and soon, a webmaster.

Owning a food truck business can be fun and rewarding. These self-contained operations offer you the chance to explore your culinary creative aspirations without the major investments involved in opening a permanent restaurant location. While there are many differences between, running a permanent restaurant and a food truck operation, food safety is equally important in both cases.

The past stigmas attached to food trucks in view of their cleanliness have mostly subsided with the new surge in food truck popularity. To ensure that your food truck is categorized in the new, clean, and delicious food truck category you need to establish a few food safety guidelines and strictly adhere to them. These are some of the most important food safety practices that should be followed when you open a food truck business.

It does not matter how educated you are about food safety if the rest of your staff does not share your knowledge, it will be hard for you to implement safe food practices. Make a food safety training program a major part of your new hire training.

During this training, it is important that you explain the reasons for all your food safety procedures and clearly define the consequences of both the business and the employee if they are not followed. If all your employees are educated about the reasons for food safety they will be more likely to strictly adhere to your policies.

Proper cleanliness is imperative if you want to create a safe and sanitary food truck business. In most places, it is against the law for employees not to wash their

hands after using the restroom. In addition to washing their hands after every break, employees should be encouraged to wash their hands after handling raw meat, cleaning supplies, or other potentially hazardous items to avoid cross-contamination.

While some food in your cart will be cooked, other items such as produce used for salads, garnish, or other fresh dishes may not be cooked. All produce should be washed prior to serving to eliminate any bacteria or dirt. The overall cleanliness of your food truck is also important.

Encourage your employees to regularly clean all preparation and cooking surfaces in your truck. You should have a traditional three sink washing system in place to wash all utensils and pans used in your food truck.

In addition to daily maintenance you should establish the end of shift cleaning chores and also monthly deep cleaning of your truck. Your food truck represents your brand both inside and out. You want to customers to feel completely safe ordering food from your operation.

Maintaining proper refrigeration in your truck is also very important. All dairy and other refrigerated food items have expiration dates; you should strictly adhere to these dates and regularly check that your refrigeration temperatures are no higher than forty degrees Fahrenheit. If the temperature in your refrigerator reaches 41 degrees Fahrenheit it will compromise the food being stored there and could allow bacteria to grow that can cause food poisoning.

If this occurs you should immediately dispose of all food in the refrigerator and have the system serviced immediately. In addition to food storage temperatures, it is also important to maintain proper cooking temperatures to eliminate any bacteria especially in the case of meat products.

There are a lot of chances in the business of food concession to promising business owners. With a small startup cost required to purchase a trailer of food concession, eager and enthusiastic businessmen can acquire one swiftly. A fresh trailer of the food concession will cost approximately five thousand dollars.

On the other hand, there are different choices available. Like, a trade cart is frequently observed at the reasonable entrance point. Less than ten thousand dollars buys a fresh trade cart three thousand dollars buys utilized units. The trade cart can be utilized to vend various drinks and food from ice cream, hot dogs, sausages and pretzels to complex mobile smokers and barbecues.

In case the concession trailer is not moving, it is comparatively simple for the vehicle to tow it to the trades' positions. Eliminating alternate means of transportation.

For a lot of people who are very careful and have fewer capital to put in, franchises may be the way to go. Never forget that achievement can't be defined throughout the franchise. Be aware of how the contract is written before providing the fee to the franchisor, you have to be very attentive and careful of the food concession franchisor.

The location is very important and essential key to achievement as the concession trailer operator. They require locating a region with soaring traffic that is currently not being examined. You can start with an excellent position. Make sure that the possessor or franchise operator will get authorization for you to use your ideal position and pay the fees for your trade position. Make sure you do this before you buy into the franchise.

It can be very stressful to purchase and sell the concession trailer for everyone involved. The price of the concession trailer is the main problem for most of the purchasers. A lot of big organizations sell the concession trailer. The cost of the food trailers can be more than twenty thousand dollars and the organizations possibly will accept a down payment for the trailers.

There are the different sizes and types of food trailers from stationary stands to movable trucks. You must first decide on the size and type of the food concession that will fit your requirements. This will depend upon the kind of food item which you will be advertising. In case you don't like worrying about hot oil; don't think about fried dough, French fries or something that needs the fryer. Select the beverage, food or snack items that are popular and will make the most impact on your business.

Chapter 9 – Creating an Online Presence

These days it's hard to imagine a business succeeding without an online presence of some kind. The Internet provides great opportunities for reaching your customers and keeping them up to date, and you can do most of it at no cost. Once you've got it set up, your online marketing doesn't have to consume a lot of your time and energy.

At the very least you'll need a website landing page with a menu, as well as Facebook and Twitter accounts. Social media accounts can be linked so that your Facebook status update automatically gets posted in Twitter too.

Websites

You may question whether you need a website: after all, you're going to be visible out there on the street at lunch time.

People who hear about you from friends are likely to Google your business. When you're trying to get into festivals and corporate events, it's important to be able to direct organizers to your website. You can also add stories about the background and origins of your business to give it a personal touch.

You can either set up your own website for free or hire a professional web developer to do it for you. It's

possible (though not guaranteed) that you will get a more unique and eye-catching website by going the professional route, but it may also cost you a lot of money. If your computer skills are good enough to set up a Facebook page, you can probably create your own website using templates.

Wix, Weebly, Squarespace and many other platforms offer free templates that make it easy to create your own website. Wix is probably the most popular, and in addition to a huge range of options, it also offers an online web development course that's worth checking out.

Weebly and Squarespace are known for their clean, simple designs (if you're not careful, your Wix site can start to look cluttered and busy.) The best way to get a feel for what you like is to look at the websites of other food trucks.

When your business takes off, you may want to sell T-shirts or bottles of your famous caramel sauce in an online store. This service is not usually available for free, but you can get e-commerce apps without spending a lot of money.

Facebook and Twitter

Social media is a great way to connect with your customers on an ongoing basis, and Facebook and Twitter are the best places to start. Almost all your customers will use at least one of these platforms.

What should you post? As a rule, anything you post should have some value to your fans and followers. Anything that isn't informative or entertaining is better left unsaid.

As with websites, a good way to get a feel for what's appropriate in terms of frequency and subject matter is to follow the social media accounts of other food trucks for a while.

It's good to post about your location and schedule, new menu items, promotions, and upcoming events. You can also post photos of some of your food and give some behind-the-scenes glimpses into your business.

Your social media accounts should direct people to your website and give them an email address. Customers may not have much reason to drop you an email, but organizers of festivals and special events might want to contact you about booking your services.

Chapter 10 – Planning Your Grand Opening

You've been working hard to get everything ready, and now it's almost time for opening day. This is your chance to make a big splash and put yourself on the map. Here's how you can make your first day of business a success.

Create some buzz ahead of time on social media. You won't have a following yet, but your friends and family can help you by sharing your social media posts and link to your website. Make sure your menu is up and you have some tantalizing photos of your food!

Include some promotions on your first day of business, and publicize them ahead of time. You can offer an across-the-board discount, which is easy, or give away free food items, which is harder to organize but makes more of an impression on your customers.

If you're giving away free items, choose some of the signature items from your menu so that people get a chance to sample the products that make your food truck special.

Depending on where you are set up, you may be able to offer some free entertainment to the people in line. At the very least, have some balloons or other decorations nearby to get people's attention. If you're opening in a park on a Saturday in the summer, have some kid-friendly activities or freebies.

Most of all, give your customers a reason to come back. Loyalty cards and coupons to be used later are good ways to encourage repeat business. Give out your business card and ask people to follow you on Twitter and Facebook.

Getting to the grand opening is a big milestone, but it's just the beginning. Now it's time to keep refining your product and your brand, get connected with the event and festival scene, and get to know your fellow food truck operators.

Although they're your competition, food truck owners like you are also a great source of information and support. If there is an association of food truck operators in your city, you should seriously consider getting involved.

With a little luck and a whole lot of hard work, your new enterprise will be a great success and you'll have lots of happy, productive years ahead of you to do what you love.

The food truck industry has grown rapidly, from 2007 to the present, while the hospitality industry, in general, has been flagging in the weak economic environment.

The rise of the food truck industry in the public's imagination is driven by many factors including:

- The economic downturn made capital scarcer and the low start-up costs of a food truck more tempting.
- Developments in social media make it easier to track trucks over space and time and have expanded their appeal to broader audiences.
- Relatively rapid improvement can be found in the overall quality and variety of foods now served on trucks.
- The predominant factor, however, may be that customers are looking for more value for their food dollar. Limited by the constraints of operating out of a limited space, today's food truck entrepreneurs are almost exclusively specialists.

They do one thing, and they do it very, very well. The limited overhead keeps costs down, and by focusing on a few menu items, food truck operators can focus on getting good pricing and delivering high quality food for just a few items, which often results in a product that is above average in quality and below average in price.

Deal Breakers

There are life's little unhappy accidents that inevitably happen and that can make:

- Engine stall: It can happen at any time: in the middle of a left-hand turn, in the middle

of traffic, even while crossing a bridge. It can cause a few moments' delay or shut down a whole shift. Always know where your handbrake is. It can save you from serious trouble.

- Broken equipment: If any steamers, cookers, fryers, or freezers are broken, they can ruin an entire shift. Either you're unable to cook anything, or your food has been spoiled.
- Generator problems: If the generator doesn't start at all, your shift can be over before it even gets started.
- Running out of small bills and no bank in sight: A simple one, but if you don't have small bills, it can impede your ability to sell. No money, no sales. Prepare, especially for big events on the weekends.
- Out of materials: If you're missing napkins, utensils, or bags, things get especially tough. If you run out of containers for food, you won't be able to sell anything.
- No parking: This doesn't seem like a shift killer, but it can easily stop the day from even starting. If you spend most of your time looking for a spot, you'll either miss the lunch rush, be unable to find a spot at all, or open where none of your clientele can find you.
- Police: Especially in cities with contention over food trucks, this can be a real problem, depending on the neighborhood. If the police keep forcing you to move, you won't have time to prep or cook, meaning you will

not be able to sell during prime meal times and your prospects of earning revenue for the day are ruined.

- Food spoiled: If anything has thawed accidentally or gone bad, you'll be in trouble. You're either going to be out of an item, or you're going to be hearing some serious complaints from customers.
- Fender benders and accidents: It may or may not be your fault, but a bad enough accident can put your truck out of commission for the near future.
- Electrical issues: Problems with wiring can cause all sorts of problems and lead to overheating, undercooked food, and/or burnouts. In the worst-case scenario, electrical issues could lead to a fire and cause a lot of damage and close your truck for weeks.
- Propane explosion: Handle propane extremely carefully. It is very combustible. Never drive with your propane tanks open. If a propane tank is damaged and explodes, it could cause an enormous amount of damage to your staff, your truck, and anyone or anything nearby.

Increase Your Food Truck Sales During the Holidays

More shoppers flood the streets during the holiday season than almost any other time of the year. With happy thoughts and the hustle and bustle of the

holiday rush, many of them are looking for a delicious and convenient meal on the go.

This is great news for food truck operators who can position themselves near popular retail outlets and other holiday events. Just being in these populated areas is one way you are sure to increase your sales during the holiday season. However, here are a few other festive offerings you can provide to entice customers to visit your food truck this holiday season.

Holiday shopping in major cities across the United States often brings shoppers out on days when the temperatures are chilly. One of the most popular cures for cold temperatures is a warm beverage. If you are a food truck operator consider adding a couple festive holiday beverages to your menu.

Peppermint hot chocolate or warm spiced cider are among the most popular steaming beverages that attract customers. Once word gets out that you are offering something warm to drink, customers are likely to try one of your other menu items as well.

Another way to attract shoppers during the holiday season is to show a little cheer yourself and let people know you are embracing the holidays at your food truck.

Creating a custom wrap for your truck might not be in the budget but spending a few dollars to decorate the inside of your truck with lights and other festive decorations can go a long way toward showing people you are in the holiday spirit. Encourage your employees to wear holiday pins or have new holiday

themed company shirts made for your employees to wear during the holidays.

Building an online social network and increasing your twitter followers is important to growing your food truck business. This holiday season, say thank you to your current followers and entice others to join your online network by offering them a special holiday gift.

Send out a tweet to your followers wishing them happy holidays and offer them a free warm beverage if they send out a tweet about your business. This will get the word out about your food truck and be a great way to say thank you to your loyal customers.

Food trucks are becoming increasingly popular and many people are looking for a way to share their favorite food trucks with their friends this holiday season. You can make a few extra dollars during the holidays by offering customers the chance to buy stocking stuffers for people on their holiday shopping list.

If you had holiday t-shirts printed for your staff you should offer them as limited- edition shirts for customers as well. You could also put together a recipe book of some of your most popular menu items, customers are sure to snap those up. Gift cards are another great way for you to offer a gift item to your customers with a relatively low overhead.

This holiday season gets in the spirit and increases your food truck profits with one of these or many other holiday marketing ideas.

Marketing Mixture

An important part of your marketing plan is your marketing combination. Developing an effective mixing program will help you grow sales. Use this example of a marketing arrangement to develop your own mixtures. Understanding how to create a marketing arrangement program involves understanding how to balance and develop best fit strategies for the 4 Ps of marketing: your product (or service), price, place (or distribution) and promotion.

A marketing plan is important to your business. Without a plan, you will be challenged to stay focused on your goals. With a well-developed marketing plan, you will have a direction to follow and measures in place to help you achieve your goals.

Each business needs to build objectives, strategies, and plans that are specific to their own business and their markets. A definition of marketing strategy for your business will help you focus on what's most important to your business; your marketing plan will help you to deliver it.

This example of a marketing mixture reviews the plan for a Computer Technology firm. The company profile is a firm that has \$2 million in annual sales. It provides a business-to-business service. The company's focus is on gaining new business and retaining existing customers. The goal is to grow sales 10 percent for each year of a three-year plan.

Clearly, define the services that the company provides. For example, the company offers 24-hour on call technical support for both hardware and software issues; it also conducts computer security audits, it will assess system needs and provide recommendations, it will maintain service agreements, it will handle backup protocols and save backup tapes off-site, and more.

Next, define the target market and then develop a benefits package for that specific market. The benefits must provide customers with a thorough understanding of the value of each of the services provided.

For example, the custom designed software support package can provide testing and implementation of new version upgrades, bug testing and resolution, communication with the software provider, and more. The cost advantage of this custom package is in the value of an experienced and knowledgeable advocate on behalf of the company in all interactions with the software provider.

Another advantage is the experience of long term employees in a broad range of technologies and software applications. By outsourcing computer support, the customer can save on the cost of a in house technical staff; use specific cost/benefit examples.

What is the business value proposition? Focus on uniqueness and differentiation, show how your products differ from the competition? Identify at least four different points. First, define the target market, so that product positioning is properly identified.

Then state the different points as solutions to customer problems and provide a cost/benefit value formula for these unique advantages. For example, employees are long term, with both generalist and specialist capabilities and skills. Employees are also certified in both new and legacy software support. Competitors do not have as broad a range of skills.

In this industry, an effective pricing strategy is to bundle price services. This involves bundling services together for an all-in-one price. For example, a services bundle might include services such as daily back-ups offsite; regular maintenance and upgrades of existing software versions; remote monitoring of email software; and more. The pricing package needs to include price comparisons for customers to review and compare (to in house staff costs or to hire competitive companies to do the same work).

As another element of the marketing mixture, promotion efforts are focused on the sales approach. Determine which approach, or a combination of approaches, works best and is most effective: personal selling (face to face and/or voice to voice); advertising, public relations, referral programs, social media, online marketing, direct email marketing, and more.

For example, during the last six months, the media has been reporting that companies are laying off and cutting staff. Track media reports and look for companies that have cut technical support departments. Then focus a promotional program to address the technical support shortages at those companies. Often, computer technology companies run lean sales organizations; sub-contract or hire professional marketing and sales specialists to

develop specific sales and promotions tactics and strategies.

The 'place or distribution' element of the marketing mix is focused on how to deliver the product or services. If you're in the retail sector, this element is about where your store is located (physical or online). For this example, if you're in the computer technology business, it's about how you reach your clients.

For the most part, you would be driving out to their location to provide the service. But the place still plays a role in terms of how customers find you - it just is more strongly related to the promotional efforts than it is to your physical location.

Create a marketing plan, and develop your marketing arrangement to include all four elements: product, price, promotion, and place. Use an example of a marketing arrangement (such as this one) or a marketing arrangement model, as a template to build your own strategies and plan. Then ensure that you act on the plan.

Marketing is defined by the American Marketing Association as any activity that involves the flow of services, products and/or goods starting from production until consumption.

This article will dwell on the following marketing concepts:

- Marketing activities
- Marketing management principles
- Techniques in marketing

- Strategies in marketing
- Market creation

The discussion of the above mentioned terms will take the form of questions then answers:

1. What are the activities that are involved in marketing?

The activities that are normally done in marketing are

a. Profiling is done to gather information before marketing policy is established. A profiler typically considers the following characteristics of products and services to users:

- affordability
- relevance
- preferences
- staffing
- the extent of use
- repeat customers

b. Planning of products refers to the development of goods and services that can satisfy the things profiled above. The one in charge of this aspect must take note of the following questions:

-Who will use the product or service?

-What products and services can catch the attention of the targeted groups?

c. Pricing determines the amount of each product or service and other factors such as competitors' prices, discount structure, and distribution channels, among others.

The following questions are considered for this marketing aspect:

- Should the information on products and services be given for free? If yes, why and to whom?

- What are the criteria for pricing a product or service?

- What are the costs of generating a product or service?

- What factors are considered before arriving at a price for a product or service?

d. Promotion stimulates demand and therefore increases profit from sales. It makes use of every media available that are accessible to potential customers.

Promoters ask themselves the following queries:

- Who are the targets of the promotion?

- What are the messages to be sent to them?

- What are the media that can be used to transmit the promotional message?

- What are the factors that will be integrated into the promotional message?

e. Distribution refers to the flow of services and products from the manufacturer. These are the channels of transport:

- mail
- telephone
- interpersonal delivery
- group delivery
- mass media
- computer network
- local depositories
- in house dissemination

2. What are principles of marketing management?

The principles are:

- Marketing management should be given equal importance as finance, production, and administration.

- Marketing management must complete the activities mentioned above.

- Even if marketing activities are divided, the decisions should be integrated.

3. What are the marketing techniques that apply the principles mentioned above?

The techniques in marketing can be divided as follows:

- practical techniques and skills
- those used for analyzing costs and other factors
- those used to obtain market data
- those used to create and stimulate demand

4. What is the difference between marketing techniques and marketing strategies?

Marketing strategy is the art of applying appropriate techniques in each situation.

5. What is the probable result of applying appropriate marketing techniques or strategies?

The answer is directly involved in the creation of a market. Here are some situations:

- If you can increase the sales, then you can create a market.
- If you can stimulate customers to buy, then you can awaken a sleeping market.
- If you can increase the demand, then you can create a market that did not exist before.

It suffices to say that the product receives life upon the creation of a market through proactive marketing management, which by itself, entails a lot of things.

Running a food truck requires a lot of commitment! Food truck owners start their day long before their first service starts. The day often begins with ingredient shopping, food preparation, social media updates, mechanical inspections and more. The end of the day is also filled with work that could extend several hours after the last customer is served. This leaves very little time for anything else. If the number of hours sounds overwhelming then it is time to hire additional help. In the beginning, you may be doing everything yourself. And depending on the level of complexity of your food truck business, you may or

may not need to hire additional hands to help with daily operations. Many trucks operate with just the owners while just as many if not more have additional staff members to help with various tasks. The owners may even run one service at a location themselves and then have staff members in charge at a different location during the day.

There is definitely a benefit to having employees on your staff. The extra expense can be worth it so you don't burn yourself out. One of the first things you should consider is how many hours of work is required each day. As mentioned earlier, you need to include the hours of work prior to and after your actual service hours. For example, if you are open for business from 10am to 6pm, that equates to about a 60-hour work week if you are open 7 days a week. That's not including the time spent before and after you open for business. If you add a minimum of 2 hours before and after your service hours, you're looking at almost 85 hours of work each week. That's more than twice the number of hours most people work at a regular job!

Add to those times any additional hours where you might stay open later or attend special events like catering parties and your work week really starts to get over the top with the number of hours you need to put in. It could be that you only need additional help during these special events. Larger services like events and catering requires more preparation time and extra hands during the event. You will also be spending time meeting with your clients and venue representative as you map out your game plan for a successful event.

Some food trucks can operate with as little as 2 people on board and still handle a large volume of customers. But that depends on your menu. If your menu features foods that are simple to prepare and assemble then a couple of people can probably manage the volume. Gourmet ice cream, donut and grilled cheese trucks for example can be well suited for smaller staff operations. At minimum, you will need someone who can cook and someone who can take orders plus other side duties.

How Much of Your Time is Required?

There's nothing wrong with long hours and hard work but there comes a point when it stops being fun. So, you need to come to terms with how many hours you actually want to spend in the truck or doing other business related tasks. This is when you need to determine the types of tasks you want to do most or have the most expertise in. Do you enjoy cooking or talking to customers? Do you thrive with the backend business and marketing part of your operations? It's good to be aware of the tasks that is better spent with your own time and hiring employees to complete the work that can easily be done by others. That way, you can spend more time building your business than running daily operations. There's a big distinction between working in your truck and working on your food truck business.

What tasks can help you make the most revenue for your mobile food business? Your time might be better spent meeting with clients and booking special events like catering rather than preparing food inside the kitchen.

You Don't Necessarily Need Full Time Employees

Sometimes food truck owners can handle the workweek on their own without additional staff. But there are moments when taking on additional help can make your operations smoother. If you know there is an event or service where you know there is going to be an exceptional volume of customers, then you can just hire temporary help during those events.

The good thing is that the people you hire don't necessarily have to have experience in the food or restaurant industry. They can all be taught on the job as they work their way up to higher positions. Of course, experience working in a fast paced environment and food service does help.

Job Duties for Your Employees

While there is probably not necessarily one specific job that an employee will be asked to do, I will try to list some of the duties you will ask your new hire to do. The work varies and everyone must help out in some way to ensure that the operations go smoothly during a service.

Depending on experience, a new hire will typically start as an order taker. Greeting customers and sending orders through to the kitchen is a job most people can do. This is often the best way to train new employees so they can get familiar the workflow of your truck. From there, an employee can move to the prep table where sauces and other finishing touches are added to dishes before they are handed to the customer.

The job that really dictates the workflow of the truck is the chef or person in charge of preparing the food. That could be the person working on a grill, fryer, crepe iron or other piece of equipment. Order tickets go to the chef where the whole cooking and preparation process starts.

Key Role of the Chef

The efficiency of the whole operation rests on the hands of the chef or the person in charge of cooking and prepping the main food items. They are the ones that get the meats and vegetables prepped before service. They are the ones that monitor the orders coming in and pace the flow of the food heading out.

This person needs to be organized and manage many things going on at one time. Different dishes require different prep times. This can prove to be a challenge even for the most experienced chef. Long lines and special requests can put added pressure on the one in charge of the kitchen.

Scheduling Employees and Pay Rates

Food truck employees aren't the highest paid workers but it's a good way to earn some income or just extra cash. Typical starting pay for a food truck employee is \$8.00 an hour. Once your employee gets more experience and moves into a cooking position, rates can be \$10.00 or more. On top of that, your employees can enjoy a bit extra from tips generated from each service location.

One of the side benefits for your employees is that you could offer them free food at the end of each shift. If you're friends with other trucks, you might share meals between the other trucks at the end of a service. This is easy to do if you are grouped together so workers and owners can bond and sample what everyone offers.

Food trucks typically operate 2 to 3 services a day. That means breakfast, lunch, and dinner. A service can last 3 to 6 hours depending on the location and type of event. Commonly, the time spent cooking and serving food will be about 3 to 4 hours. Don't forget the additional hours spent preparing for the service and cleanup afterwards.

Some trucks can serve up to 150 orders or more per service. That means in a 4-hour service, food is ordered, cooked, and served to customers every 90 seconds. Add to that modified orders, customer

complaints and mixed up orders, the work experience can be very hectic to say the least. So, it does help to hire employees that can handle these high pressure situations.

Conclusion

A food truck can be called a restaurant on wheels. This type of food service business has several advantages against starting a food service business in the traditional method of eating in restaurants. The main benefit is that it can go anywhere to meet the customers.

In addition, the overhead cost will be lower as against its traditional counterpart. The staff requirements are also lesser in this case. Even though it comes with these many benefits, the thing to remember is that it is also a business and so it needs lots of work and attention, particularly in the initial stages of its operation.

Even before the initial stages, an individual should create the right food truck business plan to ensure the best start-up operations that can ensure success to his business. Like a traditional form, this form of business also faces challenges like the sluggish economy, the slow season, bad weather, etc. So, it becomes important that when creating the food truck business plan, it is better for the individual to ask for professional help.

There are professional service providers, who help people in framing start-up food business plans and seek the help of these professionals can be of great help to the individual. Here are some tips given by experts that will of great help to people:

The first thing to be done is to find whether the business is legal in this area of operation. Particularly, being mobile, the appropriate permission, and licenses should be obtained for operating the truck.

Once, it is found that this business is legal in the area operation, it is important to identify the area in which the vehicle should be parked for serving foods. It will generally be difficult to park the truck in a busy downtown area and so it is better to choose a tourist spot.

The next thing to be done is to decide on the name of the business so that it will be easier for people to identify. The name can be something related to the type of food the individual is planning to serve

If the menu will be same every day, printed menu boards can be used. Otherwise, a board with a marker can be kept ready for changing the dish details then and there based on availability.

There is a lot of franchise opportunities in the food industry and getting the help of professionals who can be a guide in the startup food business planning can be of great help. The professionals will also help individuals understand the availability of franchise opportunities in the food industry.

Recommended Resources

www.HowExpert.com – Short ‘how to’ guides by real life, everyday experts!