



**Success
stories**



Ashraf Talukder

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Ashraf Talukder followed his hobby into the trade, and when he started he could see how lucrative the trade was and his passion for customer service and also the quality of food which the chefs provide. "I could see where I could improve, and well, the rest is history."

Passion for food, diligence in service and welcoming ambience, he says, are three key ingredients to creating a successful restaurant. He always put food first. Authentic flavours are at the heart of his restaurants and the recipes he creates are based on Asian traditions in hand with modern twists to create signature dishes. But he is well aware that "Your restaurant may have great-tasting food, but if the atmosphere is bland or distasteful, it will overshadow the quality of the meal. On the flip side, a great restaurant atmosphere will keep your customers around longer and ensure that they'll return again and again."

He looks at his competitors and sees what he and his team can do different. He creates a system that allows him to remain consistent in everything he does. He has kept all his restaurants with the same concept of dishes. All his chefs are trained in the same style. They have a very unique menu and customers can taste this when they come and dine with them.

"You must rely on your own passion to drive the passion of your staff." He gives emphasis to both a passion for food and an agreement of how food should be prepared. He wants them to agree with what he is telling them. If they do not agree they will not be able to prepare truly delicious food. It is about the recipe, but it is also about how it is prepared. With discipline you have consistency so that when customers who order something one day can come back and think, "Ah yes, this is the taste I remember." He is very innovative and hence, he says, he was one of the firsts if not the first to bring out Theme Nights or Tribute Nights within his establishments.

Ashraf treats each member of his team in the same fashion and expect each customer to be treated the same as well. At the table the customers must receive attention quickly and the food must arrive with perfect timing with consistency in the preparation and delivery.

They should feel welcome and well fed. He does team building sessions in his business, where he asks his colleagues for their views on how they did and also where they can improve, plus he has incentives in place to reward his employees who go above and beyond.

He uses online ordering plus an epos system where his colleagues can take orders and he is looking at investing in the top of the range software so their efficiency gets better and they can concentrate on the customer.

What kind of marketing and advertising initiatives have worked for you? What haven't?

Word of mouth has been his best marketing and it's free. Sending newsletters out to customer base has also been a key element. Newspapers have gone down and marketing with it due to the digital age.

Retaining staff is a challenge for him at the moment. As the business grew, so did the necessity of putting together a qualified staff. Says Ashraf, "You have to make sure you have the right people for the job." Everyone wants to be next to family and they are finding it hard and he also can see that the volume of new recruits to the trade is very low. He says restaurant business always has unanticipated issues. He emphasises the importance of planning anyway. "You can usually overcome a couple of nuances or a couple of wrinkles, but you can't overcome a lot of them," Ashraf says. "So having a plan where there are fewer unforeseen challenges is the way to go."

Customers are doing favour to you by choosing your restaurant. In turn you have to be ready to provide them with the quality food and service they have come to know. Your customers trust you and they put their faith in your skills to bring a new and unique plate that offers them a chance to experience something special.

Ashraf has been in the restaurant business near about 25 years if not more. Now he is thinking of semi-retirement: "So to do that I must pass down my experience to my protégé, so he or she can carry on with the reigns – If ever I can do that..."