

# **The 7 Essential Keys**

## ***To Ensuring Your Business Succeeds***

**Taken from the Café Academy Programme,  
with proven formulas, techniques and ideas on running a successful business**



***FREE* Report**

## Marketing Versus Advertising/Secondary Marketing

If most of your trade is (or is going to be) local, maybe even the office lunchtime fraternity, advertising in the press may not be your most productive, cost effective option.

Your local paper may boast of a readership of 80,000 – but 99% of those may not even be your target audience. There are many reasons why people buy a paper. How many people do you know who only buy it for the sports pages, or the motor-mart? My experience (depending on the type of establishment) has usually shown a poor return for my pound.

And how much of that readership is really in your catchment area?

Marketing, however, can be very targeted. My last venture, the trade came mainly from people already in town, especially people who work there & buy lunch locally. On 2 occasions I rode around the town centre on a bicycle in the evening with a big carrier full of my professionally printed menu, attached to it- a **special offer** leaflet with a powerful hook. **‘All Jacket Potatoes Half Price With This Voucher!’** My fillings were varied (offering something different!) & the quality was excellent.

I did a letterbox drop of every business in a 2 or 3 minute walk from my lunch bar. This type of marketing is very effective at drawing in lots of new trade – but the secret is, **you have to be GOOD!** There’s no point in give-away’s if people aren’t going to come back & use you ongoing at your usual prices.

The loss in profits from such marketing strategies is a lot less than the cost of an advert in a paper that doesn’t reach your target audience as effectively.

I would hope you would agree - money well spent!?

This type of *Direct Marketing* costs very little, except labour. At ‘half price’ I’m giving away most of my profits, but it hasn’t cost me anything. As a result, MANY new customers came in to try my food, most of which became regular customers until I sold up. Alternatively, an advert would’ve cost me £100’s- and some new customers may- or may NOT have come in to try me.

On all marketing material, make sure your phone number is prominent, stating clearly that **‘phone orders are welcome!’** If they can phone ahead & only have a half-hour lunch break, it can save them considerable waiting time.

This will rank you highly, as most café’s/lunch bars don’t do it. My lunch trade went up 20% (ongoing!) the first time I launched this marketing campaign.

It is also important to understand that when you do advertise, announcing your presence, you become ‘fresh meat’ to all the marketers in your industry. Including suppliers of groceries & equipment wholesalers & retailers.

It is very important that you understand that they are not experts in how to run your establishment, but just want to **sell** you everything they possibly can. Be sure about what you really need. Don't be pushed!

This will also include people trying to sell you advertising. They will all tell you why their publication is *The Best* for you. None of it is as good as it sounds. Do your own research, & if you do advertise, do so in a way that allows you to monitor it's success, ie. a voucher system which proves they came from a particular advertisement. If you run ad's in a number of publications, it clearly shows you which ones work, and which ones are a waste of money. At least that way, you only waste it once.

On the subject of advertising, one avenue worth pursuing, is negotiating a *feature story*. I have achieved this successfully a number of times.

If you have a worthy story, grand opening, new menu, refurbishment etc, your local press may be interested in running a story, with photographs. (Sometimes insisting you pay for a small advert on the same page.) You'd be surprised at how often they are looking for local news to fill their pages.

Whatever deal they offer, NEVER accept their first price. You can be pleasantly surprised at how negotiable they are. (Not always, but if you don't try, you'll never know.)

If you do get a story printed, my advice is to include a *readers offer*, just another opportunity to attract some more new customers. Just be ready to 'secondary market' them. (This is detailed fully in the complete programme.)

- Targeted Marketing in your immediate area for the best return on your pound.
- But there's no point in *give-aways* unless you're sure you're good enough that some of them will continue to use you at your usual price. How good are you?
- Offer a phone order service – not many do!
- All advertising rep's will tell you why their publication is the best for you! Be sure about what you need. Monitor results.
- Write an *article* for local publications. They're often looking for 'stories.'
- ALWAYS negotiate a better price.

For more in-depth information on this including full details on how to implement secondary marketing, & how to write an article or press release, apply for the full

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## Great Service- Total Customer Focused

Do you (and your staff) have the right attitude and aptitude for the job? If It doesn't come naturally, you have to learn it.

You have to offer the 'personal touch.' Everybody likes to feel special. It's one of the things that can make you stand out from the crowd – it certainly gives you an advantage over the big chains, and indeed most rivals.

*Really great service* seems to be very hard to come by these days – offer it – and you're onto a winner.

You have to be able to 'Turn It On' at any time. If you're standing over a hot stove, (from my experience!) grizzling because you're having a bad day, or you're not feeling very well, and a returning (or new) customer walks in, you have to be able to turn around with a big, genuine- looking smile on your face and say "Hi there, good morning- nice to see you again!"

Even if you're busy, you *must – always* acknowledge your customers. "Good morning" or a simple "Hello" will do. "We're a bit busy at the moment, but take a seat and we'll be with you as soon as we can"

How many times have you walked in somewhere, you've been completely ignored, you find a table, 10 minutes later you don't even know if they know you're there? You become agitated and frustrated. Eventually, you get served and the food/coffee is great! But the whole experience was just 'ok.'

By simply acknowledging their presence, they feel special, and will wait a little longer, very happily. ALWAYS thank them when they leave and, (with the same food/coffee!) the experience was *Great!* They'll remember you – and will be back, and will probably talk about you to their friends. Free marketing!

If this isn't you, or you're not up to it, make absolutely sure that this kind of customer focus is your No.1 criteria when choosing your staff. After all, they will be representing you- the *face* of your operation. I have employed staff for no other reason than their personality and disposition. You can train them to do the job!

Encourage staff tips. Never, as the proprietor take a share of any tips. The incentive for your staff to give great customer service (even when your back is turned, or you're not even there) is greatly enhanced if there's enough in tip generation to improve their pay packet at the end of the week.

Consider making their pay partly performance based. As an example, whatever you have budgeted to pay, offer them 90 – 95%, plus a small percentage of the take after the business reaches a predetermined level of turnover. This incentive can also enhance ‘*secondary sales*’ which can greatly increase your profits.

The big chains you are competing with have the ‘computer says **no!**’ syndrome. They don’t have the ability to personalize the customers order. If a customer wants poached eggs on his big breakfast and it’s not even on the menu, **you** can say ‘yes!’

What prohibitive signs do you have on your walls/windows/tables? At a subconscious level, it creates a very unwelcoming atmosphere if your customers are being told what **not** to do!

As an example- “These tables for Cottage Café customers only!” or “No take-away food to be consumed at these tables!” Don’t make the mistake of alienating all of your customers for the sake of a tiny minority. If someone does abuse your hospitality, just handle it diplomatically at the time.

For the sake of three paying customers, (who may not otherwise have come in) I’m happy to allow their son to eat the sandwich he’s already bought at the bakery. I’ll even give him a plate- with a smile.

But I’ll also give him one of my V.I.P. cards, offering him a 10% discount if he buys it from **me** next time. A perfect opportunity to on-market! Four very happy customers. Where else do you think they might get that sort of service? Do you think they might come back?

Do you offer coffee and cakes?

How are your cakes displayed?

Are they under tacky, cheap, cloudy plastic domes? I had large, heavy cake boards turned from oak, with marble inlays and real glass domes. Prominently displayed (with great looking cakes, I might add) they were a talking point themselves.

I sold a lot of cakes.

Can they be seen by passers-by?

If you can’t make really fabulous cakes, buy them from someone who can!

Once again, look at your display. Does it make you stop and look? Does it look not just professional, but tempting?

In one of my previous businesses, the current owners leave all the lights off.

Because of the good-sized picture window, they can see ok without it.

Can you see they’re completely missing the point? From a passing trade point of view, the place looks dark and permanently closed!

To reiterate on an earlier point, you *must* learn to see your business from a customers' point of view.

What image are you trying to portray?

By far the easiest way to understand what the customer likes and wants is to visit other establishments (travel to other towns if you need to) that are doing what you want to do. Go in for a coffee or lunch. Why are the full, successful ones successful? And why are the ones that are failing- not? Compare notes.

Don't forget that these trips are tax deductible!

Put your 'customer hat' on and walk past, and in to your own business. What do you notice, positive – and negative from your research?

- Only employ staff with the right attitude.
- Offer the *personal touch* and *really great service* for a winning formula.
- Encourage staff tips.
- Provide a discreet, but strategically placed crucible for customer tips.
- Remove prohibitive signs.
- Learn to see your place from *the customers point of view* – not yours.
- Visit similar, successful establishments. Study why and take ideas.

## Grand Opening Launch Or Re-Launch

Rather than a major advertising campaign, which may or may not work, consider going for the direct marketing approach.

When I launched Hot Gossip Café Restaurant, I ran the new business for quite a few days before the official launch date to make sure my staff & I were fluent with the procedures & the menu.

I then gave out *invitation only* free dinner invites (with a bottle of wine per table-check the laws where you are, but you shouldn't even need to be licensed if you're giving it away) to everyone that was influential in the town. Estate agents, bank managers, local press, other business owners in the vicinity etc... Obviously, the bookings came flooding in.

Because we were well rehearsed and prepared, the evenings went so well, we had a standing ovation at the end of both nights!  
And the 'free press' that followed in the next issues was just fantastic.

The cost of the two evenings was less than a half page advert in the local paper- and we still got great exposure in the papers! We were up and running and fully booked for months...

Have you run your business for a few days first, without the fanfare, to make sure all the 'bugs' have been ironed out?

On your launch nights, you need to impress. This is **NOT** the time to discover problems. After all, the whole point of this exercise is to *show off* and make sure they come back!

An alternative strategy is a flyer drop in your area.  
Again, this beats advertising because it is more accurately targeted to a catchment within a small radius of your business- this is where most of your trade will come from.  
It also enables you to monitor its success rate better.

Over the page is an example you could adapt. Make sure it's professionally printed.

## Mystery Diners Needed

We are opening

### **Oak Cottage Café / Restaurant in Fore Street**

and we are looking for local diners to evaluate & critique our operation before we open to the public.

### Would you like to help us?

On Thursday & Friday (dates) evenings, and Saturday lunch-time we are offering a sample platter of 3 of our new signature dishes with drinks & appetizers.

You are invited to come along and give us your valued & honest opinion.

Our 2-course dinner with drinks for 2 people will be only £8. (Cost only)

If you think you would like to help us, please go to

[www.oakcottagecafe.co.uk/mysterydiners](http://www.oakcottagecafe.co.uk/mysterydiners) to register. Thank You.

Even though you will be giving away most of your profits, it is so much more cost-effective (it doesn't *actually* cost you *anything*!) than media advertising, of which most of the readership or listeners aren't even in your catchment area!

Also, from an ongoing marketing point of view, the database you can collect from these events is priceless. An opportunity for absolutely free, perfectly targeted marketing on an ongoing basis.

Hopefully, you can now see that advertising is just that. Marketing is actually getting trade in the door and cash in the till. There really is a definite distinction between the two. Where are you going to spend your hard earned money?

- Consider Direct Marketing again for a launch or grand opening.
- Run your 'new' business for a while before the launch.
- Start your own database from your direct marketing campaign.

## Customer Perspective- You Have To Be Good

Make sure your establishment is inviting. Take off your 'owners hat' and put on your 'customer hat' and walk past your own premises. You're looking for a coffee, or lunch, would you instantly walk in yourself? Why? Why not?

Can people clearly see in? Is there a warm, ambient, clean, unthreatening and welcoming feel?

You quite often see relaxing, comfortable sofas or chairs just inside the window- this is done for obvious reasons. It says, "Come on in, relax, chill out, have a coffee and a chat and watch the world go by."

People *like* to watch the world go by. They're always the first seats/tables to be occupied! And it makes the place look busy. Have you allowed enough room for this? People 'draw' other people. Have you noticed, a well-patronised place seems to automatically draw others in?

Or what about a great 'Grab 'n' Go' food display for busy office workers, and the sight and smell of the coffee machine counter close to the entrance? I have even placed an extractor hood over the coffee machine, vented out above the café entrance. All of these things will entice the passing trade.

A special point to remember here is that today, people don't just go out to eat, they come for the full experience – to be entertained. By this, I don't necessarily mean 'live entertainment' but something that's engaging.

For example, a specialist coffee shop that blends its own beans might have a massive display of hundreds of different styles & roasts of beans. Backed up with 'little packages' for sale for home grinding. Grinding machines will be on show for display & for sale. There will be pictures on the wall of the coffee growing process overseas.

There might be a printed 'story' on the wall describing the 'field to cup' process of the coffee bean. Other forms of coffee related memorabilia will be on display. All of this creates an 'entertaining' atmosphere.

This is also known as part of your U.S.P. (Unique Selling Proposition) What is yours? What makes you special? Are you going to feature heavily on free-range or organic?

Develop this theme as in the coffee shop above, and use it to ‘entertain.’  
The other side of this equation is: ***You Have To Be Good.***

All of the above becomes completely irrelevant if the quality of the food, drink, presentation, service, staff manners & attitude etc, isn’t up to scratch.

You need to be *absolutely sure* that you’re good enough for them to return again-and again. There are many examples of on-going, secondary marketing that can help to enhance and promote this in the full Café Academy Programme.

You will also find examples of U.S.P’s and how to develop yours.

- Does your premises look inviting from a customers perspective?
- Can customers clearly see into a clean, warm, unthreatening relaxing environment?
- Is there a *tempting display* to attract passing trade in?
- What is your U.S.P? Make the statement bold and clear.
- Is your *service* good enough to generate ‘repeat trade?’

## **Shop Front Marketing/Image**

Does your shop front and marketing accurately describe what you are and what you do? You'd be surprised at how many get this critical point wrong. You can potentially pay a lot extra for a street frontage location, make sure you use it to its full advantage and capitalise on it.

From a passing trade point of view, it only takes 3 to 5 seconds to walk past your place, even less if they're driving. Are you grabbing their attention within that time frame?

You might be a fantastic cook/chef, great character, superb host and offering the best service in town, but if your potential customers don't know who or where or what you are, it all becomes irrelevant. (Word-of-mouth alone can take a very long time)

As the owner, you **MUST** concentrate on this point-of-sale marketing. Only you can do this. Make sure you understand what your key message is and broadcast it clearly. If for example it's 'Sandwich & Coffee £2.95' can it be read, in an instant, from a car at 25mph?

Maybe it's 'Vegetarian' or 'Home Made' or 'Spanish Tapas.' Whatever it is, make sure it's clear, bold and professional.

If you have A-frames outside, spend the money and make sure they have a quality appeal. The bigger the better, too. They become 'un-missable.' They must be well-written and as bold as possible. There are coloured blackboard pens that are weatherproof, look for them in catering supply catalogues or office supply shops. If you can't write or draw very well, find someone who can!

Is your shop front clean with a well-kept look? Clean it regularly.

If you have seating outside, does it mirror the inside image well? Are the seats not only comfy, but relaxing-looking? Is there an awning, or large parasols? This is important because it gives smokers somewhere dry to go. They can also look fantastic, inviting, professional- and a great way of marketing your business. (You can get 5 x 5 metre span parasols. google 'commercial parasols')

If you have shop-front seating, make it professional – a true reflection of the interior. Branded barriers are a great consideration. Google 'café barriers' for examples. (like [www.brandline.co.uk](http://www.brandline.co.uk))

This approach not only marks out your seating area, but can also be an invaluable promotion opportunity.

Consider comfy, relaxing sofas or tub chairs near the window, and a clearly visible newspaper/magazine rack. This suggests to passers-by that it's a great place to 'chill out' and watch the world go by. If you have a coffee machine, think about locating it visibly near the door, the smell of coffee can be a big draw card.

It's also important that people can clearly see in. People are naturally wary of walking through a door they can't see behind.

Good looking pot plants or trees outside really help to soften harsh concrete facades, creating a more welcoming and comforting image.

Outside tables can easily be forgotten, don't let them remain dirty and cluttered for any length of time. Appoint 1 person to adopt this area as their priority.

In summary, how you are perceived from *outside*, can directly determine whether people walk *inside*!

If you've got faded white plastic chairs, dirty tables and a tatty shop front, how can you possibly expect potential customers to know that you serve the most fantastic Chicken Caesar salad in town?

An important point to make while on this subject is regarding ownership and responsibility. Most people probably lease the premises, not own it. If this is the case, don't make the mistake of refusing to attend to the state of the outside because 'Why should I, it's the responsibility and cost of the landlord!' This may be the case, but the landlord still gets his rent regardless. It's YOUR BUSINESS that suffers. You are the one potentially missing out on better trade.

If it needs painting, paint it. If it needs periodical cleaning, clean it. As I often refer to the 'Nike' slogan – "Just Do It!" It's your business.

*(This doesn't stop you from still negotiating the costs with your landlord though.)*

- Does your signage *accurately* describe what you do?
- Make notices like A-frames clear and un-missable
- Does the *outside* reflect the professional image of the *inside*?
- Visual appeal. The outside is just as important as the inside
- Consider branded barriers for a more classy image

## Professional Approach

A high level of professionalism and image is absolutely paramount- regardless of your target audience. If you can't afford to do it right, don't even attempt it until you can.

When I bought Hot Gossip Café, all advice was against it. "It's a white elephant" and "Nobody's ever been able to do anything with it." This feedback came from friends, colleagues, and even my bank manager.

But its location was just about perfect, being on one of the two entrances to the only shopping mall in town. What I realised was that the current, and previous owners had only made small, insignificant changes. It was predominantly horrible lino, plastic chairs and tables and a very uninspiring menu. Its look and image stayed the same. I knew it needed a complete transformation.

This can be a lot cheaper than you might think. In this premises, the kitchen was already very well kitted out. Just minor changes were needed to service the new menus. It was just the front of house.

I had the counters made out of cheap, white melamine boards, but with a great looking facia. I purchased special, end-of-line (so also cheap) floor tiles, beautiful, scratch resistant tables, (no need for table cloths- an expensive ongoing commodity) and comfy chairs.

My costs were only about \$8,000AUS (£4,000). It was a complete transformation. It doesn't have to cost 10's of 1,000's of pounds!

After making sure *everything* was in town first, I closed for only 2 days ( the take-away remained open) and turned it into a thriving café-restaurant.

It arguably became known as the best eating-place in town, with trade levels to match.

We've all walked past crummy looking café's with plastic chairs, hand written notes on pieces of A4 paper, taped to the windows, and a home-made sandwich board outside with an almost illegible offering of today's specials.

Did you go in? Well, there's a surprise! Neither would I. Neither would that gent/lady in a business suit looking at random for a place for a quick lunch. I fully understand that you may be targeting a niche market, for example, in an area flooded with *greasy spoons*, you are aiming at the high end- business and professional client base, and so will be pricing out, by default, the 'bargain basement' type of client, which wouldn't sit so well with your target audience.

But even in this kind of scenario, you need to appeal to as many customer types as possible – not alienate some of them. This helps significantly in increasing your ‘passing trade.’ The colour of their money is the same, regardless of what walk of life they are from.

The ‘professional image’ doesn’t just stop at the décor of the premises, but must continue across the spectrum, including things like uniform, for owners and staff alike.

It’s a very bad idea to have ANY staff in civilian clothes in any kind of catering/retail outlet. Ideally, the uniform should run in parallel to your businesses colour scheme, theme and logo’s or branding.

- Appeal to as wide a range of client types as possible.
- Uniform is important. Avoid civilian clothes.
- A quality refurbishment doesn’t have to break the bank. Do your research and allow yourself sufficient time to find bargains.

For more in depth information, with ideas, tips and techniques for creating your own unique, professional image, apply for the complete **Café Academy Programme** NOW at [www.thecafeacademy.co.uk](http://www.thecafeacademy.co.uk)

## Catering Suppliers. The Myths And The Facts

Even when setting up a new place, it is not imperative that everything should be new. In my experience, the only circumstance where this may be true, is if your kitchen is open, and on view to the public and can therefore be a significant part of your professional image. But even then, stainless steel, near new equipment can still look great. Just choose carefully.

Catering equipment supply company rep's will tell you otherwise- but remember, it's their job! The more they sell, the greater their commissions.

2 years ago, I was asked to help in a new surf lodge in Newquay, Cornwall, where a sales rep had drawn up a kitchen plan, along with a quote for more than £30,000! I showed them how to achieve similar results, using some of the equipment they already had, and some from a good second-hand trader from up country, for a total of less than £4,000! It's also a question of being sure of what you REALLY need.

Company rep's will insist for all sorts of reasons that new is the only way to go- including the reliability & warranties of new. But mainly because they're on big commissions.

There are ALWAYS catering businesses going bust. You can find all sorts of bargains, especially in places like Ebay that are for sale for no other reason than the business they came from failed. If you search hard enough, you can find items only 1 or 2 years old, in 'as new' condition for a fraction of the price.

Don't get carried away with the excitement of opening your new business, and remember- the bigger your outlay (and loans?) the more it will eat into your profits for a long time. Especially when you're just starting out. If your kitchen is hidden, the only person that benefits from the shiny new surfaces – is you.

In my last business, I purchased a 2<sup>nd</sup> hand Caravell 3 and a half door stainless steel counter-top fridge for only £500 from a reputable dealer, with a year's warranty on Ebay. These fridges retail for in excess of £3,000 new. It was in perfect condition, and was still working perfectly when I sold the business.

Keep an eye out in your regional press for catering auctions. Many are held on site of a failed hotel or restaurant. There are potentially, some fantastic bargains to be had here.

- Everything does *not* have to be new. The rep's are *not* experts in how to run your business. They just want to sell.
- Choose carefully on some fantastic 2<sup>nd</sup> hand opportunities.

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For a much more in-depth look at this process and how to capitalise on it fully, apply for the full Café Academy Programme NOW at [www.thecafeacademy.co.uk](http://www.thecafeacademy.co.uk)

This programme will not only guide you to being one of the surviving minority – but a thriving success!

If business isn't as good as it should be, you know that this is NOT the time to cut corners. Now is the time to make a little investment- and find out WHY business is low – and correct it to ensure a much greater level of success.

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How much is the full programme?

You can have all the information you need to make your business venture a success – *first time!* For only **£49**

**Apply now** at [www.thecafeacademy.co.uk](http://www.thecafeacademy.co.uk)

The **café Academy Programme** is incredible value at only £49 – with more than 30 chapters covering many essential topics. If you're already in business, it can help you identify and eliminate all the things that up until now stopped you from being as successful as you can be. It can also help to ensure that you start enjoying the success you deserve.

*but that's not all you get...*

As a thank you for investing in the Café Academy E-Programme, you will automatically qualify for a three-month free trial membership of the Academy Mastermind Forum, an online meeting place and bulletin board with updates from Malcolm, and a place where you can not only post questions, but share ideas, add your own comments and suggestions, and read the same from others. Including things like favourite and helpful websites, unique suppliers, cost saving recipes etc.

This is a unique opportunity to gain invaluable access to ongoing help and advice! Programme members also qualify for exclusive discounts on seminars and any consultancy services required.

You will also have the opportunity to take part in the **Café Academy Awards** where tea rooms, coffee shops, sandwich bars and cafes, as well as restaurants.... can at last be recognised and rewarded for their efforts and achievements within their industry – giving you greater exposure and credibility in your market-place.



Once again, congratulations on taking your venture seriously enough to have researched this far, and for understanding that it really isn't quite as easy as so many people entering this industry think it is. After all, it is a profession! NOW is the time to take the next step, and apply for the complete **Café Academy** Programme- which will guide you to not only being one of the surviving minority, but a thriving success – and ensuring you are not added to the very high 'failure – rate statistics!'

Warmest regards,



Malcolm Harris  
Director.

Apply Now

**P.S.**

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