

Recipe for success: what any founder can learn from the golden rules of restaurant design...

You don't need to be a foodie to have noticed how quickly eating establishments seem to come and go these days. A notoriously saturated market with slim operating margins means that only the best can survive. And with a decades-long career designing restaurants, I've witnessed everything from businesses establishing a twelve-month waiting list to those that fold within that same time frame.

Temps de lecture : minute

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Over the years I've seen some patterns emerge, so here are my golden rules for restaurant design and how I think they could help any business...

1) Connect the dots

As a restaurant designer, I view the customer experience as a journey—each touch point is connected and when there is a seamless flow it creates the holy grail I've termed 'Immersive Hospitality'. While it's tempting to be dismissive of little details in light of the big picture, they all play an important role. To use another travel analogy, my team's planning process involves 'experience mapping'. Every touchpoint that our client's guests (the passengers) will come into contact with is considered. And the aim is to create a seamless experience that they will tell their families and friends (as well as the whole world via the internet)

about. Mapping your customer journey in detail is equally important in any sector to deliver an experience that will lead to repeat business and build brand value.

I work with my creative team to tell a restaurant's story through every detail from its website to its water jugs! Try thinking about how your potential customers will interact with your business as a journey. This starts with how they will find you and how they will pay for and receive your goods/services, as well as any post-sale experiences...Leave no stone unturned as the point is to ensure that your business's values and style remain consistent throughout the entire experience to create a seamless flow for the end user.

2) Consider every angle

One of the things I've noticed during my career is the importance of efficiency in the labour-intensive restaurant sector. It means that working with the kitchen and front-of-house teams is paramount during the design process to ensure they can deliver the founder's vision effectively. But this isn't novel to the hospitality industry—it's essential to any business, right up to the latest Artificial Intelligence. No one wants to be left hanging around—whether it's by a waiter or a chatbot!

Over the years I've witnessed the positive impact of planning with the people delivering your vision, the 'drivers' of your customer journey. And you'd be amazed at the details that can be revealed during the design process. For example in the restaurant trade, the chef's passion will be the menu and tableware that will best showcase their creations and keep them at the perfect temperature—while the waiting staff's main concerns are focused on smooth communication and transportation. In my experience, listening to the different perspectives of the people that will be executing your vision is critical to efficiency—unearthing some interesting ideas that could otherwise be overlooked. This is true for any

type of business in any sector.....

3) Don't forget the human touch

My projects over the years range from a neighbourhood café to the world-famous Bocuse d'Or competition. And one thing I've noticed across the board is the important role that character and connection play.

Hospitality is all about human connection—whether it's a parent taking a child for a Happy Meal at McDonalds, or romantic partners celebrating in a Michelin-starred restaurant. And it's becoming much more valuable in our post-pandemic, tech-driven world—with everyone from Mark Zuckerberg to his cleaner valuing this universal human experience. Talking of the Facebook founder, social media is another example of an industry based on this human need for connection...But it's not just explicit examples like these where it's evident though. Character and connection are important even in very need-based markets such as personal hygiene products. Brands use common human experiences and emotions to appeal to their target markets, often providing an opportunity for a price premium by creating the perception that they 'get' their potential customers and have designed products with them in mind.

Having a strong idea of your business's character before engaging with design experts is essential because time is money. Failing to plan can lead to unnecessary expense or even ending up with branding that doesn't tell your unique story. Get it right though and it's an opportunity to really connect with your target market and reap the benefits of customer loyalty...

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