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## Bringing in business in tough times

Posted by [susan holaday](#) on February 15, 2009 at 8:21am in [General](#)

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The desire to build business in a challenging economy is leading operators to come up with all kinds of creative ideas and promotions. Beyond the three-course prix fixe we've been seeing lots of here in the Northeast this winter, is a clever campaign from the New Jersey Restaurant Association called, appropriately, "Dine Out Often."

Jimmy Thornton, chairman, says "the messaging is simple:

The scripts read:

Dine Out Often --- It creates jobs, brings friends and family together and it's delicious too!

Dine Out Often --- Support your local restaurants during Valentine's Week (we'd add - and other holidays)

Dine Out Often --- Your local restaurants provide jobs for people and supports our Main Street Communities  
Dine Out Often --- For business, with family and friends and to celebrate the important occasions in your life ---  
Support your local restaurants."

NJRA printed window decals and bumper stickers for restaurants and their vendors to use and encourages operators to add the message to menus as well.

"The restaurant and hospitality industry has more than 300,000 employees, making it the state's largest private sector employer. Restaurants account for nearly one-third of the state's tourism industry and its workers serve as ambassadors of tourism for New Jersey," Thornton points out in a press release.

It's great and encouraging to see the industry respond so firmly and decisively at a time when voices of doom and gloom are scaring people into their caves (sorry - homes) and urging them not to spend money. Of course those who are over-extended should not be spending loosely and freely - that should go without saying. And to those who respond that these messages are directed at those people whose homes are in danger of foreclosure or whose jobs are at risk, isn't it pretty obvious that they're not dining at high-end operations every night, if ever?

The point is that when the industry react positively with messages such as "Dine Out Often," it starts a chain of positive actions - economic stimulation only comes about when people spend money - that's not to discourage prudence, savings, or common sense - but most people have enough practical wisdom to understand that - don't they?

Tags: [and](#), [dine out](#), [economic](#), [hospitality](#), [promotions](#), [restaurant](#), [stimulus](#), [tourism](#)

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Comment by [Michael Albert](#) on February 15, 2009 at 9:24am

Susan,

I won't comment on the amount of practical wisdom most people have, but I wholeheartedly agree that promotional efforts, if well targeted, can spike business traffic in tough and not so tough times alike. Frankly, promotions should be part and parcel of most operations, particularly the 'above the line' type. Stuff like advertising and other paid for marketing. 'Below the line' activity is where foodservice operators can really stand out and even help out during tough times. One type of 'below the line' activity is sponsorship.

Sponsoring a cause, a national or local issue, an organization can strengthen existing relationships and build new ones. Sure, getting uniforms for a kids' soccer team is cool, but we all can think beyond that to broader issues. For example, folks who serve seafood have the option to assist and work with a plethora of organizations/causes that make or want to make a difference to rescue our oceans and their stakeholders. Being an advocate of something you believe in will attract others who share your perspective. (and you can have a ball being creative - doing something that you and your staff really want to do) Doing good is good for business - always has been the case and likely always will be. And in times like these, special efforts are more likely to be recognized and appreciated. Funny thing, if you research the verb TO SELL, it comes from ancient Greek and it means TO SERVE. And that, colleagues, may be a most appropriate pun. Thank you again Susan for all your posts.



Comment by [Bill Baumgartner](#) on February 15, 2009 at 12:08pm

Susan,

Great "Reader Board Slogans" for those with storefront signage.



Comment by [Ivan Collins](#) 1 day ago

I work with [Reservation Genie](#), an affordable alternative to Open Table. We're launching a new rewards program on March 1st that differs than Open Table in that it rewards your customers for returning with frequency to your restaurant as opposed to rewarding our site users to return frequently to our site (and then billing you for their traffic). We think Dine Out Often is going to be more along the lines of Dine Out Strategically. I agree it will help the economy, but the money simply isn't there. Dining out less often is a requirement in this economy...unless you can find a way to make it more affordable. So our goal will make dining out more often more viable if you go to the same restaurant.

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[State fines 4 area restaurants \(Daytona Beach News-Journal\)](#)

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