



“Just A Thought” – Edward Theakston

When I ‘wer’ a lad’, my father always used to say to me that it’s no fluke that a pub is generally never far from a church, as one is the soul and the other is the heart of the community! I do think that if there is likely to be any positive, no matter how small to come out of this pandemic, then the general population having now missed it for practically a year, has remembered what the pub is all about.

Unlike a restaurant where you tend to enter as a group, stay as a group and leave as a group, in pubs when you enter you are likely to swept up into a conversation with the locals, generally from all walks of life. I remember reading in a paper once that you are more likely to get a job in a pub than you are going to the local job centre. Why? Well, it is all to do with trust. When you get to know someone, you can clearly make an informed decision about the person and whether they are capable of doing a job well or not. Ah, I hear some of you say, but that’s fine in a village but what about a city or town centre pub? Well, if you ask the licensees of large town and city pubs, I am sure you will hear them say that they have a great group of regulars. Do we need to look at how we operate the pubs and perhaps we should renew the focus on community and the regulars? Suits mixing with builders, engineers and plumbers and bankers with bin men. We all need each other! I am not saying that its wrong, but I think we often go into these pubs in groups and look inwards, rather than outwards. Now, I accept that there are times that you want to be in a group, night out etc, but my point is that now that we have effectively had the reset button pushed for us and we now have re-valued the pubs for what we missed, perhaps we should have a re-think as to how we approach pubs in general. By this I mean the promotions, the activities we run could be focusing on the regulars and what we and they do and how they can help the community. Whether the pub is run by a manager, owner or a licensee, a focus on the locals and the community will be refreshing. It’s perhaps worth noting that about 3 years ago a study found that pubs raised over £106 million for charities, that’s over £2750 per pub with local charities receiving £40mil.

When the pubs are eventually allowed to open, there is likely to be two opposing forces at play. One is there will be the group of people who simply can’t wait for the doors to open (me included) and those who will be a little reticent especially as the threat of the disease is still being forced into everyone’s consciousness. So, what will that mean? To my mind it will mean that the pubs will be busy, but not stupidly so, especially as it appears that there will be some restrictions as to how the pubs & bars will be allowed to open. Therefore, efficiency and speed of serve is essential to maximise the pubs take and profitability. Similarly, for the team behind the bar to be bright smiley and very welcoming as well as super conscious of the need for speed, especially if we are confined to table service. It goes without saying that we all need to demonstrate that we are safe, but we have already proved that! But either way we need to be prepared. If rumour is correct, we have got about a month to get the operational running of the pub into tip top shape. This is where I think we need to start to focus, as I hear that there is a lot of difference in the way some pubs closed down. Some will have been properly put to bed, lines cleaned and then left either empty or with a ‘guardian’ solution in, whilst others will have had beer left in them or worse water. There needs to

be a concerted focus on the maintenance of cellars, lines, couplers, ice machines, glass washers, as they all need to be in fine working order and serviced if necessary. The flexi-furlough may help with this but there is a lot of elbow grease required. This is not easy, as I'm sure you realise but that's what I'm here for, to help get our collective minds back into gear! If anyone needs any help on knowing what to do and when, please shout! The one thing I know for sure, is that when the customers are allowed back, they will not be expecting poor quality, badly poured drinks that are dumped down on the table! Their expectations will be through the roof, giving us a much harder job to even match their expectations let alone exceed them and they will want it quickly!