

# BUMS SEATS

## **“A NEW NORMAL”**

Now is NOT the time for Bars, Restaurants and other venues to sit back and wait for the return of normality. What we all used to do will no longer deliver profitability even after vaccines have done their job. There is, instead, a new normal, and one which requires businesses of any size to take a different and innovative approach to their trading going into 2021.

I am seeing hospitality venues embrace new ideas with courage and enthusiasm to remain visible and in position to benefit from the post Vaccine upturn. I also know that not everyone sees change in the same way. Change can be daunting, even challenging, but it can be managed (with or without help) and will almost certainly make the difference between long term profitability and failure.

Not all changes will be appropriate either. Knowing your customer and environment (as well as competitors) are key. Let's look at some of what is already happening: Home delivery; Make at home meal kits from your fave restaurants; Click 'n collect; virtual parties and events; and so on. Whatever the innovation or idea, they all have something in common: significantly improved contact with Customers, as well as contact with a whole range of local community businesses, offices, charities, public sector and volunteer organisations. Without the latter, any new idea will fall flat. Any hospitality venue who doesn't get this will lose out.

In the same way that a Covid vaccine will inoculate against the disease, any Bar, Restaurant or other venue can deliver the reassurance and continuing best experience for its customers ONLY by creating genuine rapport, mutual trust, and confidence. I'm always amazed how many venues fail to grasp how essential this basic really is, and how it's done! Creating the right conditions for Customers to feel valued, reducing 'no shows', and reassuring them about the safety of the venue must be paramount if any new idea is to succeed.

## **COLLABORATE & INNOVATE**

What's working right now might just work for you too. Could it be mental health awareness and support, free school meals from the sector, experiences delivered to the home, virtual quizzes, themed brunches, afternoon and alcohol-free teas? Any of these possibilities – and more – are available for you to exploit if you have an understanding of how Customers want to be treated. There are many collaborations across the sector right now, for example with local businesses to support employees working from home by enabling local hospitality venues to provide the right environment to help them break up the day. Things like plug sockets, better WIFI, affordable coffee and lunch packages etc. are all important innovations in themselves, but the way in which venues interact with Customers through a responsive and genuinely warm discussion is still more imperative in building long term business resilience than offering simple innovations such as more flexible terms and no quibble deposits, important though they are.

I wish there was a Vaccine to deliver more Bars, Restaurants and other venues an understanding of just how important contact with Customers' needs to be. The many Audits I have carried out continue to demonstrate this essential point, without which innovation will not fully succeed. But we will all come back stronger and more resilient than before by being brave and innovative!