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SPECIALITY FOOD
NEWS, COMMENT AND BUYING IDEAS FOR FINE FOOD RETAILERS
DIGITAL MAGAZINE

The Ultimate Guide to Online Retail



How to achieve growth in a challenging climate

Learn from the leaders who are getting it right



WELCOME TO THE ULTIMATE GUIDE TO ONLINE RETAIL

Brought to you by the team at *SPECIALITY FOOD*



There's never been a better time to up your online game. Shoppers are spending more time online than ever before, and on all sorts of platforms – from e-commerce sites to social media and beyond – so it makes sense to boost your assets while the iron's hot.

A strong online presence will boost your business in more ways than one. Not only will it provide a new, profitable arm to your retail establishment, but it will raise the profile of your business beyond your immediate area; potentially attracting new locals as well as consumers from further afield to check out your wares.

Social media, too, is worth an investment of time (and potentially funds). Its various platforms offer a wealth of community-building opportunities.

With that in mind, we've gathered exclusive information from an array of experts to boost your business's presence on the internet and excite existing – and potential – customers.

From tips on maximising your website and social media advice to ways to improve your newsletter skills and build a connection with your online audience, we've got the intel to help you. Not only that, but this expertise is sourced directly from people in-the-know from across the industry and tailored to you, so you can rest assured that you're in safe hands.

I hope this gives you the boost you need to master online selling.

HOLLY SHACKLETON | EDITOR



CONTENTS

4 How To: Balance Bricks & Mortar With Online
Bring the traditional and the digital together for a forward-thinking retail enterprise

5 How Personalisation Brings Added Value For Your Customers
Creating tailored, valuable content cross all platforms is a sure-fire way to keep shoppers coming back for more

6 Are You Ready For A Successful Online Business?
Mathew March-Smith, co-founder of online cheese destination Pong, shares his hard-earned expertise

7 How To Become A Social Media Whizz
Tap into the opportunities that social media brings and stay ahead of the pack with these top tips

8 Maximise Your Website
With more consumers shopping online than ever before, now's the time to make sure your website is profit-ready

10 How To Become An Email Master
Customer inboxes are relatively untapped resource for community, sales boosts and shopper-retailer relationships. Here's how to maximise their potential

11 Meet the Master of Grocery Delivery
Guy Singh-Watson, the founder of Riverford Organic Farmers, shares his need-to-know advice on setting your business apart from larger-scale competition

12 How To Get Home Delivery Up & Running ASAP
Our expert tips will help you make the first steps and decide what's right for your business





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Published by
Aceville Publications Ltd,
21-23 Phoenix Court,
Hawkins Road, Colchester, Essex,
CO2 8JY

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EMAILS PRODUCE THE HIGHEST **ROI** FOR **RETAILERS** – AN ESTIMATED **4,300%**

SOURCE: DATA & MARKETING ASSOCIATION

FEATURED EXPERTS



Andrew Murray-Watson
Guzzl



Vhari Russell
Food Marketing Experts



Shane Ryan
fiid



Sairah Mojib
Widen



Arun Kapil
Green Saffron



Ciaran Bollard
Kooomo



Audrey Madden
White Bear Studio



HOW TO: BALANCE BRICKS-AND-MORTAR WITH ONLINE

Bring the traditional and the digital together for a forward-thinking retail enterprise

Create a clear customer journey

Think about how easy it is for customers to navigate your bricks-and-mortar store. Now translate that to online to ensure that shoppers can quickly and easily find what they need. Ensure that images of stock are visually pleasing and that product descriptions are clear and concise. While in-store customers have the option to ask questions, so compiling a list of FAQs or adding a live chat function could help to close sales.

Training staff

Ciaran Bollard, CEO of Kooomo explains, "Omnichannel can only be fully effective when in-store staff are as good as the online service agents. Sales assistants should spend more time connecting with shoppers and be ready to tend to their personal needs. Ensure your staff are familiarised with your website and can offer to support the same way as they would online. This can be achieved by politely requesting their email addresses or phone numbers in order to overview their shopping history. This will allow you to provide a highly personalised and excellent customer experience."

Choosing an e-commerce platform

Running a bricks-and-mortar store alongside an online shop requires laying good foundations. Choosing an ecommerce platform is the first stage. There are plenty out there, such as Wix or Shopify, that give you everything you need to get started on a budget and provide all the checkout functionality needed.

An important element to keep in mind is that the physical store and online shop need to reflect one another and work together, for example sharing a similar aesthetic and brand message. According to Ciaran, it's key that all the piece of the digital commercial puzzle come together within the customer journey: "Retailers should look for a platform that is flexible enough to handle the seasonality of catalogue management so that products and images can be added quickly, pricing can be adapted in line with stock levels and promotions can be easily managed."

AT A GLANCE

- Ensure your staff are familiarised with your website and can offer to support the same way as they would online
- Think about how easy it is for customers to be able to navigate your bricks-and-mortar store. Now translate that to online to ensure that shoppers can quickly and easily find what they need
- Don't overlook the value of your local customers



> "Sales assistants should spend more time connecting with shoppers and be ready to tend to their personal needs"

RETAILER PERSPECTIVE



For founder of Guzzl, Andrew Murray-Watson, the online store came first, with a location in London soon following. He shares his experiences of balancing both sides of speciality retailing:

"The online store opened in June 2017 followed by the bricks-and-mortar shop in November 2017.

When you launch a pure online retailer, after months of planning, market research and so forth, it is natural to expect that everyone in your personal networks will see the obvious genius of your idea and immediately start spending money with you. That doesn't happen. Your mum might spend some cash with you. But she will still expect a discount. So the hardest aspect of online is getting the first 100 customers. It is a real slog.

I opened the bricks-and-mortar store knowing nothing about merchandising. So that was challenging, and thankfully I had a business partner who had been a retailer for 20 years who lent invaluable support. You have to really quickly adapt to what customers are buying and what they are ignoring. Be prepared to pivot to follow demand, even if it is a million miles from your original concept for the shop.

Invest time in looking at the best packing, shipping and distribution options. It is soul destroying to find yourself with 5,000 cardboard boxes which take ages to build and often break in transit. Also shipping costs can vary greatly. The Post Office is great for small parcels under 2kg, but expensive for anything above that, for example.

On a technical level, track how your customers use your website, where they spend their time, what page they leave from etc. so you can hopefully tweak the design to improve your sales conversion rate.

At Guzzl there aren't separate teams for the shop and e-commerce and I don't think there should be. Success as a retailer is dependent on listening to your customers. The people who look after online need to be exposed to what customers are saying in the store. Also, don't overlook the value of your local customers. It is worth building in a free local delivery option on your website."



HOW PERSONALISATION BRINGS ADDED VALUE FOR YOUR CUSTOMERS

Creating tailored, valuable content across all platforms is a sure-fire way to keep shoppers coming back for more

In the competitive world of online retailing, customer connection is crucial. Putting time and effort into personalising your digital offerings will help boost your sales, and encourage repeat business too. In the speciality food and drink industry the emphasis is on produce with great stories behind them, and being able to communicate those with customers is all part of the fine food shopping experience. Translating that connection online means creating an online experience that's tailored to your customers' needs.

Create valuable content

These days consumers are receiving an array of marketing messages through social media, websites and newsletters. Stand out amongst the crowd by creating content of value to your new and existing customers. Dan Jones is the head of CRO (Conversion Rate Optimisation) at Search Laboratory, and he advises, "Developing an advanced marketing funnel which includes a top layer of engaging and valuable content that keeps users coming back to the site time and time again. Examples of content which would be suitable include informational blog posts, downloadable resources or on-site quizzes. By providing consumers with real meaningful 'value', it ensures that when they are ready to move down the sales funnel, your brand is the first that comes to mind. If you're a food retailer, think about what content at each stage might look like and how it would differ."

AT A GLANCE

- Do your research – get to know your customers
- Stand out from the crowd by providing shoppers with valuable, memorable content
- Create a personalisation strategy that instils trust and creates a connection with consumers

Challenge your customer assumptions

Never just assume that you know your customers, take the time to get to know then so that you can tailor your newsletters, social media posts and website content accordingly. There are various tools, such as Google and Instagram analytics that can be used as a resource. Nadine Hellmann and Sophie Niedermaier-Patramani, co-founders of Little Tummy, say, "When we launched our first web shop for Little Tummy in 2019 this was based on assumptions about who our target customer is, what information they need to know to make a purchase and how they shop. To validate these assumptions further, we used tools such as Google Analytics and heat maps – the good thing for start-ups is, all of them are free. Moreover, we asked our customers how they liked the shopping experience and this has been massively helpful in refining the content on the website. Based on these learnings, we've continually optimised the website."

Personalise your content



Sairah Mojib is head of marketing, EMEA at Widen, a Digital Asset Management provider. She explains how to personalising your content and why it's key to retaining repeat customers:

1. Instills trust

"A successful personalisation strategy exudes authenticity and instills a sense of trust when it comes to marketing, but to do it well requires significant creativity and effort. Going way beyond the basics of a birthday email or a seasonal greeting, personalisation helps to humanise the customer experience and give retailers' messaging real legitimacy, which not only helps convert to vital sales but encourages repeat custom."

2. Creates connection

"In today's competitive food and beverage retail landscape, personalisation is a basic market demand that helps consumers connect with the brand – often on an emotional level. For example, who remembers the 'Share a Coke' campaign? But to do personalisation well and attract those all-important repeat customers, it needs to go beyond basic demographics such as age, sex and location. Through a registration questionnaire for example, a retailer can find out about dietary requirements or taste preferences."

CONNECT THROUGH VIDEO

Dr Craig Rose PHD, managing director of Weed & Wonderful, on why video is a great tool for engaging with customers:

"Engaging with people is always best face-to-face and on a personal level, but during these unusual times speaking through video is extremely valuable. It is a way to create genuine connections, and also convey information more easily and interactively. Videos have huge potential for creativity, and are an increasingly integral part of my business."

ARE YOU READY FOR A SUCCESSFUL ONLINE BUSINESS?

Mathew March-Smith, co-founder of online cheese destination Pong, shares his hard-earned expertise





This strange and difficult period of retail has, at least temporarily, changed the way people buy food. The fact we're stuck inside for days on end has meant that the easiest way to get something we love, cheese in the case of our business, is by searching on the internet and ordering a delivery. It has also forced the hand of gift-givers who would previously take something to friends or relatives and now must organise something exciting to be taken to them; in this instance, an artisanal, quality food item fits the bill perfectly.

The surge in online demand could last for as long as the lockdown itself, but it will likely also influence what was already a perpetual increase in internet shopping volume over a much longer time. The increased number of online purchases won't of course change the marketplace entirely, it will simply re-align buyers' relationships with the brands and products with which they already have a positive relationship. For many grocery buyers, this period might even represent the first time they have ever ordered on the internet and as long as they have a positive experience they will likely be back for more, trying new companies and new products as their online skills and confidence improves.

Remember: it's at this initial point of their journey that the relationship with our company and its products begins, and it's at every stage of that ensuing process that what we create and update and manage, namely our website, has to work really hard at converting every opportunity.

Consider 'conversion'

If you're a retailer and you want a successful online shop, you must approach its build and marketing with a thorough understanding and strategy of it as a series of 'conversion' points. From the beginning of the customer journey, for example sitting on the sofa, at a laptop and entering 'order cheese delivery' into Google, all the way through to the text beside the 'Checkout Now' button at the end of the order process, every stage is an opportunity to convert or not convert a sale. The ranking in the search results and consequent traffic into relevant pages, your 'bounce rate' from your landing page (how many customers simply take a look and leave), your prices and average order value, your basket abandonment rate and ultimately your eventual conversion rate; all of these together will have a huge impact on how successful your online shop is.

Here's an example, let's say you have 1,000 'natural' visitors to your online shop in the month (natural meaning how many would come from a search without any optimisation or paid marketing). If the product you sell the most of is on the second page of the user journey and only 10% of visitors end up going to that page and 20% of them add it to their basket and 50% of them actually complete the order, you'll make 10 sales. Now, let's say you do a bit of work optimising the site and now you have 1,200 visitors to your shop (because you were higher up the search rankings) and the product you sell is on the landing page and 30% of visitors add it to their basket (because the photography is better and the price is more accurate) and 60% actually complete the order (because you've installed a great, easy to use 'one page checkout'). Now, you'll make 240 sales! Quite a staggering difference, no? Imagine now your average order value is £20: in the first case you'd make £200 in sales whereas in the second case you'd make £4,800. Finally, imagine then you did some work improving cross and up sell at the checkout and you managed to improve the average order value to £25. You'd then make a sales turnover of £6,000. Little improvements make huge differences. That's why some shops do far better than others on the internet.

Post-sale to dos

But it's not all about sales is it? Once you've got a sale or two you need to ensure your logistical operation is well thought through from the management of stock, especially if it is perishable like ours, the speed and efficiency of the order processing and packaging routines and of course having a well-priced, reliable, effective courier(s).

We've always said, Pong is a cheese delivery company i.e. half of our offering is the quality and variety of the product, and the other half is getting it quickly and safely to our customers. This therefore puts a lot of emphasis on the quality of the couriers, so it's a good idea to keep trying different companies until you're happy with one key one that serves the majority of your needs (naturally you'll have others for different requirements, for example international shipments).

DON'T FORGET

- The increased number of online purchases won't change the marketplace entirely, it will simply re-aligned buyers' relationships with the brands and products with which they already have a positive relationship
- From the beginning of the customer journey, for example sitting on the sofa, at a laptop and entering 'order cheese delivery' into Google, all the way through to the text beside the 'Checkout Now' button at the end of the order process, every stage is an opportunity to convert or not convert a sale
- Little improvements make huge differences. That's why some shops do far better than others on the internet
- Once you've got a sale or two you need to ensure your logistical operation is well thought through, from the management of stock, especially if it is perishable like ours, the speed and efficiency of the order processing and packaging routines, and of course having a well-priced, reliable, effective courier(s)

Final word...

Finally, be careful what you wish for! From the sales example above it's easy to see how things could get quickly out of hand if you're not set up to deal with higher volumes. Selling on the internet is not just about going for the highest possible number; the real art to creating and growing a successful online business is managing the volumes of sales and their fulfilment at the same time. This is particularly pronounced when you're selling perishable products with a finite shelf life, such as cheese, and stock management becomes critical to the success of the business.

> "Selling on the internet is not just about going for the highest possible number; the real art to creating and growing a successful online business is managing the volumes of sales and their fulfilment at the same time"



> "Use social media to reach a wider audience with your e-shots. Merge web and social platforms - use one to connect to another and drive more sign-ups which in turn allows you to communicate your message to a wider audience. For small businesses this is key - it, in turn, drives word of mouth communication about what you are offering."
>
> **VHARI RUSSELL, THE FOOD MARKETING EXPERTS**

HOW TO BECOME A SOCIAL MEDIA WHIZZ

Tap into the opportunities that social media brings and stay ahead of the pack with these top tips

These days social media needs to be a core component in any food and drink business strategy. With millions of users across Twitter, Facebook, Instagram and LinkedIn there are plenty of opportunities to market your business. Each platform is individual and will therefore need a different strategy.

Key platforms at a glance:

LinkedIn - a valuable tool for professional networking
Twitter - great for sharing snappy news updates
Instagram - a popular platform for image-led content such as video and photos
Facebook - a hub for customer interaction and creating a community

What's the aim?

The first step is to establish what you wish to gain from your social media platforms. Is it to attract new customers into the shop? Do you need to promote a new element of the business, such as an online delivery service? Would you like to keep customers up-to-date on new stock? There will be some promotions that stay consistent but others that will develop over time. For example, you may wish to create a dedicated campaign to promote new lines in the run-up to Christmas. Each platform will require slightly different language and content to get this message across.

Know your audience

Taking the time to find out who your audience are, and most importantly what they want, is the key to social media. After all, there's no point spending time and potentially money on a campaign that isn't suitable for your audience. Shane Ryan, founder of plant-based food business fiid, says, "Think about how you can add value to your customer rather than blatantly selling. What are they interested in? What can you offer them that will be interesting, entertaining or both?" Conduct some research and discover what content your audience needs from you.

Keeping a connection

Once you know who you want to reach out to and you're creating some great content, it's important to engage with your audience. This is made up of existing and potential customers, so keeping a consistent dialogue is essential. Be sure to post regularly across all platforms to keep your business at the forefront of people's minds and engage. Reply back to reviews and comments quickly and efficiently and be open to suggestions.

Arun Kapil, founder and CEO of Green Saffron, says, "For us the key with social media has been making it a place of dialogue, engaging with our followers and trying (and hopefully succeeding!) to provide them with the content they want. Instagram and Facebook have been invaluable to us – our followers post their interests, the trends they are following etc, and from that we can begin to identify ways in which Green Saffron can meet their expectations. It is time consuming, but listening to our followers on social media is really worthwhile."

Shane concludes, "At fiid we consistently get our most engagement when we open up about the business, issues we are facing and showcase our amazing team."

CASE STUDY: LITTLE TUMMY

Co-founders Nadine Hellmann and Sophie Niedermaier-Patramani on why social media is an essential tool for start-ups and beyond:

"For us, as a young company with a limited marketing budget, social media has been essential in building our brand and community and generating sales. From early on, it has given us the means to spread the word about the benefits of Little Tummy's cold-pressed baby foods, and most importantly, communicate with parents and support them on their weaning journey. In terms of social selling, I've experienced that a satisfied customer who loves your product and can identify with your brand values is very likely to be one of your best spokespeople. Giving these customers a platform to talk about your product can be a great organic way to boost your sales, and win more fans for your brand. Today, people trust in the experiences of their fellows, and if they see that others enjoy using your product, they will be more likely to engage with your brand too! Therefore, leveraging organically created content of your customers by reposting it is one of the best (and free) marketing tools that young companies can use to drive sales."

MAXIMISE YOUR WEBSITE

With more consumers shopping online than ever before, now's the time to make sure your website is profit-ready

The first step to making your website the powerhouse of opportunity it has the potential to be is assessing your approach to it. If you consider it an add-on needing the occasional update to keep it from being out-of-date, chances are it won't be bringing the numbers to your sales sheets that you're after. Instead, if you approach it as an important arm of your business, therefore applying time and investment into getting it right, you'll be on the right track for boosting your business in a newly profitable way.

First up, it's important to consider how you want to present your business to existing and potential customers. Remember that your website could be the first port of call for your customer base – whether they're looking for opening times, wanting to get in touch or hoping to check out your product range – so it's worth spending time and funds on getting it right.

Now's the time to spruce up your website. "You might already have great content," says Audrey Madden of White Bear Studio. "If this is the case, give it a spring clean, spruce it up, and revive old evergreen content. This will help you score higher in the search engines." A bit of direct, personable contact with your audience could be a winner if you have some spare time on your hands. "This type of content marketing is usually extremely time consuming and hard to keep consistent, but now is your chance to do it right and snatch that spot on the first page of Google.

"If you need to know two things about SEO, it's this: write long form content (Google likes 1,800 words – yes, that's a lot), and keep to a consistent schedule (even if that just means one article per month)", she advises.

"All of the pieces of the digital commerce puzzle must fit together to truly optimise every step of the customer journey," explains Ciaran Bollard, CEO of Kooomo.

"Online is increasingly used as a purchasing channel, but it is often used in the research process, even if a consumer chooses to buy through a store." It's worth looking into hosting platforms which are flexible enough to adapt to a changing stock catalogue, adapt pricing in line with stock levels and easily manage promotions. "These are all crucial requirements for successful retailers," says Ciaran.

When it comes to the 'customer journey' on your website, keep it as easy to navigate as possible. "Offer meal solutions or boxes of fruit and vegetables," suggests Vhari Russell of Food Marketing Experts, in doing so "taking away the need for customers to make more decisions and choices."

Make it mobile

We all know about SEO (Search Engine Optimisation) by now, but have you considered mobile optimisation? "With over 30 million British consumers using smart devices – for example, mobile phones and tablets – to shop so far this year, it's important to make your website easy to use on these devices in order to avoid frustrating or losing this customer base," says Dan Jones of Search Laboratory. "Mobile optimisation can be as big as a full website design or as small as prioritising key content on a page," he explains.

While you're making your site mobile user-friendly, look into mobile payment options such as Apple Pay or PayPal - "mobile payments make it easier for consumers to purchase goods online," explains Dan, "and therefore reduce checkout abandonment, increasing sales and repeat customers".



KEY CONSIDERATIONS

Courtesy of Ciaran Bollard, CEO of Kooomo

- A key element to consider when choosing an e-commerce platform to accompany your bricks and mortar store is whether your site incorporates distributed order management (DOM). This allows brands to take control of all their sales channels and choose the most cost-effective fulfilment method. Retailers should consider this level of sophisticated fulfilment if they want to maintain their margins
- Consider stores as warehouses too. Sometimes it makes sense to ship stock straight from a store, especially if consumers want it delivered quickly or to specific pick-up points
- Omnichannel can only be fully effective when in-store staff are as good as the online service agents. Sales assistants should spend more time connecting with shoppers and be ready to tend to their personal needs. Ensure your staff are familiarised with your website and can offer to support the same way as they would online



"If you make it hard for your customer to give you money, in my experience with an e-commerce business and also as someone who shops considerably online, they'll just go somewhere else"





KEEP IT CLEAR

VHARI RUSSELL, FOOD MARKETING EXPERTS

"It is a time in which to ensure you have your copy as simple, informative and useful as possible. It would also be worth looking at your SEO and keywords. All the delivery companies are doing their best to deliver as quickly as possible under enormous pressure, so don't make false promises if you aren't delivering yourself. Keep messaging really clear, and simple to avoid any confusion about deliveries and order dates."

CASE STUDY

ARUN KAPIL, CEO OF GREEN SAFFRON

"The flexibility of being able to offer products to almost anyone, anywhere in the world, at any time, has given us a really strong revenue stream. We worked closely with web developers and SEO experts, and continue to do so — this is something we needed to outsource to ensure the customer experience was seamless. I would strongly recommend this as being something worth investing in; we wanted our customers to know that buying from us would be a seamless process, we would be a brand they can trust."









IN A HURRY?

SHANE RYAN, FOUNDER OF PLANT BASED FOOD BUSINESS FIID, TALKS US THROUGH HIS TIMESAVING HACKS

If you're doing things in a hurry, look to an e-commerce platform that you know does everything you need it to. Some of the biggest e-commerce brands in the world are built on platforms such as Shopify and they couldn't make it any easier to get started.

I think simplicity is the key when going online. You have to put yourself in the shoes of your customer and consider their journey through the path to purchase. Is it clunky? Are there too many steps? Is it difficult to find how to buy on your site?

The chances are that if someone has landed on your site organically, they're likely looking to purchase. Make this easy for them and ensure that the site is optimised for sales instead of content – a clear 'buy' or 'shop' button is key. If you make it hard for your customer to give you money, in my experience with an e-commerce business and also as someone who shops considerably online, they'll just go somewhere else. If you can get your customer to the payment screen in as little steps as possible they will likely keep coming back.

It's easy to rush and throw every single piece of inventory online in a time of panic. Instead, again think of your customer. You don't want to overwhelm them with options. Why not consider starting with your top sellers to give you a chance to get comfortable with order processing, online payments, fulfillment and shipping before gradually adding more if the demand is there?

Finally, hidden fees suck. We all know that. There's nothing worse than getting to your cart in an online shop and realising that the shipping costs are twice the price of the item, or worse, that the store doesn't deliver to your postcode/country! Be transparent about shipping and costs from the outset so as not to waste your customers' time. At fiid we've built the cost of shipping into our online price so we can offer free shipping on all orders, and our customers constantly tell us how much they appreciate this.

HOW TO BECOME AN EMAIL MASTER

Customer inboxes are a relatively untapped resource for community, sales boosts and shopper-retailer relationships. Here's how to maximise their potential



Since the emergence of social media as a marketing platform, attention has waned on the opportunities that email presents. The rollout of GDPR (Global Data Protection Regulation) means that every single person who receives your emails has opted in to do so, so ignore its potential at your peril. From weekly stock updates to community noticeboards, the variety of content you can include in your outgoing emails is limitless – so get creative!

Note: for further information on GDPR, and to check if your business is compliant with the regulations that came into force in the UK in May 2018, visit the Government's Guide to the General Data Protection Regulation online.

Getting started

Your website host will most likely have email options as part of a package, but to really maximise the potential of email marketing experts recommend stepping out of gmail-style systems into providers such as MailChimp and CampaignMonitor. These come with perks including templates and customisation, so you can be confident that your mail-outs fit with your established aesthetic.

Once you've chosen the provider which best suits your business, it's time to get your database up to scratch. Attract customer email addresses by offering something tangible, be it an exclusive discount or a special recipe, or tap into their desire to be part of something by inviting them to be member of a 'club'. Get the message out on your social channels, pop a sign-up sheet on your counter, and host and attend events.

Cash in on the personal touch

As consumers choose to shop at independents thanks to the personal connection between business and shopper, your knowledge of your customers' wants and needs should tailor the content you send out to them. The days of batch-sending generic content is over; instead, look to your sales reports, check out the latest trends and think seasonally in order to make your words really speak to current – and new – customers.

Schedule, schedule, schedule

While dedicating a chunk of time to planning out email content over the coming days and weeks may seem an inefficient use of time – ad hoc is quicker, surely? – think back to the times you've been wracking your brain for something, anything, to send out to your database so as to maintain momentum. Think of this as an exercise in campaign-planning: what do you want to gain from this newsletter? Is that mission worth a series of messages, and if so, how are you going to spread it over the course of three, four, five outgoing emails?

For example, say your mission is to sell the remainder of Easter stock left on your shelves and in your stock room. Sales promotions and discounts can only get you so far; consider recipe suggestions – complete with attractive photography – and take these products out of their season-specific context (i.e. Colomba makes for a deliciously Italian-inspired bread and butter pudding, whatever the time of year).

Utilise email as a business tool

If your website has e-commerce capabilities, it's worth stepping beyond weekly newsletters if you want to really maximise sales. If you're spotting a trend for customers filling their online baskets then leaving your site without paying, consider sending them a polite nudge – it might be just what's needed to pique their interest again and get them spending. "Cart abandonment emails are vital for generating sales as they reignite a consumer's interest," explains Ciaran Bollard, CEO of Kooomo. "For every cart abandonment email that is sent, an average of $8.21 is generated in revenue." Ciaran's advice: "Don't wait too long to get in contact. Studies show that emails that are sent within one to two hours of when a user leaves a site drive 105% more revenue than if you were to wait 24 hours to send the same email."

72% OF CONSUMERS WOULD **CHOOSE** TO RECEIVE **MARKETING CONTENT** VIA **EMAIL**

SOURCE: MARKETINGSHERPA

17% PREFER TO **RECEIVE PROMOTIONS** THROUGH OTHER CHANNELS

Emails consistently produce the highest ROI (Return On Investment) for retailers – an estimated 4,300%

SOURCE: DATA & MARKETING ASSOCIATION

DON'T FORGET

If your newsletter links back to your website, ensure that your site carries the same tone and aesthetic and that it's easy to navigate. Clear signposting is invaluable, and there are plenty of other tips to make your website function as well as possible – check out our guide on p8 for more information and tips.



MEET THE MASTER OF GROCERY DELIVERY

Guy Singh-Watson, the founder of Riverford Organic Farmers, shares his need-to-know advice on setting your business apart from larger-scale competitors

Since its launch in 1987, Riverford Organic Farmers has been at the forefront of home delivery in the fresh produce sector. The business is now synonymous with its industry, but it's success didn't come easily – it has found itself stepping beyond practical farm-to-doorstep logistics to learn how it can differentiate itself from the likes of Amazon Fresh and other similar business models, primarily through questioning the ethics of what it does. A demanding industry this may be, but success mustn't come at the expense of staff welfare and sustainability.

SF What are the challenges of home delivery?

GW We employ people on proper contracts, pay our NI, tax, pensions, sick pay, holidays, apprentice levy etc. Getting to someone's door costs us £3 to £5. Amazon pay their self employed drivers about £1. We are trying to compete in an immoral exploitative industry as an ethical business where the hard and dirty work is outsourced to the unregulated gig economy. We need to be very good at the details to survive and be able to show convincingly how we are different.

SF How does Riverford make the process of home delivery as sustainable as possible?

GW Denying choice. Choice is always the enemy of environmental and social sustainability. To get that time slot delivery the planet and an underclass of delivery and fulfilment workers are being exploited. To offer times delivery slots would increase the carbon intensity of delivery around fourfold. Additionally, our staff would have to be on flexible contracts to cope with the unpredictability. Demanding and fulfilling 365 day availability of every fruit and vegetable comes at huge environmental cost and robs us of a cultural connection to the seasons, nature and agriculture. I am far from convinced that the exercising of choice by the wealthy makes them any happier, healthier, time rich or more fulfilled; I suspect it has more to do with how we define ourselves under the heavy influence of consumerism. So far very few companies are willing to argue that restraining freedom is an essential part of sustainability.

WHAT ARE THE STEPS TO SETTING UP A SUCCESSFUL HOME DELIVERY SERVICE?

- Don't underestimate the nitty gritty of handling low value, low-margin produce with a short shelf life that often needs refrigeration
- The website, branding, IT etc. are important, but don't assume the boring stuff will do itself just because you are an online business
- A really good, easy-to-use website and associated database is crucial in removing all possible barriers to purchase

HOW DOES THE RIVERFORD ENSURE CUSTOMER SATISFACTION?

- Logging complaints and customer retention. Don't think that absence of complaints means your customers are happy or will stay with you, especially if your product is demanding to use
- You need a balance of doing the basics very well with occasional delight, personal discovery and new and rewarding experiences
- Propensity to recommend to others is the best measure

> "We are trying to compete in an immoral exploitative industry as an ethical business where the hard and dirty work is outsourced to the unregulated gig economy. We need to be very good at the details to survive and be able to show convincingly how we are different"

HOW TO GET HOME DELIVERY UP & RUNNING ASAP

Whether you already offer a limited service and want to expand, or are completely new to the world of ordering and delivery, our expert tips will help you make those first steps and decide what's right for your business

WORDS: NATASHA LOVELL-SMITH



DARTS FARM BROTHERS

In a very short space of time, the coronavirus crisis has completely changed how shops of all shapes and sizes operate. While indie food sellers are classed as essential businesses, retailers are understandably keen to protect their staff and customers by keeping physical interaction in-store to a minimum. And with many unable to leave their homes at all, a lot of small retailers are having to quickly revamp their existing business models to include some form of delivery service.

Standing out from the competition

From the start of the coronavirus crisis, the first instinct of shoppers has been to head straight to supermarket websites. As a result – and as the situation has progressed in severity – all of the major multiples have been overwhelmed with online orders. Delivery and click and collect spots are nearly impossible to secure on any of the supermarket websites (Ocado currently only has 400 available nationwide), customers have to queue to get on the Morrisons and Ocado websites, while Riverford and Abel & Cole are't taking orders from new customers.

The likelihood is the multiples will eventually begin to readjust to the increased demand, but in the meantime, independents have a unique opportunity to make themselves indispensable to local shoppers – and attract loyal new customers who previously may not have been familiar with their services. Whether that's by offering free local delivery, sending out creative hampers with innovative themes, getting involved in community activities or simply being at the other end of the phone to take orders and payments, there are plenty of ways savvy retailers can make the best of a tricky situation.

Paul Hargreaves, chief executive of Cotswold Fayre, thinks indies should make the most of the chance to offer reassurance and comfort to consumers. "Shopping in supermarkets over the past two weeks has become a frightening experience for many older people, and local shops have provided a service that enables people to stay safe in their homes. In addition, independent retailers have managed to keep stock on their shelves better than most of the supermarkets," said Paul.

Darts Farm in Exeter are supporting their customers by offering free home delivery to over 70 year olds or collection in their car park. "Once we have cracked the essential food items for our local community we will be looking at how we can begin to cheer people up in this hard time. Our 'Send Some Cheer' post box hampers are a box of artisan treats that can be popped in the post and delivered to anyone that may need some cheer," says owner Michael Dart.

"If you're just starting to offer delivery, keep it simple and offer free delivery for a small local area," advised Vhari Russell at Food Marketing Experts. "Keep your order process and forms small and simple: consumers need basics. It's not Christmas so offering a basic list of products that you feel assured you can get is key," she added.

In Malton, North Yorkshire, design agency Ten Fathoms have set up an online directory called Malton Delivers, listing details of all businesses in the area that are offering delivery services and alternative shopping arrangements.

> "If you're just starting to offer delivery, keep it simple and offer free delivery for a small local area. Keep your order process and forms small and simple: consumers need basics"
>
> VHARI RUSSELL, FOOD MARKETING EXPERTS

The website is simple but effective, listing contact details and opening hours of each retailer, as well as what they can currently offer.

Donna Middleditch at Ten Fathoms said: "We saw first-hand that there has been a disconnect between the larger supermarkets – which have fast been running out of stock – and the smaller local businesses, who have plenty of stock but have perhaps seen less footfall in recent weeks. We wanted to help the local community by setting up a hub for them to use as a directory when ordering food. We hope that by using our skills in design we can do our bit to help."

Dominic Allport, insights director at market research company The NPD Group, believes that during uncertain times, shoppers want to use trusted, familiar businesses. He said, "We know from anecdotal evidence in China in January that consumers continued to support foodservice outlets that they knew well, and that there was still strong demand for food and beverages that can be consumed off the premises. Any local outlet offering delivery, drive through or click and collect will be able to mitigate some of the effects of the inevitable business downturn prompted by the coronavirus outbreak."

Your options: an overview

Liam Patton is a director at digital marketing agency Mayfly. He works with a range of small businesses, helping them to raise awareness and drive traffic to support online sales.

He said, "The quickest and most popular routes for food and drink retailers to sell takeaway meals online would be to add their business to the likes of Deliveroo & Just Eat. However, this means paying upfront fees to join, and then 15-30% commissions on sales. A caveat here is that businesses in rural locations also




ANTHONY DAVISON, BIG BARN

might not be covered by these services," he explained.

"A more affordable route can be to utilise and develop an existing website. Food and drink retailers can add an e-commerce store to their existing website. Although it can take time to build an ecommerce shop and have the merchant account (Paypal or Stripe) created, this is a streamlined way to take orders 24/7 and sets retailers up for the short and long-term,"

And if you don't have the time or finances to invest in an e-commerce shop? "If a business is short on time and budget, the quickest solution would be to add a chat service to the site that the owners can operate from their phone, and then take orders via the chat window. Payment could then be taken over the phone or by PayPal. It's a low cost and quick method of adapting in these unpredictable times."

He adds: "In either case, it's important for these businesses to update their social media channels


MALTON

and their 'Google my Business' listing to let their audience know that they are taking orders online, and offering home deliveries."

Using a third party

If you're keen to get cracking as soon as possible, another option for getting an ordering system up and running quickly is to use a third party website such as Big Barn, a local food hub with 8,700 producers and retailers on its Local Food Map, plus 20,000 registered consumers. Businesses can create their own profile and have the option of selling online via the website's marketplace, advertised as 'the Amazon of local food'. "We can set up the shop, local delivery restrictions, promotion and also offer advice to get the service viable quickly," said founder Anthony Davison, a fifth generation farmer who set up Big Barn almost 20 years ago.

Since the coronavirus outbreak, Anthony has seen web traffic increase from 2,000 visitors per day to 10,000 due to extra demand for local food. "In response, we've just set up hub technology so that producers can team up with other local sellers to offer one shopping basket and one delivery." He recommends keeping things small and manageable at first, expanding only when you have capacity. "We have also added a 'local delivery only' facility so that those on the map with online shops can limit orders to customers in a set local delivery area. This will help local shops quickly and easily offer a small range of essentials and deliver to those self isolating locally," he adds.

The fee is reasonable and cheaper in the short term than investing in your own e-commerce system. "We like to charge £10 +VAT per month for large businesses, dropping to £40 +VAT a year for small or seasonal businesses. We also charge a 6% commission for those who have shops on Big Barn, but give 2% back to any affiliate websites promoting our map and marketplace," he adds.

These are stressful times for any small food business, but there are plenty of options currently available to keep retailers afloat, whatever your budget or timeframe. Companies are reporting huge amounts of goodwill and support in the local community – something that will hopefully continue long after the crisis is over.

