



The ultimate guide to boosting footfall for your business

Contents

Chapter 1 - Plenty of Opportunities

Chapter 2 - Looking the part

1. What does your brand say about you?
2. Does your shop have curb appeal?
3. Address your interior
4. Boost your marketing

Chapter 3 - What's on offer?

1. Don't sacrifice quality for cost
2. Become streetwise
3. Think about your offering

Chapter 4 - Create a buzz

1. Create a great 'user' experience online and offline
2. Get social
3. Build customer loyalty

Chapter 5 - Think big

1. Broaden your horizons
2. Partner with local businesses
3. Engage with your local community

Chapter 6 - People power

1. Invest in your staff
2. Get your employees involved

Chapter 7 - Case Studies

1. Benny T's - Falkirk
2. Cheddar Deli - London
3. The Dodo Micropub - London



Chapter 1

Plenty of Opportunities

As a bricks and mortar business, the more people you get through your door, the more successful you'll be. And that goes for whatever the size of your business, because it's far better to have people overflowing onto the street or queueing down the road than having tumbleweed blowing around your shop floor.

Although the prevailing economic landscape is a little uncertain, there are still plenty of opportunities for shop owners who find the right niche and take a smart approach. And there are key growth areas.

For instance, Local Data Company research released earlier this year (2017) revealed that since 2011 the number of cafés, fast food outlets and restaurants have gone up by more than 6,000 across England, Scotland and Wales.

The figures were collated by people walking up and down the country's high streets and show the largest growth areas to be lounge bars (up by 116%), juice bars (up by 46%) and speciality restaurants. There was also a 31% increase in the number of coffee shops.

Whatever business route you take, growing footfall is vital if you are to achieve your long-term goals, and maximise your profits. With so much competition out there, encouraging people to choose your business over someone else's takes thought and planning. The Ultimate Guide to Boosting Footfall For Your Business is packed full of hints and tips to point you in the right direction.



Chapter 2

Looking the part

Creating an enticing look and feel is one crucial way to grab people's attention. No matter how good the food, drink or service are at your establishment, you're going to be facing an uphill battle if you don't look the part. Here are the most important things you need to focus on:

What does your brand say about you?

Your first challenge when looking to drive footfall is making sure your customers can actually find your store. What visual clues are you giving to your first time customers? Is it clear what you offer? Does your shop include an outdoor seating area?



Clear branding ensures that your customers know what to expect from your venue. Some can initially be put off by an outlet with no identity as it can be seen as too much of a 'risk' to enter, especially if it's for an important occasion. Having a distinct brand that's simple but noticeable tells your customers who you are and what you're all about – in that way it helps to allay any reservation people may otherwise have about entering.

A simple analogy to keep in mind when you're creating your branding is the old adage: ***"You don't buy a drill necessarily because you want a drill, but because you want a hole in a wall."*** This same principle

works with restaurants, cafés and bars... you don't serve food, drink or fashion because your customers simply want sustenance or something to wear, you provide them because they are looking for an experience.

Understanding the experience you offer customers is key to your success – this can be anything from a big vibrant venue with lots of life and lots of choice to a simple place for people to relax and kick back; and everything in between. Find the customers seeking that experience and target your branding in their direction.



Does your shop have curb appeal?

As we mentioned at the top of this guide, competition on the high street can be fierce. The reality is that first impressions count, so if you want to entice people through your door it's vital you make your shop as attractive as possible.



How your shop looks from the outside can be the difference between someone visiting or just passing by. It doesn't have to cost the earth to draw people in, and you can often see big increases in footfall by making very small changes.

Clear signage goes without saying, but

other details can also make a big difference, too, such as plants and shrubs, clean pathways (if you're set back from the road) and tidy smoking areas. Even little things like leaving the door open will make you seem more welcoming, and encourage customers to enter – although you might want to rethink this during the winter.

On top of this, window displays are a nice touch. Make sure they're as smart as they can be, and in keeping with your brand and the season. If you have a Christmas display up in February, there is something wrong.

Address your interior

Of course, what use is curb appeal if you don't have the interior to match. Going back to your branding meeting your customers' expectations of the experience they are looking for, the interior also needs



to reflect this – stark and minimalist for example is not going to encourage people looking for a more intimate place. Again, delivering this doesn't have to be a huge expense. For bars, cafes and restaurants, simple changes to the positioning of your furniture or access to your bar can breathe new life into your venue and increase the longevity of a visit. Ensuring your outlet is neat, tidy and uncluttered, giving your product – and your customers – space to breathe, will make for a more enjoyable shopping experience. And ultimately this all brings more people in and puts additional money in the cash draw.

Boost your marketing

Finally, it is important that potential customers know who you are, and where to find you. In order to achieve this you need to make sure that your marketing efforts are as comprehensive and as targeted as possible.

If the majority of your business is conducted through bricks-and-mortar premises, consider ways that you can target your marketing to the local community. This might be through direct mail, adverts in local papers, or geo-targeted online marketing*. Increasing awareness of your business is key to increasing footfall – and yet it is often overlooked by business owners.

* Geo-targeting is the method of determining the location of a website visitor and delivering different content to them based on that location – such as country, region, city, post code, organisation, IP address, ISP or other criteria.



Chapter 3

What's on offer?

What you offer not just in terms of experience but also your physical product which will have an effect on your footfall...whether you're cooking up a unique menu, producing outstanding pizza or specialising in the best coffee in town you need to have stand out appeal. Here's some things you need to think about:

Don't sacrifice quality for cost

Promotions are always a good way to get customers in the door, but don't get carried away. Try to resist the temptation to cut costs by compromising on quality – you're not going to gain any customers that way. The crucial thing here is to justify the prices you charge, not lower them. The only way you can do that is by maintaining quality and not letting it drop.



Become streetwise

Many businesses forget that their shop isn't just confined to the four walls of their venue. There's nothing stopping you from heading out onto the street in search of customers.

Try offering samples or tasters to potential customers passing by – this can be a great way of enticing them into your venue, and building brand awareness at the same time. This is particularly useful (and easy) for businesses offering food or drink – just think about how popular free coffee samples are outside major chains.



Think about your offer

It may seem obvious, but the best way to ensure that customers keep returning to your establishment is to offer them something they can't get at home. A specialised drinks selection, quality food offering, some form of entertainment...there are countless possibilities. But if they can buy that drink or item of clothing on discount in a supermarket, or cook the same meal cheaper and better at home, there's not much incentive to go out.

If you're not entirely happy with your offering – or you're just feeling a little stuck – then consider making a visit to your competitors to see what they're doing. It's fine to take some inspiration from competing businesses operating in your area and then do things better. Sometimes you can get the best ideas from outlets who don't sell the same thing as you, so cast the net as wide as possible. Also, your EPOS system can provide you with more insight into who your customers are and what they are looking for.

Chapter 4

Create a buzz

The Holy Grail of marketing any business, is ‘word of mouth’ – getting your customers to do your marketing for you. Here are a number of ways you can get out there and boost your engagement with customers, and hopefully turn them into advocates.



Create a great ‘user’ experience online and offline

Making people feel comfortable and welcome in your venue, and giving them something they can’t get at home is one thing, but you also need to focus on making sure they have a great experience when they are there; which means friendly, attentive staff and great service.

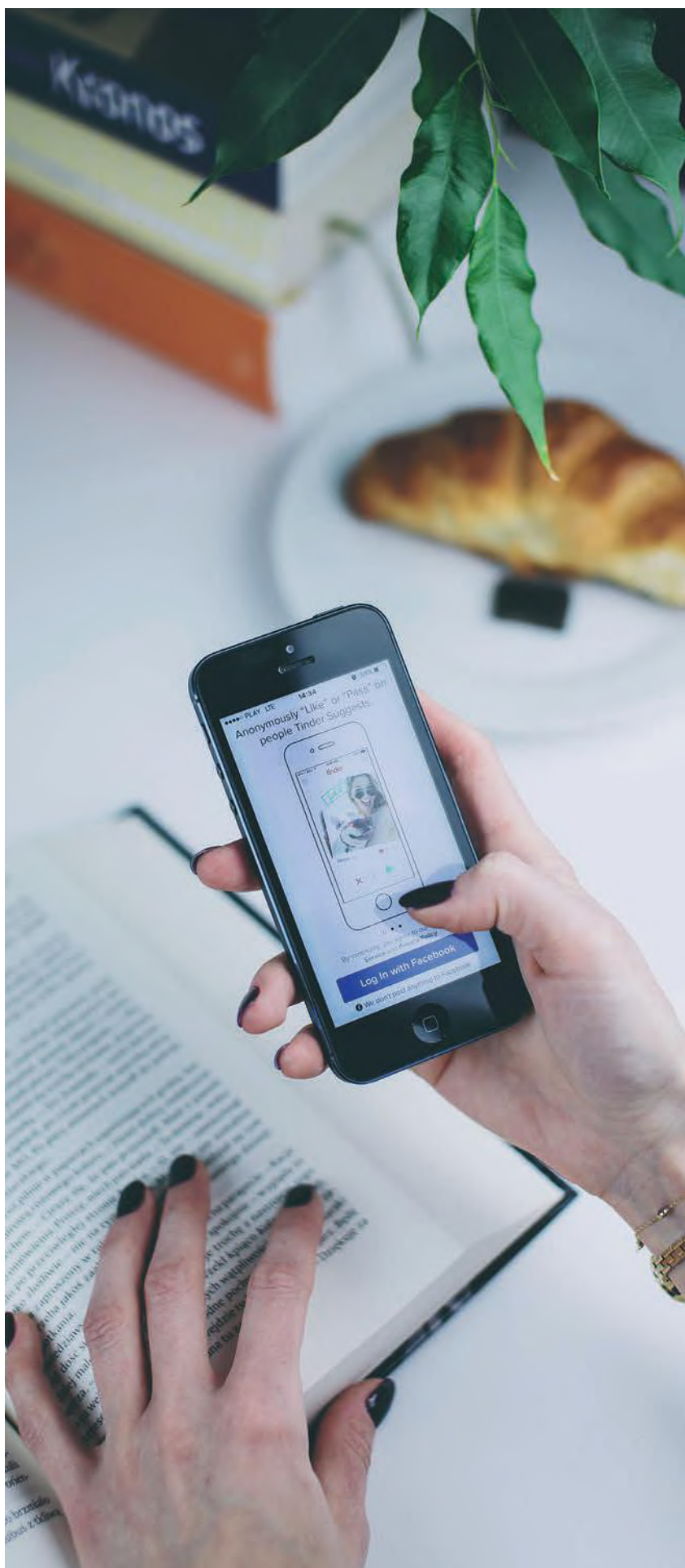
That same sense of experience also needs to carry over to your website. Today, the website is king, so if people find you first online or want to check you out before coming in, you need to ensure that your website reflects your real-world experience. You need a site that is responsive (works on mobile and

computer), has simple and intuitive navigation, and enables people to get to the information they want as quickly and easily as possible. In short, you need a seamless user experience. Having an easy to navigate website is essential to having a successful online presence, providing a core basis for any internet marketing recipe.

Get social

Social media has been booming over the past few years, yet many venue owners and businesses are still hesitant to embrace this world. However, sites like Twitter and Facebook allow businesses to build personal relationships with their customers. It's also a great way to seek valuable customer feedback, which ultimately helps you improve your offering.

According to research company Flint, ***66% of UK adults use social media everyday. Among those users, Facebook and YouTube are still the gold star performers with 78% and 85% of respondents using them respectively.*** Other channels to take note of include Twitter (45%), Instagram (29%) and Pinterest (29%). Also, according to Hubspot, visuals are becoming increasingly important on social. On Twitter, for example, tweets



with images receive 150% more retweets than those without. This offers you a great opportunity to share enticing food and drink imagery with target audiences.

So ensure your brand is active within the channels your customers, their followers and their influencers can be found. How do you discover where your customers are? Ask them!



But remember, once you start a relationship with your customers via social media, it's vital to be consistent – better to stay off social media than start a campaign that's out of date and out of touch with your audience. If you're not big on social yourself, or don't have the time to get involved, why not look among your staff; you're likely to have someone who's already active on social media and can help you drive your presence.

Build customer loyalty

Creating a loyalty scheme is a great way of getting a buzz going among existing customers and increasing footfall at the same time. Let's face it, repeat customers are the bedrock of any successful business, so think carefully about ways you can keep them coming back for more. For example, you could offer discounts or incentives to regulars like a points system, where customers

can redeem points collected against purchases – this can be as simple as a stamp card or as sophisticated as an app-based system integrated into your EPOS solution. Schemes like this can be particularly useful for businesses that have direct competitors in the area, as they help to differentiate your firm.



It's also important to make sure that your customers know about what you're doing. Most customers are too busy to search for offers or discounts related to your venue, so instead of waiting for them to come to you, go to them. Collect email addresses by offering an incentive and use their contact information to expand your mailing list. Creating your own opt-in customer database is highly beneficial. Collect as much contact information as you can, along with the all important permission to keep them on a mailing list.

A monthly newsletter of upcoming events and offers will also help to keep your customers involved in your business and encourage them to spread the word.



Chapter 5

Think big

Sometimes you need to go that little bit further to raise awareness of who you are and what you're doing. Here are some ideas to help get you started:

Broaden your horizons

Look at other ways that could help you to get people through your doors. For example, depending on how big your venue is you may be able to diversify your services by reinventing a space that's always empty – perhaps you could

use it as a meeting space or a function room? Alternatively, if you offer food or drink, why not consider starting a delivery service for nearby offices. Things like this will help you develop new revenue streams, as well as increasing your reputation and commitment to your customers' needs.

Partner with local businesses

While it's common for all businesses to presume that they are in competition with every other establishment in their area, this isn't always the case. Instead of looking at others on your street as rivals, consider how you can work together for mutual benefit. In Ealing for example, a local microbrewery has opened but they don't serve food, so it has struck up an arrangement with the fish and chip shop across the road that allows their customers to buy food there and eat them in the bar. They have also partnered with a local cheese shop to run several cheese tasting evenings. The only limit is your imagination and a high street that works together will benefit all venues involved and expose them to new customers.

Engage with your local community

Your best source of repeat business is your local community, so the more you engage with them the better. There is lots you can do to generate goodwill and followers locally, from promoting an open-house policy for parents to supporting and sponsoring local clubs and schools.

You can also look at holding different events at your establishment that fit in with your brand and the overall experience you want to create, such as poetry evenings, books clubs, cooking classes and more.

Chapter 6

People power

How many times have you heard it said that your people are your greatest asset? Probably from every business blog or book ever published. And why do they say that? Because it's true. Here are two ways you can harness the power of your people to drive footfall.

Invest in your staff

Your employees are the face of your company as far as your customers are concerned, particularly in the retail environment. This means that everything they say or do contributes to the overall image your customer has of your business. This means staff training – and retraining – is imperative. Make sure your people are aware of your company's brand and ethos, and that they know how to deal with complaints and understand the importance of the 'customer is always right' philosophy. Great staff will help to create a great reputation for your business.



Get your staff involved

Having fun and engaging with your staff can be an excellent way to help your business grow. Create a culture where staff can share ideas and are rewarded for their efforts. Holding occasional training evenings is essential to keep them up to speed, but turn them into 'thank you' events by offering free food and drink and telling them how much you appreciate their help and support.

Organise regular brainstorming sessions where they can share their ideas. Showing that you care about their views and acting on them will give them real ownership and pride in your business, which is the key to encouraging them to go that extra mile to deliver great service and be committed and loyal to your cause.

Remember that many of the world's most successful companies have been built on the ideas of their staff, so listening in to them could well do far more for your business than you think.



Chapter 7

Case studies



Mark Mulholland
Benny T's, Falkirk
www.bennyts.co.uk

Benny T's is a fish and chip restaurant and takeaway in Falkirk – a short distance from the Falkirk Football Club ground. The restaurant offers takeaway food as well as dining facilities for up to 100 covers. Although coming from marketing and design backgrounds, Mark and his wife Dominique have been running Benny T's for the past 13 years.

Making the most of local connections

“One of the biggest ways we drive awareness and footfall locally is through our association with Falkirk FC,” explains Mark. “It’s a very family oriented club, which suits our own ethos so we sponsor the family stand. As part of this

we also have a number of advertising boards throughout the main and away stands as well as next to the goals so we get some great added exposure from that especially if the games are televised.”

Mark continues: “Local ties are really important for us to grow our business, and we work really closely with the club outside our commercial relationship. We’ve done a number of promotions with players such as sponsored pizzas and discounts if players score goals. This has lead to a spot on BBC Sport Scotland and has also been picked up by the Sun Sport.”

This is Mark’s biggest spend in terms of marketing and this is the third season they’ve run this, so it’s something that is working well for them.

Spreading the message

On top of this, Benny T’s also runs ads in the local press which means they not only get ads in the Falkirk Herald but also across three or four other areas as well. “To keep things fresh we like to change our ads around so it’s not the same running all the time,” says Mark. “If you run the same thing all the time people get used to it, changing things around means we don’t get overlooked.”

Although, as any local business owner will tell you, you get a lot of charity requests, unfortunately you can’t support them all. Mark tries to support the local community as much as he can in this way, but one big charity event they have a long-term relationship with is Mag’s Fish Supper Ceilidh. “This is a local breast cancer charity event,” explains Mark. “We’ve been supplying the fish suppers for this annual event for the past 13 years.”

On the tourist map

It's not just the locals who need to know about you though, and Mark also has a relationship with Visit Scotland. "Falkirk's Kelpies have become a big tourist attraction so being on the tourist map is definitely important for us," he adds. "We're a short distance from the Kelpies and can offer parking facilities as well... we had a coach of around 100 French tourists turn up one Monday so it's good business – fortunately they did warn us they were coming in advance."

Getting staff in on the act

"Social media is also something we're trying to get more involved with," says Mark. "Channels like Facebook and Twitter aren't my strong point, and you need to invest a lot of time in keeping conversations going. So we're looking at getting our staff involved. We have people that are very active on their own social media so it makes sense to use their skills."

One social channel where they have been trying to look, learn and listen is TripAdvisor. "You can't influence what goes on but you can listen and take on board any constructive criticism people may offer," says Mark. "Engaging with people if they've had a really good or bad experience shows we care about our customers and the experience they have."





Brent Wilkinson
Cheddar Deli – Northfields, West London
<https://cheddardeli.co.uk>

Cheddar Deli is a specialist cheese shop, which Brent started in August 2011. Here Brent suggests his top tips for boosting footfall.

1/ Do promotions

You need to do something to drive interest, something you're known for. Obviously this needs to tie in with what you specialise in. For us, one of the things we do is have our special cheese selection bags that we sell outside the shop during peak times.

2/ Specialise

Choose your specialisation and stick to it. You need to bear with it, because it might not work straight away. Find one or two things you do that are different to the big retailers – either product, service or promotions. It may be difficult to compete on price, but if you combine these things well then you can be looking at a good future.

3/ Get feedback

Google and TripAdvisor are excellent tools. People really do use these reviews to come and shop, so use this to your advantage. Offer people an incentive to give you a review – a free cup of coffee or, as in our case, a free cheese sample.

4/ Work with the people that work around you

Today as bricks and mortar businesses, you need to be part of a choice. So sell each other's services; team up with the local butcher or baker for example. If you're a shoe shop team up with a clothes shop. You have to utilise what you have around you and get to know the other people, don't operate your business in a bubble.

5/ Create a profile

Having a host or personality in your shop that people recognise is a great way to get known and get people in the door. It doesn't necessarily have to be the owner, but people buy into the personality and warmth and they connect with that person and ultimately your shop.

6/ Motivate your team

Keeping your staff engaged is crucial. Take them on tasting days, go out with them, whatever it takes to keep them encouraged, as it'll help keep ideas and inspiration flowing.

7/ Get to know your local community

If you build a human relation with the people around you, they'll be happier to spend money with you as they know where their money is going. It's worth spending time getting to know your local customers – for us 75-80% is repeat business.

Every business has its own customer base and it takes time to work out who really fits you best. And remember, it's a two-way street. You can spend a long time trying to educate people or spend a long time selling products that don't keep you in business. Finding the right path and people to keep you in business is crucial.

8/ Keep a bit of kid inside you...

This is very much a personal thing. I try to enjoy every day, learn something new and not think I know everything. I like to keep that going inside me and my team.



THE DODO MICROPUB

{52}



Lucy Do **The Dodo Micropub – Hanwell, West London** <http://thedodomicropub.com>

The Dodo, which opened six months ago, is a welcoming, independent, one-room pub in West London run by Lucy Do. Lucy left an extensive career in marketing/publishing to setup one of West London's first Micropubs.

Lucy explains some of the things that have helped the Dodo establish itself as a growing business in the local community.

Partner with local community events

So far we have partnered with the Hanwell Hootie, which is a free one-day music festival that takes over a number of different venues in Hanwell, and local businesses that are inline with what we're trying to do. One of the key

ones here is Weird Beard Brew Co, which is our local micro brewery. They have been brilliant helping put events together and giving special beers, all of which have helped to drive people through our doors.

With the Hanwell Hootie we worked closely with the organisers to come up with a way we could be involved that got round the fact we didn't have a music license – the idea we came up with was a silent disco. Initially, I was concerned it wouldn't work but we had a record-breaking day. It turned out to be a great way to get involved in a massive local event and put our own spin on it.

Another extremely successful event we did was with Weird Beard to celebrate Beer Day Britain on June 15th. They gave us nine cask ales, four of which were limited editions. The result was we were averaging around a pint and half per minute throughout the evening.

Use other businesses locally to fill any service gaps you may have

We don't do food at the Dodo but we do have a close relationship with The Golden Chip just up the road, and we allow people to get their food there and eat it in the pub. This is a great way of keeping people in the pub for that bit longer when otherwise they may have gone off somewhere else to eat. Naturally it also benefits the Golden Chip as well.

Make the most of your social channels

As a startup we don't have huge budgets to invest in advertising, so everything is done through our website and social channels – Facebook, Instagram and Twitter. These have all been really powerful for us. For our soft launch earlier in the year we just put out a few tweets and Facebook posts and we were full. This has really continued to be our biggest driver for exposure.

What other advice does Lucy have?

Stay on top of things locally – Word of mouth is our second biggest source of business. Also, don't allow yourself to have a bad day in terms of service as it will get out. So no slip ups.