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## **Food & Beverage - How to Attract More Group Bookings - By Ken Burgin**

Are your functions and event offers designed for tight budgets?

Packages, pricing and communication all need an urgent rethink. Easier, shorter and better value are the words that make customers happy - use this checklist to rework your offer for a much more competitive market.

\* Use the word FREE more often (and mean it). It's part of smart packaging, not a sign of weakness. Free use of AV equipment, free parking, a free dinner reward for the organiser. All those picky charges for lecterns, screens and extra coffee just make people upset. The secret is offering lots of 'soft dollar' items - they cost you little but have a high perceived value.

\* Rename basic corporate packages so they shout VALUE. The Everyday Package or the Fresh & Lean Lunch Deal are just what's needed by the PA on a budget. Economical but stylish food & beverage is the challenge for chefs and beverage managers - yes they can! And yes, you can still upsell extra items...

\* Keep the corporate customers happy. They want detailed invoicing, prompt replies and may need to see your written OH&S Policies. Use the Health & Safety Policy Format from this site, and grab all of the Catering & Functions Downloads for instant professionalism.

\* Kinder, gentler conditions. You still need a signature and deposit, but is it really essential to have final numbers 7 days in advance? A 'soft guarantee' allows for variations of one or two people - it maintains integrity and shows you are not cold-hearted. Would it hurt?

\* Update everyone's knowledge of costing and breakeven point. How many people do you need for the event to turn a profit? Factor in the fixed costs and variables - use one of the 6 Special Cost Calculators in the Download Library.

\* Better website promotion. 'If you can't be found online, you don't exist'. Sadly, it's true. To be web-friendly, you need all the commonly-searched words and phrases on the relevant web pages. You know what customers ask for, but most web-designers are not experts in the vocabulary of your business - they need help. A good function site is loaded with detailed information, useful downloads and great photos so everyone finds what they want.

\* Help people promote their events. The more people they attract, the more money you make. Recommend online services (like EventBrite), give them templates for party invitations, offer to manage payments for them and share your promotion and organising tips. Many voluntary and sporting groups do this poorly - give them a hand. Show them how to use relevant Online Calendars and the free resources in the Party, Wedding & Event Planning Toolbox.

\* Better, more appropriate party photos. Many photo galleries show gorgeous people making faces at the camera, way past their legal drinking limit. Does this really promote your venue? Digital cameras allow you to take hundreds of shots, then choose the ones that reinforce your reputation for fun, food, fashion, freshness or whatever...

\* Take deposits and payments online. At our recent Melbourne workshop, 75% of the enrolment booked and paid online - everything was handled automatically. This is how most people want to do business (and of course you still take phone and mail bookings). We used the excellent EventBrite booking system - it's fantastic. For deposit payments, if you don't have an online payment system, sign up as a Business member of PayPal.com - it's widely known and trusted.

\* Create your own events on the quiet days. Special dinners, bar nights, entertainment, classes - bars and music venues do this, but it's less common with restaurants and cafes. Now everyone has to be a promoter! Many people who attend will discover you for the first time. Think about your typical favourite customer and offer them a tempting surprise.

*Profitable Hospitality offers management and cost-control systems (Manuals & CD-ROMs) for restaurants, cafes, hotels, bars and clubs. The systems are based on the extensive consulting and operating experience of CEO Ken Burgin, and enable busy owners and managers to set up complete operating and cost-control systems in minutes, not months. Profitable Hospitality also runs regular management training workshops in the areas of kitchen profit & efficiency, restaurant marketing and functions management. A free monthly e-newsletter keeps you up to date on the latest industry management issues. [www.profitablehospitality.com](http://www.profitablehospitality.com).*