

Title:

A Coffe Shop-The Perfect Business Part 2

Word Count:

923

Summary:

So you have worked at a couple of neighborhood coffee stores, and worked for at least one of the "chains". You have put a business plan together, and you have even attended some SCAA (Specialty Coffee Association of America) meetings and/or seminars, and now you have found the perfect location.

Before signing your life away, make sure that this location really is good, and that there are no hidden restrictions on advertising or signage. I had one client who opened up a gre...

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Article Body:

So you have worked at a couple of neighborhood coffee stores, and worked for at least one of the "chains". You have put a business plan together, and you have even attended some SCAA (Specialty Coffee Association of America) meetings and/or seminars, and now you have found the perfect location.

Before signing your life away, make sure that this location really is good, and that there are no hidden restrictions on advertising or signage. I had one client who opened up a great looking coffee shop opposite a brand new supermarket. However, the township made him take down his sign because it violated some insignificant by-law. His business completely dried-up and he had to close.

Another small, but incredibly important factor, is trash. Who is responsible for its removal, and is the dumpster easily accessible? Find out now, otherwise you may regret it later.

Also find out if you have a monopoly in your shopping area/mall/strip mall/etc. Once again I have a horror story of a small operator who built up a nice trade around an espresso cart situated in a mall. When the mall saw how prosperous the cart was, they leased out a large space to a "chain", and did not renew the cart

operator's lease.

I'm being negative with all these stories because I want you to succeed, and if you try to foresee (and solve) problems in advance, your energies can be directed towards producing the finest cappuccino in the hood. And please remember that the great American public does NOT drink espresso, they drink multi-hued and flavoured cappuccinos/lattes.

Quick test - how many "c"s are there in cappuccino?

So now you are the proud lessee of an empty building. But is it really empty? Go find a bug and rodent exterminator before doing anything else! AND NOW, before going out and buying equipment you do not need (but it looks so "neat" and "cool", and the salesman said I would "grow" into it!), decide on your menu. Do not be overly ambitious, and remember that the health and fire inspectors will be watching over your shoulder.

Having decided on your menu, you can now lay-out your store, and start ordering equipment. DO NOT HAVE EQUIPMENT DELIVERED UNTIL YOU ARE READY - it will just get dirty, and may even become damaged. Make sure that you insure the place from the day you sign the lease. And, if you are fitting out in winter, make sure you have heat so that the pipes don't freeze and burst. And of course make sure that your place is accessible to the handicapped. Not only is it socially unconscionable not to make it accessible, it is also against the law.

Well now for the big moment... let's go shopping for an espresso machine. And by the way, I have had clients who have firmly told me that they will need both an espresso machine and a cappuccino machine! Unfortunately my patience usually breaks down at this point.

Do not buy on price alone. Remember the golden points to consider when buying equipment and product:

- PRICE
- QUALITY
- SERVICE

Choose two of the above, and price had better not be one of them. Remember the difference in price between equally featured machines will be less than the cost of a cappuccino per day (when you amortize it over a couple of years).

The first question your friendly neighborhood espresso salesperson should ask is "What size beverages are you going to produce and sell?" The second question is

"How many do think you will sell per hour, both in peak times and non-peaktimes?" Those two questions will then determine how big an espresso machine you will require. If anybody tries to sell you anything larger than a two-group machine, move on to the next dealer. Unless you have the espresso concession at Rome's (as in Rome, Italy's main railway station), you won't need anything bigger than a two-group machine.

Try the equipment; check references; and ensure that the equipment seller can properly back up the warranty and has trained service personnel and spare parts. Also, can they lend you a loaner if your equipment needs to be serviced in their shop?

Now what about the coffee? Once again check the references, and taste the coffee (not on your home machine, but from a proper commercial brewer). Nearly all reputable coffee roasters will lend you regular commercial brewing equipment at no cost for as long as you purchase their coffee - but check whether they will give you service for that equipment, and make certain their equipment is reliable. And can your roaster supply all your coffee needs, or must you buy different coffees from different sources? Once again check carefully, and taste, taste, taste.

DON'T FORGET TEA. Remember that 1 in 2 adult red-blooded Americans do NOT drink coffee. Mathematically that approximates to 50%, so do not forget tea (and iced tea for that matter). And of course your flavouring (yes, there is a "U" in flavouring) syrups. Food such as biscotti and muffins are not in my realm of expertise - I only eat them. But use the same criteria for searching out your supplier(s).

Make sure that you have plenty of help and support from loyal and very hardworking spouse(s), relatives and friends, because you will be working 24 hours a day, 7 days a week to make the place look good, and to keep it running after it's open.

And most important, find a buyer after 12 months, because you will need the rest!