

Market Position

In order to determine your restaurant's "market position," you need to evaluate the elements of your restaurant that differ from the image: look at the volume of business you do (how many covers in an average meal, how many daily, weekly, monthly and yearly), check average, average length of time for table turnover in one service (consider at least one lunch and dinner), dress code (if any), and other factors that will help you understand whether your restaurant is: inexpensive (low prices, no reservations policy, self-serve or tables that turnover quickly, appeals to the budget-minded, people on the run, families with young children), moderate (casual restaurants offering good food and service at affordable prices), or luxury (exotic and expensive ingredients and highly developed food, tasting menus, fine service performed by layers of staff, extensive wine and beverage listings, high check averages, reservations and/or seatings). Appraise your restaurant honestly, and then associate it with one of these categories.

Once you have defined your restaurant's image and understand your position in the marketplace, it is critical that you share these findings with every member of your staff. Train them to know the meanings behind their actions, why they perform certain tasks, and adhere to certain standards of dress and conduct. These people are your first line of communication with your customers, and a full understanding of your operations will give them the tools to share it with others.

Be sure to perform this preliminary PR activity thoroughly. Image and market position are two important factors that help you determine your target audience, also known as the people who would want to patronize your restaurant, if they knew about it.

Oceana's image and market position can be clearly defined in a few words. First, image: "Oceana is a world-class seafood restaurant. With an emphasis on the total dining experience, Oceana's service staff are warm, knowledgeable professionals focused on the diner's every comfort and need. The wine list, of more than 1200 labels with 37 varietals from around the world, rates internationally as one of the world's finest. And, the gifted chefs, both savory and pastry, are acknowledged by media as the country's best (Food & Wine named Oceana's chef one of the 10 Best New Chefs in the US in 2003).

Oceana's market position is evident from the image statement: upscale, luxury, fine dining establishment competing for discriminating customers worldwide.

EXERCISE: write your market position

1. What kind of volume does your restaurant do? Describe it in detail.

2. What are the price points on your menu, and what is the check average: at breakfast?
Lunch? Dinner?

3. How quickly (or slowly) do tables turnover, and what determines the rate (service style, menu style, kitchen efficiency, customer comfort)?

4. Describe typical customer attire; is there a dress code?

5. Is there a reservations policy, or does your restaurant do mostly “walk in” business?

6. Describe your location, geographically (physical surroundings. rural, urban, etc.)

7. Where do the majority of your customers come from?

8. Which restaurants do you consider to be your direct competition, and how does your restaurant compare?

Once you have answered all these questions thoroughly, arrange a full staff meeting to communicate your restaurant's image statement and position in the marketplace to everyone in the organization. Be clear and concise, and thorough.

Give your staff time to consider all this new, great information about the restaurant, and then invite their feedback. Schedule a second meeting and encourage them to share their ideas and thoughts about the restaurant with you. They will feel like a part of the process, which will help them promote your restaurant more effectively, in a more genuine and personal way.

And if they are not already, make certain these kinds of meetings are an on-going part of your restaurant operation. Constant communications between ownership and/or management and staff make it possible for staff to represent your restaurant the way you want it to be done. There is less opportunity for misunderstanding, and more opportunity for the staff to take ownership of what they say and do while working at your restaurant.

So, we're off, right?

You know you want to establish a PR plan (you have purchased this workbook!), you have created your image statement, you have established your market position, and your staff is well on its way to communicating the spirit of your restaurant with every move they make...

Well, hold on –

Let's get you organized so we don't lose you in the next phase!