

The GRIP PERSPECTIVE

**5 TIPS for  
SOCIALIZING YOUR RESTAURANT**



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## 5 TIPS FOR SOCIALIZING YOUR RESTAURANT

If your business requires getting the word out to customers on a daily or weekly basis, a mix of social media vehicles can reap you rewards in reputation and at the register. One industry that can definitely benefit is the hospitality industry and specifically restaurants. Because of the "up-to-the-minute" nature of social media, it's perfect for this constantly evolving business.

Here are 5 best practices for going social:

### 1. KNOW YOUR AUDIENCE

Are your customers on social networks, and if so, which ones? Next, spend time learning what kind of dialogue they are open to having with you: do they want to go behind the scenes, a la Anthony Bourdain (<http://twitter.com/NoReservations>) or do they simply want the convenience of timely updates like what's fresh today, what's new on the menu this month, or invitations to community events you (and they) are getting behind? It's not a strategy just to be there, know why you are there!

### 2. KNOW THY SELF

Decide whether you want to speak to consumers in your personal voice (as the owner, chef or general manager) or as a brand (<http://twitter.com/theBKlounge>). Then stick to it! The internet is crowded enough without there being more than one of you out there, and it will be far easier for consumers to connect with a single point of contact for your brand.

### 3. PUT IN THE TIME

Social media is not a hobby. You're either in or you're out. Assign someone the task of developing and managing social-media strategies. The best results require commitment to a plan, and setting aside the hours necessary to create, monitor, communicate and engage – on a consistent and timely basis. And for heaven's sake make sure all your efforts are linking and feeding one another. [Tweetdeck.com](http://Tweetdeck.com) offers a godsend in this regard!

### 4. LISTEN CAREFULLY

Good, bad or ugly, you need to hear (and be open to hearing) what's being said about your brand. Search social-media sites and read what already has been posted about your brand or location – not just in reviews but in comments and conversations. Social media can be more powerful and certainly more cost effective than any focus group. You'll hear the things people love and hate about décor, service, pricing, etc. An incredible source of business knowledge! Some social-media sites, such as Twitter, let users set up RSS feeds around search terms. Other options include blog-searching sites such as Technorati and Google Alerts, which update you whenever chosen search terms get mentioned on a blog.

## 5. PICK YOUR BATTLES

When it comes to responding to negativity (and there will be negativity) DO NOT respond in haste. You need first to determine how inflammatory the issue is, how real it is, and whether comments are likely to spread with any degree of legitimacy in terms of impact. A fun and genuine example is that of a Chicago-area Domino's Pizza franchisee, who quickly responded to a consumer's tweets about a bungled pizza order: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r8Th9DBGbQ&feature=related>

A final word, and we hope this is stating the obvious: have something interesting to say! Assuming you were passionate enough about food service to get into one of the most demanding and all-consuming businesses going, we can only imagine you've got something passionate to say beyond, "Soup of the day: Consommé." **So say it loud and say it proud.**

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