

Benchmarks of a True Supplier Partnership

Is your distributor a true partner or just an order taker? Check out these key aspects that can illustrate a good, valuable restaurateur-distributor partnership. Gauge if your supplier is fulfilling basic customer needs on your behalf:

- **Increasing profits, by reducing costs.** A great partner will suggest new menu item ideas from their product line. They will pass along cost savings opportunities and labor saving best practices they've come across, including seasonal purchases that are of great quality and low cost.
- **Increasing your sales.** Your distributor should ask you how business is going and offer to help you increase sales or customer frequency in your establishment.
- **Attracting new customers.** Good suppliers will be aware of market trends and will share them with you. Tapping into these ideas when they are new will help you bring new customers to your restaurant.
- **Retaining customers.** A supportive partner will help you evaluate what's working and ensure that your decisions take into consideration what your current customers like and want.
- **Providing a reliable source for products and services.** It may sound simple but if your distributor doesn't care about your business there is no downside to telling you he's out of products and services that you need and depend upon. A good partner will help keep that to a bare minimum.
- **Reducing costs through manufacturer deals and better yields.** Your supplier knows what cost savings are available and a true partner will be sure you are aware of them and how they can be used to help your bottom line.
- **Helping you stay out of trouble with the Health Department.** A savvy distributor knows how to help you maintain OSHA and local Health Department standards.
- **Allowing you to gain a competitive edge.** Does your distributor fully understand your business and know what makes it successful? A great partner knows this and contributes to your strategy.

Think about this: is your distributor the one that other distributors are reacting to, or are they reacting to the offers made by other distributors? Are they being proactive on your behalf?

The saying goes that if a customer is just giving his business to the least expensive distributors, then he will always be replacing distributors. If a distributor is just selling groceries or moving boxes, then they will always be replacing lost customers. A true partnership is very valuable on many levels. Everyone comes out ahead!

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