

F&B can be the goose that lays the golden egg

At the 2010 Clubs+ Food & Beverage Management Summit, delegates will learn the secrets to successfully putting your Club on the map as a 'foodie' destination.

Why do some club restaurants and cafes flourish, attracting new members and markets, while others perish?

Two top operators with glittering credentials - Angela Withoulkas, business consultant and Director of the vibrant VIVO Café Group and Tom Rutherford, Creative Director at F&B - will bring their ideas to this perplexing question. Tom started the Truffle Group with \$1,000 in the bank and, in 2000, the business turned into a \$20 million enterprise.

They will be supported over the two-day Summit - September 8 and 9 at Bankstown Sports Club - by a stellar cast of industry experts and club managers. Delegates will acquire a wealth of information and insight to cover many aspects of how to successfully position clubs as a destination - not a chance discovery.

A hands-on operator for more than 25 years, Angela Withoulkas has built a brand and chain of cafes - VIVO Café - in Sydney. Telstra Business Women's NSW Business Owner award winner in 2007, in addition to running her café chain, Angela travels the country, working with organisations such as the Commonwealth Bank to share the secrets to her success. Her practical, down-to-earth approach to building a

successful business has been the catalyst for change in many of the organisations she has worked with.

Tom Rutherford has the runs on the board in the arena of large-scale catering. Under his direction, The Truffle Group employed 85 full-time staff, owned a 200-seat restaurant "Liquidity" with an event space for 450 covers, secured the catering contract for the Sydney Opera House and Fox Studios, had a 50% share in the catering contract for the Sydney Football Stadium and Sydney Cricket Ground and caters for another 800 events annually.

After passing on the mantle of the Truffle Group, Tom bought a small 50-seat run-down restaurant in Palm Beach that provided the opportunity to try his hand at building a profitable small business. After a renovation investment in new facilities "Beach Road" is a flourishing and popular restaurant and bar seating 120 people.

Angela credits her inspirational success to people ... "It always comes down to one word - people," she says. "The people you employ ... the people you serve and the people who are stakeholders in your business, such as your suppliers, your board of directors and even your landlord."

Recruitment is a constant revolving door with F&B.

The team faces the challenge of not only providing the highest level of customer service, but also dealing with each other and management.

As managers, this is too often forgotten.

"We must face the fact that we drive the culture ... therefore, we are the impediment - or the solution," Angela added.

Club executives continually refer to streamlining costs, overheads and basically anything that involves the outward journey of money.

But what about streamlining the customer experience and that of the hospitality or F&B team?

Does this receive the same attention?

According to Angela ... "If the experience in your venue is that it is easy to be a customer AND easy to serve a customer, then increased revenue turnover and decreased staff turnover are an inevitable outcome,



F&B Creative Director
TOM RUTHERFORD

no matter how large or small your operation."

Australia's largest club organisation - the Panthers Group - controls 16 clubs across the country. The largest - Penrith - employs 350 food and beverage staff, incorporates 18 outlets, theatres, outdoor activities, gaming and member facilities, operating 23 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year. To assist in addressing declining profitability and visits to its food outlets, Panthers Penrith engaged Tom Rutherford to find the solution.

This involved identifying the types of outlets required to cover a range of lower to higher pricing strategies and identifying the right people for the right roles.

"Within the first month, the machine was already on the move in an upward and joyful manner ... staff had smiles on their faces, clients were finding it easier to understand what was on offer and how to get it - and the Directors started to see a change for the better in financial returns," Tom says.

It is a fact that the focus has shifted in Club F&B from "feed" to "food" and from survival to celebration.

An entrepreneurial mindset is expected from catering managers, bar managers and chefs.

The 2010 Clubs+ Food & Beverage Management Summit is the latest opportunity to learn from the best in the business.

> Summit brochure - Pages 46 & 47



VIVO Café Group Director and business consultant ANGELA WITHOULKAS