

Time to raise your profile

As the owner of your hospitality business you're one of its best assets so get yourself out there and ready to be noticed with the help of these tips from Ken Burgin.



IF YOU'RE the owner or manager of a hotel, club or restaurant, there's no escaping the spotlight. You're automatically admired and recognised, so don't give away the advantage. It's time to shift your thinking and use the most flexible and reliable of your marketing assets – you. Here's a list to have prepared to help you get the best from any media attention and publicity that comes your way.

Have your 'elevator speech' ready. That's a quick explanation in thirty seconds of what you do and who your customers are. What you would tell someone between the first and the twentieth floor? Australians often play-down their achievements, but this can be a great opportunity to arouse interest.

'Business is great'. Period. No-one is really interested in hearing about your problems — they've got enough of their own. Even if it's slow, tell us about one of your great staff, interesting customers or recent menu changes. Sometimes you have to 'fake it until you make it' but this won't be the first time.

Don't take sides. Remember the saying, 'in business, there are no enemies'. Whatever you think privately about the prime minister, the local council or anything else political, keep it to yourself. You never know who may disagree, and they might be planning to purchase — if they like you.

Support a cause, thoughtfully and consistently. The local soccer team is a good cause, and there are other groups that may engage people more effectively — overseas child sponsorship, a health charity or environmental work, something that you and your staff can watch develop and grow over time. Your support will be made known, but modestly.

Start an online diary to share some of your thoughts — a blog. There are simple free services online to do this with such as posterous.com. Experiment with an entry once a week, then make it public when you're confident. Then link it from your website or emails.

Have good photos available. Get



together some good head shots, working shots and pictures of the business. Simple picture editing software can fix the lighting and remove red eyes — choose the ones that show you off to best advantage. Some magazines or papers may want 'high-resolution' photos. 'High res' means 300dpi (dots per inch — dots also equal pixels). A modern digital camera will do the job nicely. And make sure the photo is well-lit.

Be available to the media. If a journalist rings, your staff should know how to find you and 'cover' if you're busy. A journalist doesn't expect you to be instantly available, but they do want to hear back within the hour. In any event, it's good practice to ask if you can call back in ten minutes so you can collect your thoughts or check facts that might be needed. Don't just talk about yourself but follow their line of questions.

Have something on paper to give away. It could be a page of recipes, your top ten tips for throwing a party, a page of pictures from your recent trip overseas, and definitely a professional business card.

Dress for success. It's not about labels, but people assume you have a good life, so wear stylish clothes and shoes, certainly beyond the standard of your staff, have decent glasses and a good haircut. And gentlemen, shave every day if you don't have a beard. Smile more, and look after your teeth.

Take care with the car. It's a fun-

ny thing with Aussies — some times they admire your extravagance, and other times they think it's coming out of their pocket. Much as you might love the idea of a new Land-cruiser or BMW with all the extras, your staff and some of your suppliers may start to take a different approach when it comes to negotiating wages and money. A new Commodore may be enough.

Check the friendliness and quality of your phone messages and email replies. Officious voicemail or staff can sabotage your image, and misspelt emails make you look sloppy and careless. Set up 'auto-signatures' in email if your typing is slow, but you want to look professional.

Have a friendly biography on your website. Many websites have an 'About Us' section, but no faces or names. Tell us about what you enjoy, what you've done before and about passion for the industry. This helps customers and strangers make a personal connection.

Show the right image on social media sites. Chances are your Facebook profile is private, but make sure the details that are available are flattering. Add a profile to LinkedIn, the networking site for professionals — this will often be one of the first things people will see if they do a Google search for your name.

Ken Burgin is a leading hospitality industry consultant. To find out more visit profitablehospitality.com or call 1800 001 353.

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