

Using the Marketing Mix to Assist You in Delivering Your School Meals Service

Within the marketing industry, 7 'Ps' – People, Product, Place, Price, Processes, Promotion, Physical Evidence - are used to evaluate whether an effective marketing mix has been achieved. Applying the same basic principles to your school meals service can assist you in delivering an efficient, cost effective lunch, remove barriers to learning and improve standards of pupil behavior.

Price

- ✓ Where the service is provided in house, the Cook has been provided with challenging but realistic food and labour unit costs per meal. Performance against these is monitored on a regular basis.
- ✓ Loyalty schemes/ discounts have been considered for those pupils taking a meal every day/ for those families with more than one child in school.
- ✓ To minimise customer resistance, a sensible, long term, price increase policy is in place. This is based around small, regular increases rather than long periods without change and higher increases. Parents are given advance notification of any planned changes to prices.

Product

- ✓ Each day, there is a clearly defined meal offer. E.g on a given day there may an offer of roast beef, Yorkshire pudding, potatoes, vegetables and gravy or vegetarian spaghetti bolognaise and garlic bread. Pupils are required to take one option or the other – not a combination of both.
- ✓ All food served looks appetising – both on the servery and on the plate - and tastes good. At the service counters, pupils can see clearly, the food being offered.
- ✓ There is an appropriate ratio of familiar/ already popular and new dishes (i.e. those designed to help vary the diet).
- ✓ The menus offered meet the Food Standards for school meals.
- ✓ The meal is served on to crockery, rather than flight trays

Place

- ✓ The dining room offers a bright, comfortable and welcoming environment to take lunch.
- ✓ Pupils taking packed lunches are not segregated
- ✓ Special consideration is given to younger pupils who may be intimidated by the dining room environment.
- ✓ They are situated in an area away from the queues and hustle and bustle.
- ✓ Pupils have sufficient time to eat without feeling rushed or under pressure.
- ✓ Action has been taken to reduce congestion and minimize the amount of foot traffic.



Promotion

- ✓ Pupil interest in the dining room is maintained via frequent theme days and special events.
- ✓ The school has a clear strategies in place to maximize the uptake of meals and consequently, financial economies of scale. Where a contractor is used, they have provided the school with a development plan to achieve the same.

Using the Marketing Mix to Assist You in Delivering Your School Meals Service

- ✓ Promotions are evaluated to assess whether they have appealed to the needs and wants of each target sector and to determine whether any agreed objectives have been achieved.
- ✓ All written correspondence and promotional material, whenever possible, emphasises the potential benefits of the proposed action to each stakeholder.
- ✓ Promotional materials and other tools, such as visits, ensure that parents consistently have an accurate perception and understanding of the lunch time environment within school.
- ✓ Any use of local suppliers is widely promoted.
- ✓ The school meals service has a positive presence at all events likely to be attended by parents. Care is taken and planning is carried out to ensure that each presence promotes the service effectively.

People

- ✓ The headteacher provides a clear, shared vision of what lunch times must 'look like', the standards that must be achieved and the roles that each stakeholder group must play in delivering these.
- ✓ The headteacher takes ownership of any resulting development plan and is pro-active in driving it forward.
- ✓ Teaching staff support the head by consistently delivering positive messages about the service to pupils and parents. They demonstrate the high value of the school lunch by regularly eating in the dining room.
- ✓ Kitchen, Food Service Staff (FSS) and Dining Room Assistants (DRAs) work together, as a team, to create a positive dining experience for all pupils. They understand that their role is about engaging with pupils effectively, teaching them to enjoy a varied diet and providing the agreed standards of customer care. They have a clear understanding of each other's duties and objectives.
- ✓ Kitchen, FSS and DRAs have all been given sufficient training, particularly in areas such as 'positive behavior and communication', to fully deliver their role.
- ✓ Kitchen, FSS and DRAs are effectively managed. They feel supported and valued by school leaders. To keep them informed, regular meetings are held – particularly with the Cook. The performance of each group is regularly reviewed and appropriate feedback provided. Where shortfalls occur, appropriate action is taken.
- ✓ Parents and the wider community – such as luncheon clubs - are invited to take a school lunch. This provides positive role models for pupils and assists in creating financial economies of scale for the school.

Processes

- ✓ Systems are in place to:
 - Encourage pupils to accept and enjoy all elements of the day's menu offer.
 - Where choice is available, minimize the number of occasions that pupils do not receive their preferred selection. E.g. pre-ordering.
- ✓ The systems and processes operated within the dining room contribute to it being user-friendly for its target market. Senior school management regularly 'walk the walk' to ensure that these remain so.
- ✓ There is a formal process in place for obtaining pupil views of the service – snag groups, student councils etc. These are used to manage expectations about what can be provided. The value of the meetings is demonstrated by avoiding cancellations and rescheduling. Catering and dining room staff are included within this process.
- ✓ Tasting days are used to prepare/acclimatize pupils (and parents) to any unfamiliar dishes being introduced to the menus.
- ✓ Comments on annual customer and pupil surveys are analysed and appropriate action taken/ responses given.

Using the Marketing Mix to Assist You in Delivering Your School Meals Service

- ✓ Mechanisms are in place to ensure that
 - Pupils actually consume the majority of the food on their plate
 - Where this doesn't happen, parents and school work together to encourage better eating habits.
- ✓ Positive behaviour at lunchtime is linked to wider school rewards schemes.
- ✓ Joint working with other schools takes place. This allows best practice to be shared.
- ✓ To ensure that the agreed standards are consistently achieved, a formal audit process is in place.
- ✓ A kitchen and dining room maintenance and replacement plan is in place.

Physical Evidence

- ✓ Systems are in place to measure the impact of Universal Free School Meals on attainment and behaviour
- ✓ A packed lunch policy is in place. It ensures that there are no hidden incentives to take a packed lunch – inclusion of fizzy drinks or confectionary, able to eat outside in good weather, given first access to the dining room etc.
- ✓ Queues are not unreasonably long.
- ✓ The menu is presented in such a way that it serves as an effective sales document. Where necessary, different versions of the menus are used for different stakeholders.
- ✓ Suppliers have gained appropriate accreditations – Red Tractor etc.
- ✓ Where a catering contractor is used to deliver the service, a specification, describing the roles of both parties is in place. The specification accurately describes the standards of service expected by the school and has been agreed and understood by both. Appropriate professional advice has been taken in the production of the specification.

