

HOT TOPICS

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Welcome to Hot Topics!



Finding the REAL you

by Dave Rolston

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Ambience—essential to the dining experience

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FINDING THE REAL YOU

by David Rolston
President and CEO



I'm sure you've often heard people ask (or been asked yourself) "what do you want to do when you retire?" Judging by the television advertisements, most would like to travel to exotic places or to relocate to luxurious communities surrounding golf courses in milder climates. For an increasing number of people, however, the answer involves a "second career." They might talk about starting a business, returning to school to pursue a profession, or expanding a hobby into a commercial enterprise.

Many individuals only discover what they really want to do after they have established themselves in other lines of work. By then, family responsibilities, financial commitments, and their current position have made it all but impossible to follow what they feel is their true calling. Their ambitions become a dream that must be put off until retirement.

For most of us, the positions we desire, and in which we are likely to have the greatest success, are reflections of our strengths. It is frequently hard to see this when we are young for a whole variety of reasons, including lack of knowledge or experience, absence of guidance, or pressures from friends and family. As a result, it is only later that many of us realize, professionally, who we really are.

Because Hatco is a company with a wide range in the scope of its activities, we are fortunate in being able to offer opportunities in many diverse areas, from engineering to manufacturing to marketing and sales, not to mention such management functions as human resources, accounting, and planning.

In order to help our employees find where their greatest strengths lie, and to assist them in planning their careers, we use a tool called "The Predictive Index." The test normally takes only about 10 minutes and involves selecting from a number of words those that you feel best describe how others view you and those that personally best describe yourself. The results will indicate which of 17 different profiles (including such descriptors as "collaborator," "specialist," "strategist," "adaptor") are most indicative of your style and the way in which you communicate and handle situations.



Those who have taken the test found it to be amazingly accurate—though not without a number of surprises. Even in cases where your personality type might not be the apparent best fit for your current job description, you will become aware of avenues to not only improve your performance but to reduce stress. Most important, The Predictive Index provides a means of achieving greater self-knowledge, improved communication, and more satisfying career direction.



The Scots poet Robert Burns once wrote,

"O wad some Power the gittie gie us
To see oursels as ithers see us!
It wad frae mony a blunder free us,
An' foolish notion."

The Predictive Index might not do all that, but it can certainly help. After all, why wait until retirement to enjoy what you're doing.

David Rolston
drolston@hatcocorp.com

Ambience

essential to the dining experience



Whether opting for which fast food to choose for lunch with the kids, or the most elegant place to celebrate an important anniversary or entertain a special client, the question of ambience (or, more informally, surroundings) can be as important as the food. Because appearance is crucial to an establishment's brand or image, foodservice operators spend large sums on research, strategy and planning long before purchasing the equipment and furnishings.

Dave Stroik, CEO of Zimmerman Architectural Studios—a leading Midwestern architectural firm—stresses the importance of three main factors in restaurant design: “The theme we are trying to create, the colors chosen and, of course, the type of food served and how it is presented.”



In terms of theme, the exterior is a more important factor in establishments ranging from quick-service restaurants to fine dining venues. In the landmark book, *Learning from Las Vegas*, architects Robert Venturi and Denise Scott Brown address the importance of signage—especially in places like malls and shopping centers where the building is relatively undistinguished. In the fast-food sector, the shape and style of the building often becomes a part of the identity as well and are crucial to the brand identity experience. White Castle and Pizza Hut are excellent examples. In destination restaurants, the exterior is the first part of the transition into the dining experience.

With fine dining, the experience starts as you approach the restaurant. “Consider the difference between a nondescript doorway and an entryway that establishes the identity and sets the theme,” states Dave Stroik. “The most difficult challenges are restaurants located on the first floor of office buildings or hotels. Where possible, it’s preferable to create a main entry point in the exterior rather than through the lobby.”

An equal amount of care is taken with the interiors in everything ranging from colors to service counter and table placement. Dave Stroik stresses the crucial impact of color: “The right choice of color is not only critical to the development of the restaurant theme, whether simple or elegant, but has a direct bearing on how it relates to the food served. For instance, an excess of red can result in a greenish tinge to steaks and other meats—something to be avoided.

Working with our clients and their qualified consultants, we strive for not only the right color choices but for the lighting (both natural and artificial) that creates and maintains the desired ambience.”

Operating on a philosophy that might be described as the Three F’s—friendly, fast, and functional—quick-serve units strive to create interiors that are attractive and comfortable without encouraging customers to linger for extended periods. The importance of cleanliness in high-traffic areas dictates the use of surfaces and other materials that are easily cleaned. At the counter, the menu is depicted in large lighted illustrations that speed selection and ordering.



Family style chain restaurants and franchises take the basics a step further. Often, there is a local or national theme that inspires the décor. Applebee’s restaurants are famous for sourcing memorabilia that reflects the character of the area. A Western look could be expressed in décor accessories, as well as in the attire of servers and the background music.

When it comes to sports bars or local bars targeted toward young people, multiple considerations are involved. Dave comments, “Research tells us that, for a bar to succeed, it has to project an aura of popularity. An important part of this is the noise factor—the noisier a bar sounds, the greater the perception of popularity. As a result, structural considerations include sound reflecting materials

and sheer surfaces. Another sometimes difficult challenge in these settings is lighting. There has to be sufficient darkness and unobstructed lines of sight to provide optimum viewing of any number of large television screens without creating a hazard for servers or guests." Backlit displays of multiple craft-brewed beers and indirect lighting help solve those particular problems.

For fine dining establishments, the preparatory work is extensive. Arlene Spiegel grew up in the foodservice industry (her family owned various restaurants) and is the founder of Arlene Spiegel & Associates, a New York-based foodservice industry consultant with international credits.

Describing her methodology, Arlene states, "The menu is the DNA of the concept.

That dictates everything—the equipment, the level of staff experience, and of course the design and ambience."

Prior to developing a menu, Arlene and her staff do extensive research, both in the restaurant's proposed locale and into surrounding areas. "We conduct both demographic and psychographic research to examine the lifestyles, habits, and tastes of potential customers. We measure criteria for a destination restaurant that includes such things as travel time, price expectations, and anticipated frequency of usage. We also look at the market to ensure that we are creating our own unique niche and that the concept is consonant with local trends. Once those things are done, we proceed to menu design and the definition of the price points.

"Operators need to be aware of trends in dining and continue to put a 'halo' on their ingredients such as local, organic, sustainable, grass-fed, cage-free, and also promote the use of compostable packaging. While these attributes alone will not attract the 'destination' customer, incorporating them will remove obstacles to the growing demand for 'good for you and good for the planet' seekers."

Depending on the restaurant, the theme and the client base, it is essential to consider the way in which the ambience will evolve over time, or indeed if it should. Many establishments follow the research dictum that a major renovation is necessary approximately every five years so as to avoid excessive familiarity and diner boredom.

Arlene Spiegel comments, "'Destination restaurant' implies a special place or dining experience that is worth going out of your way for or making reservations/plans way in advance of the event. Whether the restaurant updates and modernizes its décor or dedicates itself to preserving historical and iconic elements, there is a real need to stay 'fresh' and 'relevant' in the minds of the guests. Even older restaurants need to be active on social media, proactively pursue loyal customers with incentives and rewards, and pay careful attention to the hospitality and culinary experience that their brand promises. Bottom line—good operators are not looking at 3, 5 or 7-year windows to refurbish their restaurants. It's a daily awareness of cleaning, maintenance and switching up or out—any item that impacts the guest.



"Furniture, fixtures, displays and lighting need to be in pristine condition and show that the operator is 'keeping up' and committed to the business," according to Arlene. "Guests also notice the condition of the menus (torn, frayed) and if the salt and pepper shakers are clean and filled. Anything from dust on the ceiling fans to fingerprints on the front door will erode the overall 'specialness' of the venue."

Dave observes that, in an increasing number of cases, this is accomplished by "moving the kitchen into the dining area so customers can watch the preparation process."

In other cases, such as Antoine's Restaurant in New Orleans, both regulars and visitors expect to experience a historic tradition—one to which they can return. While it is necessary to freshen furniture and accessories over time, great care is taken to maintain a look that has attracted customers for over a century.

In recent times, as take-out has become more popular even with destination restaurants, operators have faced the problem of serving those customers without interrupted diners or disturbing the mood of the restaurant. Currently, the most popular solutions include establishing a pick-up/cashier station in the bar or another waiting area, using a window pickup station where room and traffic flow permit, or offering curbside service via cell phone.

Without a doubt, no restaurant at any economic level can survive without ensuring that the food they serve is up to the customer's expectations.

Over time, especially when it comes to fine dining, people will recall the ambience even when they might have forgotten what specifically they ordered. As with the food, surroundings are key to the dining experience, to building customer loyalty, and to creating a culinary legend. ■



The *next* season of The Four Seasons



Photo of the original Four Seasons restaurant

In 1959, Restaurant Associates opened The Four Seasons restaurant in the recently completed Seagrams Building in midtown Manhattan. With an interior designed by architect Philip Johnson and a menu on which the legendary James Beard acted as consultant, the restaurant quickly became the preferred lunching venue for some of the wealthiest and most powerful individuals in business and entertainment. Following the “less is more” dictate of Seagram Building architect Mies van der Rohe, Philip Johnson created an interior that was spare yet elegant and included works by such artists as Mark Rothko and Pablo Picasso. In 1989, the restaurant was designated an interior landmark by the New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission—a rare honor.

Culinary innovations included the introduction of a seasonally changing menu and the first restaurant to use fresh wild mushrooms.

The Four Seasons retained both its signature décor and elite clientele for almost six decades until, in 2015, the new owner of the Seagram Building refused to renew the lease, thereby creating a singular challenge for the restaurant’s owners: how do you maintain the spirit of a great restaurant in a new locale? Securing a new somewhat smaller location several city blocks to the south of the original, it was decided to refrain from copying the first venue but to include elements of “mid-century design” that recalled the uncluttered elegance that characterized the earlier restaurant. (View the interior at www.fourseasonsrestaurant.com.)

The menu likewise has been modified. Signature dishes including the Roast Farm House Duck and Dover Sole have been retained, while other favorites have been updated and new dishes added by Executive Chef Diego Garcia.

Although only time can determine the ultimate success of the new Four Seasons, the response has been extremely enthusiastic on the part of both critics and the public. Writing in *The New York Times*, food and wine writer Florence Fabricant states that the “dramatic, square Bar Room seating 50,... captures some of the soaring grandeur of the old Four Seasons.”

In a review by *Forbes* magazine, Karla Alindahao commented, “Everything about the space, service, and food is anchored by finely tuned details.” And, regarding the food, “Now, the quality of the food catapults it into a place that it hasn’t been in many years. A new season has truly begun.”

For a legendary destination restaurant, that may be the ultimate accolade. ■

“Listen my children . . .”



Longfellow's Wayside Inn

has been serving travelers—and inspiring poets—for almost 300 years

Located in Sudbury, Massachusetts, Longfellow's Wayside Inn, a national historic landmark, is the oldest continually operating inn in the United States.

The building, rich in colonial character, inspired poet Henry Wadsworth Longfellow to write “Tales of a Wayside Inn,” the most famous of which is the innkeeper's tale: “Paul Revere's Ride.” Offering both lodging and dining services, the Inn's own grist mill grinds all the grains used in the many traditional dishes served.

Longfellow's Wayside Inn provides patrons with a unique experience and invites them to become part of its history.

For further information, phone 978-443-1776 or visit www.wayside.org. ■



BAKED INDIAN PUDDING

[Click here for recipe](#)



Make the “Split” Decision for low-profile products

Now you can save space and enhance the quality of lower-in-height foods such as bacon, sausage, hot dogs, pot pies, etc., that should NOT be stacked. Hatco’s new Split Drawer Warmers combine adjustable sliding vents and individual thermostatic controls to hold hot foods safely for your peak serving periods.

Features include:

- A recessed individual thermostatic control and temperature monitor for each drawer (optional touch screen display control (TTC) available)
- Adjustable sliding vents on each drawer (no vents available as an option)
- Standard 20.75" x 12.75" x 2.5" (527 x 325 x 64 mm) pan supplied with each drawer
- Each drawer will accommodate one half-size sheet pan
- 12-gauge stainless steel heavy-duty drawer glides with nylon rollers.

Low-profile, hand-held foods, are among the most popular, and Hatco’s Split Drawer Warmers ensure optimum temperature, while preserving appetizing visual appeal.

Contact your Hatco representative or visit our website at www.hatcocorp.com and make the “split” decision. ■



HDW-TTC option
Temperature adjustment and
timer touchscreen control