



5 ways for restaurant owners to achieve brand relevance

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It takes more than a goal of corporate consciousness for restaurant operators to create a shared value between their brands and their guests. Restaurant operators must now view obligation as opportunity and responsibility as relevance, said Denise Lee Yohn, strategy consultant and president of Denise Lee Yohn Inc.

Yohn spoke at the **2012 Fast Casual Executive Summit, Oct. 21-23**, at the US Grant in San Diego. Her presentation highlighted five ways operators can achieve brand relevance in the hearts and minds of consumers.

The five levels are:

1. Industry Relevance: Such as The National Restaurant Association's Kids Live Well Program and Share Our Strength's Dine Out for No Kid Hungry
2. Community Relevance: Such as The Center's Dining Out for Life San Diego and community food trucks
3. Target Relevance: Such as the families served by the Ronald McDonald House
4. Brand Relevance: Such as the Firehouse Subs commitment to fire safety and Chipotle's Food with Integrity\
5. Value Relevance: Such as Starbucks Jobs USA and Coca-Cola's 5by20 programs

"Social consciousness is the growing belief you can do good and make money at the same time," Yohn time. "Getting to level five is a journey and an upward spiral of activities."

Operators need to keep in mind however that reaching each level requires the pursuit of brand meaning and value that also must be communicated in a compelling way. To reach a successful outcome, operators must:

1. Have combination of efforts: Don't just settle on one area of achieving brand relevancy.
2. Focus: Don't spread your brand too thin.
3. Make a long-term commitment: It will take time to transform your business and thinking.
4. Form partnerships with like-minded individuals.
5. Integrate the brand with its community, employees and partners

If successful in their approaches, restaurant operators and their brands will have the ability to further connect and engage with their customers and employees in a way that inspires trust and loyalty. Other outcomes include:

- Customer preference and advocacy: Most people will support a cause-related brand.
- Corporate leverage: Increased transparency into what the brand represents could produce an increase in investors.
- Focus and Innovation in relation to partnerships and programs in a way that inspires and connects others.

"Finally, you want to evolve as you grow," Yohn said. "As you grow, more opportunities will come up."