

Keeping it Simple Building Your Business

Ever since I was a kid, if there was a game being played, I was either right in the middle of it or on the sidelines begging to join in. With an ever-growing crop of gray hair, the sports that I once enjoyed in my youth were not conducive to my staying injury-free. I had to find a new way to stay in shape and not, as my lovely wife put it, “start to look like my father”.

One not to be outdone, when my sister participated in a triathlon, I thought, I can do that. It seemed straightforward enough; swim, bike, and run. However it was no small feat, as I had never swam a lap in my life and I only rode my bike as a kid to the local store for baseball cards. I can honestly say that I have learned a lot about myself and life through my new found sport.

After months of learning how to “really” swim, putting in hundreds of miles, and some very sore muscles, I discovered that I could push myself further than I ever thought possible. Through the haze of my exertion, I realized that I truly enjoyed the simplicity of each sport.

Training for a triathlon takes a lot of hard work and determination, just like running a successful business. There are a lot of paths you can take to get to the finish line, but sometimes, the simplest way can be the most effective. Straightforward marketing techniques often yield the best results.

I was speaking with an owner of a local restaurant the other day about how business was down. He was frustrated with how ineffective his marketing efforts had been to date. He told me a story about how a woman came in for dinner and told him that she lived a few blocks away and didn't know the restaurant existed. I understood his frustration because he had been open for more than year! I asked him if he had sent out any direct marketing to the neighborhood homes, and you can guess what his answer was.

The point of the story is that sometimes, we miss the most obvious things that will help our business grow. Having ongoing communication with your current and potential customers can go a long way in

keeping your business in the forefront of their minds. Much like sports, hard work and a straightforward approach can lead you in new directions.

Don't forget! In your direct marketing, put a specific reason for them to give you a call. At North Rim, we have developed a marketing system that can help any business grow. Call me today for a FREE CONSULTATION for your business!

~Matthew Schweitzer, *Vice President*

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\$1,365,000

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Making Hash in a Recession

Hash is just one example of a small, locally owned business trying to get established during challenging times. And Wong and Murray have set a high bar. They bring a fine-dining flair to humble breakfast and lunch fare. They feature nicely presented, made-from-scratch dishes with homegrown ingredients, from seasonal mushroom hash to high-grade maple syrup on brioche French toast. They're betting that Sellwood, which yuppified in recent years but retains its more bedrock bearings, will turn out for \$8 to \$12 entrees.

So far, they've been right. They've been consistently able to pay their bills and meet payroll without tapping their line of credit. But it's taken a lot of hard work and financial discipline. Wong turns on the oven, heads for the cooler and slides out a baking sheet of little dough triangles winking with dried cherries. By the time he switches on the "Open" sign, the miniature scones' sweet scent flavors the air.

Space on Hawthorne and Division was too spendy. Then North Rim Development Group showed them their new Sellwood storefronts south of Tacoma Street. Cafes and a yarn shop have sprouted amid taverns and insurance offices along this commuter route from Milwaukie just north of Waverly Country Club. They signed their lease in June. They painted the space and installed the baseboards themselves. They decorated simply with dark-wood tables and chairs, and hung local artists' work — gallery space for the artists and free decor for the restaurant. And they tightened their own belts to live on small salaries. Murray dropped his cable service and shares a car with his wife, Rachel Murray, the lead server at Hash. Wong, a bachelor, put off buying a new computer and cut back on meals out.

Wong and Murray are a generation apart, but both saw salvation in the food business. Murray, 28, was 11 when his parents split up. He, his older brother and his mom slept in a battered women's shelter or at the San Francisco airport until they found an apartment. At 15, he was on probation for graffiti but could leave the house for work. So he washed dishes in a pizzeria and soon graduated to throwing pies. He moved around, reconciled with his dad in Indiana, and worked his way up in restaurants. He learned about long hours with little pay and dreamed of owning his own place.

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When his daughter was born in 2002, Murray knew he needed a better income. He enrolled in the Oregon Culinary Institute in Portland in 2005. At the institute, Murray soon noticed Wong, the only person to regularly score higher than him on tests.

Wong, 45, was born the youngest of four boys in Hong Kong. He immigrated with his family to the San Francisco Bay Area. When his dad noticed a fish market for sale in L.A.'s Chinatown, he used savings to buy it, move the family and better their lives. Wong spent his time after school cleaning and filleting catfish, carp and eel.

His father opened a restaurant in Chinatown that quickly drew Hollywood stars and lines out the door. But a second restaurant in the suburbs failed. "Luck isn't something you get or don't get," Wong says. "You have to set yourself up for it."

The two reconnected last year at Sel Gris, a standout restaurant on Southeast Hawthorne. Murray was the sous chef, and Wong did the salads and desserts. But amid pan-frying halibut and getting home after his daughter was asleep, Murray thought again about Wong's offer.

They left Sel Gris in the spring and spent days at Murray's dining room computer crafting a business plan. The economy was slowing as home prices stagnated. They agreed on the breakfast/lunch concept — giving Murray more time to be a dad — and stuck with a cautious approach. They knew that making everything from brioche to corned beef in house would enhance quality and lower costs.

Excerpted from "Making Hash in a Recession", by Erin Hoover Barnett, published by The Oregonian, 2008.



Hash Restaurant

8728 SE 17th Ave, Portland | www.HashRestaurant.com

"Every owner wants to know that they have picked the best location possible for their business. One of the keys to being successful is to have the right team supporting your vision. Matt and Jeffrey were a key component to helping us find and build out the best location for us. They showed us demographic data that listed traffic count and median income of the surrounding area. Their knowledge and expertise helped us realize that the location was well suited to our vision as it was a green building and also saved us time and money as we were opening our new restaurant. We could not have picked a better team to help us achieve our goals." ~ Wong & Murray, Hash

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