

Round Up of 'Points of Interest' from recent Zoom calls with Members 24th June – 7th July

Insights, topics, what's working, what's not, any issues or hints. Everyone seems to have been very busy, reacting to the changing situation almost daily, so hopefully this round up may prove beneficial, especially if you haven't managed to get on a call.



Increase in overall trade on last year and margins looking at an avg 25-40% increase.

- For some it was an increase in customers and others an increase in amount purchased by each customer. And even though trade and wholesale fell – as quoted by a member, *'I always thought the Supermarkets were my competitor, I feel now it was perhaps the restaurants'* – after the run on chicken and mince, steaks became the next big seller.
- Most retail sales have consistently increased on last year
- The big question is how many of the new customers will stay loyal. Lishmans view is that many businesses are looking to continue keeping staff at home for part of the working week, so this could become the norm, and mean more lunchtime and flexible sales.

Mail Order and / or Online Orders

- Those that offered a website service, saw sales increase overnight and for some this meant they had to re-evaluate how they processed the orders, as they were overwhelmed with systems and staff not really coping.
- To speed up picking, products were standardised or prepacked, as picking and packing was taking up a disproportionate amount of time.
- Lishmans use a standard order form for customers to just tick what they wanted, made the process so much simpler!
- Online prices are sometimes pitched at 10-25% higher than shop prices (stated Godfreys, Barlows & Lishmans) to cover admin and processing

IT, Sales Systems & Streamlining

- Some had to quickly set up separate systems for taking telephone or online orders, but are now looking to streamline or merge these systems and include them into their normal business transactions process, as orders taken over the phone, took up a lot of staff time getting details right and taking payment.
- Systems discussed and or currently used by members were:
 - **EKM** <https://www.ekm.com/> an online shop system from £30 per month
 - **Dimensions** – this can link up shop and website sales to help efficiency in taking and processing orders, especially if online sales continue. Some only used this system at Xmas but are now looking for all year round use after recent experience.
- NB:** the Guild will be hosting a chatroom about this topic in the future – let Claire know if you are interested.*
- Cash is appearing now, but most trying to keep to card or contactless transactions where possible

Local / Home deliveries

- These increased for many and managing them has been a big part of business planning, trial and error, especially for those that didn't usually deliver. Some keeping the service as sales continue to be very good, and exceeding normal shop sales. Some had no vans and so used local drivers or uber taxis.

Del Charges:

- some charge a minimum of aprx £3+ up to £8/£10 and some don't charge at all. Many have a minimum order value and use the chance to upsell to get orders up to the min order value.

- Some members quoted that offering products like the new **Ramus Fish** offering from the Guilds new Corporate Member was often a good option. The packs are an easy upsell as they are all skin wrapped and unit priced, sold by Lishmans, Frasers & Walmsleys
- Some charge for C&C, as they feel there should be a cost for processing the order.

Click & Collect

- Very well received, but initially some allowed customers to collect when they liked, but this took up too much time, now restricting to time slots for when customers can collect (i.e. one hour in the morning and one hour in the afternoon) this helps to reduce staff being taken off other tasks and manage customer throughput.
- for some C&C has helped to increase their t/o by offering a service they didn't used to for people who may not have shopped with them due to limited time or who couldn't park easily.

Reduced Hours

- many reduced their shop opening hours to help staff cope with getting ready for next day, to carry out deliveries or opened later to get shop ready in the morning. Some are continuing with changed hours i.e. closing early or opening earlier, dependent on their environment and footfall.

Catering side of business

- for most this was lost overnight and has given them the chance to review this side of the business and many are debating whether they want the business back but if they do it will be run more on their terms
 - i.e. pricing is just a straight 10 or 20% off shop prices and products are as per the shop, no getting in special cuts etc, with the aim to reduce any extra work for no extra value.

Adapting shops & Installations

- a big challenge has been installing PPE and social distancing for both staff and customers
- Some smaller shops closed altogether and only offered an outside Click & Collect, some still only offering this as it has worked well for them (Wrights & Robert Alexander). For the really vulnerable some continuing to offer home delivery.
- Thinking ahead when the weather is colder & wetter, businesses with no outside covered walkway may need to think about options to keep customers dry if they still have to queue outside the shop, i.e. umbrellas, window shades, etc.
- In store adaptations have included: Screens, some hung from ceiling, some installed on the tops of the counters
- Some insist all staff wear gloves, masks and / or visors, others are making it optional but everyone is strict on hand washing and hygiene procedures.
- All are installing items like - Queuing systems, sanitiser stations, one way systems for the larger stores, or floor markings as the 1 and 2mt rules are likely to be with us for quite a while.
 - PPE Equipment available from [XL Refrigerators](#) , [Cosmos](#) and [Paragon](#)
- Request for single shopper criteria caused issues in some shops, and eventually had to ask them to leave, some let in groups but only from one family if they stayed together.

Staff

- Staff have had varied reactions, most have been fine, some really concerned, others went straight to shielding or were put on furlough. The best action is to show you are a responsible employer and have all your HACCP in place.
- Some repurposed staff for delivering or shop work, but they will be going back to their normal jobs soon.
- Long hours are being put in by some staff, therefore some shops shut for a week's break to rest, take charge and re evaluate their systems.
- Some using students and are worried about what will happen when they go back to studying in Sept
- Also it's hard to know if trade will continue at current levels and whether or not to hire new permanent staff.

Hot Counters and Salad bars

- Many shut and are just starting to reopen, salad bars were self service now have to be served by a member of staff so a premium has been added to the £cost. Some have restricted opening of hot/cold counters to a few days per week rather than everyday others are just doing lunchtime servings.
- Rotisserie chickens with potatoes and gravy went very well (Lishmans)

Fruit & Veg Sales

- many have seen a surprising rise in fruit, veg and grocery sales with some consumers saying they were a better quality than the S/Mkts. Also an easy quick win to add as a top-up to their meat shop.

'Drive Thro'

- for those with the space these are working really well (Blacker Hall Farm Shop) in addition to just sandwiches and coffee, they have included a collection service for such items as treat boxes, i.e. afternoon tea

Cafes/ Restaurants are slowly reopening

- some have used the time to refit and restlye their seating to ensure social distancing for customers and staff. Pre booking and tables already set up with plates and cutlery plus throwaway or wipe clean menus

Reduction in Product range

- Some items were taken off counters i.e. Cooked meats, pies & ready meals, it was just about getting out the basics to begin with, more complex products starting to return as consumers want more variety. i.e. BBQ ranges and ready meals
- **'Bake at Home'** pies concept selling well for Walmsleys saves on time and cooking. i.e. Pork Pies sold with A5 laminated Cooking instruction sheet, Jelly, syringe, and top tips. Half the pies normally sold cooked are now being sold raw for customers to 'Bake at Home'.
- Higginsons also sell unbaked pies which are selling really well.
- Meat packs/hampers went well when people initially panicked, not ordered so much now people know they can get most items fairly frequently.
- Treat boxes or hampers seem to be more popular, especially for those that couldn't visit friends and relatives i.e. afternoon tea, picnic selections, cake selection, charcuterie selection, etc.

Wastage feels less

- meat is moving and selling quickly, so not much is hanging around

Christmas

- some already have had the 'Turkey' phone call and don't really feel they can make a decision yet without knowing how this situation is going to proceed. Some saying they are going to base numbers on last year
- [Listen](#) to some Christmas 2020 predictions **from the Food People**

NPD

- Some looking to launch new Easy to Cook/Ready Meals in the Autumn for busy people returning to work, those reluctant to use restaurants as much or are those at home more and looking for a greater variety.

Social Media

Facebook Video's

- work really well – the featured products often sell quickly, so always worth doing a counter video every few mornings. (worth checking out Turnbolls FB page)

- Cranstons used FB to highlight to their consumers how they were adapting to safety guidelines as well as posting an **Online Questionnaire** asking consumers what they have liked or not over this period and what they would like to keep. To date over 900 responses

Facebook Workshop

- exclusively for the Guild on 21st July 2020, 6pm – 8pm. How to understand your business ranking, usage of images, and content. Further info or to book a place contact manager@qguild.co.uk

Text promotions

- Lishmans carried out a **‘Text’** only promotion – sending a certain amount of their customers a text msg about a steak promo that was only available via this text msg and monitored how many came in quoting the offer, went really well – contact Emma for more info. Used [‘Text Local’](#)

Instagram

- also working well for some, a great place to promote offers, new shop layouts and images of your products

Keeping New Customers

- Many members feel they may keep their new customers, feedback is they like the new systems and hygiene procedures, opening times and product offering, deliveries and/or C&C.
- Also recent times has shown how much more flexible and adaptive Butchers can be compared to S/Mkts
- However, there is still a requirement to promote via Social Media, Newsletters, fliers etc to keep your business top of mind with customers, amongst all the other messages they continually get bombarded with.

Unit Pricing:

- due to the increase in online orders, many have had to unit price more of their range and feel this may have to stay. Some consumers still don’t like to ask how much 450gms will cost for example and feel more confident shopping when they know, and can see, how much they are spending.

Food for thought: If there is a 2nd spike in the Autumn/Winter

- it is worth thinking about whether you would react the same or do anything different? Maybe time to plan?

‘can we name our prices now’?

- Some trade prices have increased over these last few months and may even increase more with Brexit looming, and for some butchers a retail price increase has actually helped to sell more product!
- Therefore, should butchers be more confident in increasing prices?
- We know we are often better than the supermarkets, and especially now it is not a pleasant experience for shoppers. We are good value with a friendly service.

Worth noting, Tesco are currently looking at a price war, as they feel an economic downturn is imminent. And so a word of caution is not to be seen to be too greedy, especially don’t put off your new customers with a price hike just yet, as old habits can be hard to change, once they forget how awful supermarket shopping was.

Q Guild Price Benchmarking - [View](#) the online excel sheet

- Click on [Link](#) and an Excel Spreadsheet will open – add your prices and view the list to see where your prices are benchmarking. **For members only, so please do not share this list with anyone outside of the Guild.**
- It’s an online form, which updates automatically, so just add your details and don’t over type or delete any other information.
- You can return to it as many times as you like, just ensure you keep the link safe or once opened save it to your online favourites list.
- It doesn’t need sending back. If you want to save a copy for your own files, go to File, Download and save as an excel sheet.

Next time.... Face Masks and Brexit!