

## **VALUE IN CATERING ISN'T JUST ABOUT PRICE**

**By Michael Roman, Founder, Catersource Magazine, Conference & Tradeshow**

Catersource believes that value to many shoppers of catering is not always about money. Value is found in the eyes, minds, and nervous systems of your shopper. A restaurant offering catering can discover their value goals by listening to what the prospect says and through intelligent questioning. Value to one buyer may be entirely different than value to another one.

### **VALUE TIPS THE SCALE TO CREATE A WIN-WIN**

Many buyers are weary and suspect of anything “free” because they realize that nothing is really free. They believe that if the caterer gives some free stuff in one area, they will just make it up in another area. Most buyers of catering do enjoy surprise discounts filled with value instead of something free. Remember that all buyers of anything are hoping to get some sort of discount – getting a better price is just human nature even when chefs buy stuff.

My suggestion is to offer value that is important to the shopper instead of forcing them to take your view of what value is or should be. Consider creating a list of perks that your buyers can select from if they purchase from you that represent a wide variety of advantages and/or savings to buyers. Reducing the wedding cake cutting fee from \$3.00 per guest to \$1.00 per guest creates instant value because they spend less of their budget.

Your shoppers come to you with a similar list of predetermined perks and advantages in their mind that represent value to them. Try to discover what is on their “if we get this we will buy” list. The most important tip I can pass on is that value is not something you give to a shopper. It’s just the opposite. Value is something that a shopper “takes” from you, or at least, thinks they took it from you.

### **TWO TIPS TO UNCOVER A BUYER’S VALUE TARGETS**

First, some salespeople simply ask the shopper directly what their restaurant needs to do to get them as a client. There is no beating around the bush, just a direct question. It is quite amazing to listen as shoppers tell the salesperson what their hot buttons are or what their “if we get” list is in response to *“Bob and Mary, what do I need to do to have you select my company for your event?”*

Second, try to discover what the last things the shoppers said to themselves or to each other just before the sales presentation began. For example, did a husband and wife agree that they would purchase only from the caterer that gave them a special rate for the children coming to the event? Once discovered, these shopper wishes make sales much easier to accomplish.

### **THE SIMPLE TRUTH ABOUT VALUE**

Let’s remember, rightfully or wrongly, that to many catering shoppers “chicken is just chicken” and any of the caterers they select will have quality chicken, or at least chicken that will be just fine. So, in the final analysis, the restaurant they finally select will be the one that offers them as many items on their “if we get” list that they can get. Value cannot be forced on shoppers. Value needs to reflect what the shopper deems important. Here are some elements of value:

1. Value is saving money or using less from their budget leaving more for other purchases.
2. Value is gaining some advantage over whatever they are worried about.
3. Value is attained when the caterer creates harmony, happiness, and peace of mind in the family or company that is buying.

4. Value is created when the shopper feels less worry about the performance of the catering and is less concerned about embarrassment.

#### EXAMPLES OF VALUE FROM A SHOPPERS POINT OF VIEW

1. Discounting delivery or banquet room fees.
2. Not charging for the bride and groom at the wedding.
3. The owner or Executive Chef will be at the event – not just the salesperson.
4. More relaxed final guest guarantee deadlines.
5. Getting early access to an event space to decorate.
6. Smaller deposit requirements.
7. A salesperson that permits changes without anger.
8. Exciting menus that have mid-level pricing.

#### FINAL THOUGHTS

Most customers are not buying food when they call a restaurant for catering. Most customers believe the majority of restaurants always have good food. They buy from restaurants that keep them safe from embarrassment, offer value and provide good food and service. Restaurants who offer catering must continue to develop new menus, services, and presentations that offer real and/or perceived value and advantages for buyers of catering. If buyers only purchased from the lowest priced restaurant, why are the leading restaurant caterers higher priced?

Michael Roman will be expanding on this topic and many more at the 2012 Catersource Conference & Tradeshow in Las Vegas, February 26 thru 29, 2012. Attend the conference to learn how to increase your catering profits. Visit [www.catersource.com](http://www.catersource.com) to register and for more information or call 800.932.3632.

