

Food Management Precipis

SUMMARY

Food Management should play on its strengths as an authoritative publication by focusing on three areas—Management issues, improving food service operations products and efficiency, and creating a community of executives and managers.

The editorial strengths of the features need to be augmented with unique department concepts that speak directly to the reader needs, and do so in entertaining, involving formats. The publication needs to show an editorial integrity in its feature well and simpler, specific functions in its departments to win over a new generation of readers and advertisers.

Our recommendations for achieving this is to revamp the flow of the magazine, add more departments of shorter lengths and sharper concepts, fewer feature pages, and a more integrated editorial design. The end result of these changes will create a new magazine of greater reader interaction, editorial content that is easier to produce, and a stronger magazine to sell to advertisers.

It is a close call as to whether the revamping is a repositioning that would benefit from a title change. We are experimenting with that possibility for your review.



Food Management finds itself in the enviable position of leading its niche as a voice in the food service community. Its closest competitors (which admittedly are nipping at its heels) feature a different content mix (R&I) that is not as broad, or is formatted for journalistic urgency (FSD). The upstart *On-Site* covers some of the same ground but is trying too hard to ingratiate itself into the community with

content that is more sizzle than steak.

The opportunity to improve the standing of *FM* exists if the publication sticks to its mission, but the mission needs to be clearer in each issue structure and content, and its voice stronger in declaring *FM's* role in the industry.

Starting with a clear mission is important. We define the mission of *Food Management*:

Food Management strives to be the premier publication in the food service industry for providing *insightful information* that can improve: 1) the **success** of food service directors and managers in *implementing positive changes* to their operations, 2) the **image** of food service operations within *individual communities* and the industry *as a whole*, and 3) the **productivity** and **quality** of food service operations. *Food Management* seeks to strengthen self-operating food services to help them maintain their independence, and still address management in large corporate contract operations to improve their ability to work for their clients.

1) Helping Food Service Directors and Managers Succeed

Directors and Managers should rely on *FM* for current information and analysis on:

- Issues facing their industry segment involving compliance, competition and innovative trends
- Day-to-day practical management advice about food purveyors, equipment suppliers, labor relations, contract execution and maintenance, and improving their authority within their organizations.
- Strategies for budgeting and procurement, business structure, and site improvement

2) Improving the Image of Food Service Operations

FM seeks to raise the level of prestige of on-site operations by defining improved aesthetics for marketing and presentation of product at operations, striving to be comparable with “retail”:

- Improving marketing, site design, and execution of food service facilities
- Creating new revenue streams and improving the importance of food service operations to an organization’s bottom-line.
- Promote value-added benefits of a food-service operation

3) Improve Productivity and Quality of Operations

As a valuable source of information that is qualitative, original and specific, *FM* is an invaluable ally to food service operators.

- A resource for innovative menu planning
- Innovative ideas for improving presentation of product
- Reduction of waste and improved efficiency under high and low use conditions
- Provide subjective information about the comparative merits of products

Using this mission statement as a blueprint for revamping the publication, and taking into account the focus group information, as well as the responses to our in-house survey, we can begin to see where the current editorial should be augmented or ditched.

The goals of these departments is to foster more interaction with your audience, develop new ways of presenting your mission that are more entertaining and easier to produce, and to create unique concepts that become associated with the publication and are viewed as, “information you can’t get anywhere else.”

Here are our conclusions from the focus groups and our recommended editorial approaches for promoting your new mission:

1) Readers look to *FM* for management advice. OK, maybe they are just parroting the nameplate, but that is what the magazine is supposed to be about. The nature of managing the service has elements that are similar to the GM of any operation, as well as specific needs that are called upon in the food service industry. The elements that they deal with are covered to a degree in the cross-over section, but that feels tacked-on. Specific departments related to being a manager could be:

Leadership—How operators and managers build a first-class operation by using the examples of others who have been in tough situations and have prevailed.

Motivation—Employee incentives to work harder, produce better product, use creativity to excel, as well as ways of encouraging utilization of the facility by customers.



Looking Ahead—Planning for growth, dealing with contract takeover, instituting new policies, launching a new facility or starting a new incentive. This department emphasizes the need to constantly plan ahead.

Labor Issues—Negotiating pay raises, reviews, discipline, benefits, hygiene, resolving conflict. This department could be presented as a Q&A section by encouraging readers to send in their tough employee issues for help in resolution.

Vendor Issues—Making contracts, dealing with mistakes, how to choose among competition. Other issues include more sophisticated procurement environment, dealing with group purchasing organizations when your institution belongs to one, tapping suppliers for the right kinds of value-added support, etc.

Creativity—Learning how to think outside the box through case studies of other operations solutions. Initiatives such as new dining concepts, marketing or menu ideas, not presented just as a finished *fiat accompli* but analyzing how the great solution was accomplished.

2) Readers want practical hands-on food advice. The food “section” of the current magazine has lots of good stuff in it, but it feels like a magazine *in* a magazine. This needs to be better integrated visually and editorially in the magazine. There are two choices here. One is to run the food materials together in a separate but visually congruent section of the magazine, and the other is to integrate the parts in an overall structure. Following the former approach, food departments would be in the back of the book, much as they are now, but the feature stories would be integrated into a single feature well. And keeping the nutritional information on the recipes is important.

The food departments should launch with a two page factoid section with lots of relevant trend tid-bits. The departments should be indicative of the issues facing services. The departments are an excellent opportunity to reach out to chefs and dieticians to participate.

Healthwise—A good column idea that should include a recipe. The way its done now works pretty well.

Makeover—Reader contributes high-calorie or difficult to present product and expert nutritionist/chef work to reinvent it with better pizzazz and more healthful balance. Or, the subject could be an “old faithful” recipe (like, say, macaroni and cheese) that is reinvented.

Presentation Plus—Description of successful plating ideas, maybe themed each month, or maybe gathered from reader input.

Beyond the Basics—Alternate side dishes, main dishes, beverages that go beyond the regular (like alternatives to french fries, or plain mashed potatoes, soft drinks, salads with unusual ingredients, ethnic foods

Whip It Up—Make a list of common staples in a food service,

then send the list to five chefs and ask them to create something interesting to serve from the list.

Taste Challenge—Comparisons of products. You *know* the readers want them, and if done *subjectively* the advertisers won't mind. What's “subjective?” Use a jury of consumers in a blind test, or a team of experts in the field. There is little to fear from advertisers if the results are presented as their opinions. *In fact, the advertisers might feel that they need to counter the results or reinforce them with ads. That has been the case in other trade segments.*

There are a couple of department ideas that are transitional—they're not about management or food, but are about facets of the industry:

Market Savvy—A restaurant consultant describes ways that commercial restaurant marketing, promotion or design ideas can be used in food service situations.

Branding Concepts—Description of interesting self-op branding attempts and the way they were created and marketed.

Ground Up—Case studies of interesting renovations or conversions and the effect the changes have had. (I noticed that you used to do this, and it should be interesting to your audience).

Hi-Tech—Reporting on new technologies with most application in your market: P.O.S. (point of sale) register systems for tracking cash, inventory and data “cashless” debit card systems electronic order entry systems from distributors and suppliers and on horizon,. more use of product databases in foodservice industry, web-based transactions, etc.

Reader Tips—Solicit reader tips for improving the productivity, ambiance or quality of food service program. Offer a \$25 use fee, or hold a contest for most useful tip, but stimulate reader interest. If this section took off, it could be a good lead into the feature well.

In addition, these departments that are currently in the publication should remain: The new products section, although the title “Brand Street” is misleading. “Well-equipped” is also good, but it doesn't have to get such a large feature treatment. The editor's column, of course. “Viewpoint” should be replaced by some kind of “Question of the Month” that could be answered by industry leaders. And “Food Safety” is not the stuff of a permanent column, but its not a good idea to have apartments that appear irregularly. You're better off having small irregular features on the subject.

3) Readers aren't looking for news in FM. They are looking for insight and interpretation. The Marketplace section needs a revamping to make it tighter and more interesting. It doesn't have to be “newsy” and it doesn't have to cover every market segment. It might turn into an “Innovation and Issues” section.

4) The publication needs to feel more like a consumer pub in the feature well. The features need their own editorial space, the cover story needs more visual impact, and there



should be a visually defined section. The feature *stories* in the publication are already good, and the initiatives that you have are also good, but it would be great if you had *one more* for symmetry around your calendar. Interactive initiatives (awards, contests) and industry conclaves are also good, but maybe redesigns? Or leadership awards recognizing long-time forces in the industry?

5) The overall feel of the publication needs to clarify its role as a business magazine that has important food elements.

As an archetype, imagine the new FM as a cross between “Worth” and “Cooking Light.” The nameplate needs to feel more substantial and the kind of goofy crossed “os” have got to go. The next issue is one that is harder to decide—whether the branding of the publication is so strong that changing the name of the publication is a mistake.

My gut feeling is that if the new name doesn’t accompany a rededication to the cause, and some nice crossover from the old title to the new, it might not go over well, but on the other hand, we’re already recommending some pretty big changes in the content. It’s a leap, to be sure, but maybe one worth making to position you against your competition.

I’ve attached two covers that will show how I think the nameplate should evolve, (remember, it’s just an example, with a new slug that I think better represents the mission statement. I’ve also made a cover nameplate of the new concept, and a transitional slug. I won’t try to pitch it if you aren’t attracted to the idea, but it *does* solve the issues of moving out of food service exclusively.

The magazine lay out:

The goals of the magazine layout are to create more attractive advertising placement positions and a more unified look for the publication. The rhythm of the magazine would become more staccato as single page departments (easier for bust execs to read, easier to sell ads against and easier for editorial to prepare) take more of the ad load so the feature well can stay more pristine. Here is a rough idea of how the book might run:

- The cover would be more standardized than it is now. Issue covers interspersed with special issue covers, would all have a more similar typographic treatment than it does now. As things stand now, there would be an issue specific image that would be the feature story in the issue.
- 6-8 pages of ads up front, before the contents. Lots of people like to be up here. Also consider a gatefold ad as a premium.
- The contents page would become 1 and 2/3 pages. the first page would be feature stories and the second spread would be 2/3 page for listing departments. These are premium ad spots that can sell to full pages and a nice 12-up 1/3 vertical.
- The masthead would be changed to two 1/3 page verticals with ads all around them. The mastheads would break along editorial and business lines, and create more upfront ad space. These also could be good ad spots, especially if sales could get their minds around selling a special “following 2/3 vert slot”:

two 2/3 rds that can make a one-two punch promotion for an advertiser.

- The front section would be called something like “Across the Industry,” and it would contain what is currently “The Agenda,” “Short Takes,” “Industry News,” and “Marketplace” (which will lose the name) The whole section will be a long monthly industry overview, simply designed, with stories that are a variety of lengths. It would be nice but not necessary to cover every industry segment. It would be nice to develop a few more “mini-departments” that could have some humor, or be informative (like an in-out list, or industry data watch). Then the management departments would follow. I think this direction moves away from the magazine trying to cover the “news” in the industry, which is an area the FSD has locked anyway. And these pages could be loaded with ads.

- The feature well would have four stories, one cover story, a second smaller feature that deals with industry issues, and two food features. The order of the stories is unimportant except that the cover story should lead the well.

- After the features there should be a food grazing section that is a small mirror of the “Across the Industry” section up front. A couple of pagers worth of bits and pieces. Then the food departments, and end up with the back-of-the-book departments like the new products pages.

- There ought to be something interesting opposite the back inside cover, perhaps some interactive contest feature, or maybe an archive picture that serves as a interesting “moment in time” kind of feature.

The whole arc of this layout creates fewer feature pages and more departments, plays down the industry diversity without making a point of it, and allows for the addition of more entertaining concepts.

Although the changes in the format and content of the publication seem extensive, we are really repackaging the current content in more attractive form and pushing the editorial credibility to greater heights, which ultimately will inspire more fervent readers and more content advertisers. The publication will promote its authority in the niche by:

- Having information that is immediately useful
- Soliciting opinion and advice from industry practitioners, and profiling veterans and up-and-comers
- Stress the value of chefs as part of the operation, and the image of directors and managers as high-level executives comparable to retail operations.
- Promote successful innovations and “spread” them throughout the industry
- Be a force for positive change by promoting strong views on current topics.

NOVEMBER 1999

AtYourService

FOOD MANAGEMENT & MORE



Plate *Like the Pros*

Let Them
Eat Cake

**Labor
Mistakes
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Never
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Again**

**5 Sure-fire
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ON-SITE INNOVATION & INSIGHT

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