

FRIDAYS AT FOUR
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GF STRATEGIES HAS JUST UPDATED OUR WEB SITE. You can now view all past issues of our newsletter, send us your comments to Fridays at Four and keep up to date on our latest projects. Visit the new site at www.gfstrategies.com.

WE have just returned from the IAAM District IV meetings in Vancouver, British Columbia. Our hosts were the staffs of the major venues in that city. And we were treated to a visit to the new Vancouver Convention Center, open just two weeks. What a facility, and visit their web site to learn about how they have made this venue one of the greenest ever built so far.

The April 2009 Harvard Business Review had an excellent article on “Getting Brand Communities Right” written by Susan Fornier. The article talks about three forms of community affiliation—Pools, Webs and Hubs.

Pools Strong central goals or affiliation (Democratic party,Republican Party,Environmental Groups)

Webs Personal relationships—Facebook,Cancer Survivors Network

Hubs Charismatic figure key to the web (Oprah, Martha Stewart)

Each one of the pools needs a different strategy to reach them.

At the IAAM meetings there was a session on managing the multi-generational workforce. One thing that came out of the session was the Generation Y (18-30 year olds) really want collaboration. They do everything with others..they want teachers, not a boss, they want to be a colleague, not a subordinate. This is the STING group...Short term instant need gratification.

Another session was on new trends and revenue generators. Centerplate is focusing on local sourcing as much as possible. Customers are all looking at the price versus quality equation. You must learn to deal with a cutback in catering revenues. Revenues are increasing in the groups area, where you can create a special opportunity or a way for them to be part of a community.

Another trend is for smaller portions with better ingredients. And convenience retail inside of buildings is coming along...a Seven Eleven inside of the building, not branded with Seven Eleven, but with the local vendors and local products.

This from the banking world..For the first time in history, VISA reports that the debit card usage was greater than credit card usage, going to 52 percent of transactions.

From Ad Week Magazine comes this brief from the advertising strategies of Coke and Pepsi. Gary Hemphill, managing director at Beverage Marketing comments “Companies are looking for ways to invigorate their business in a very soft economic market. They are

looking for ways to give consumers better value and create excitement around trademarks and brands” There it is again, the word VALUE.

On the fast food front comes this from Jeff Davis of Sandelmand And Associates. “You will continue to see people looking for ways to broaden their menus. They are saying “if we can do dinner, why can’t we do lunch or try breakfast?”

And this from the chief retail analyst Marshal Cohen at NPD Group talking about the retail sector (WalMart, Target, Macys)...”Value can’t be an unspoken message right now”.

From AD Week comes an interesting breakdown of the use of the new social media from a poll done by the Harris Poll. The poll found these age breakdowns.

Percent of each age group that have a Facebook or MySpace account.

18-34 74% 35-44 47% 45-54 41% 55 plus 24%

Of those 18-34 29% used MySpace or Facebook daily.

Here is a new acronym to be watching that comes from a story in Beverage Spectrum magazine. LOHAS..Lifestyles of Health and Sustainability. This is the fastest growth area in beverages, with explosions in green teas, and other natural products.

And in their annual Energy Drink guide comes this statistic. “Of the 228 brands listed in last year’s guide, only about half remain. Forty new ones were introduced”. And the newest emerging trend is what are called energy shots, a spinoff of the Red Bull and RockStar drinks, that just in 2008 created \$500 million in new brand sales.

A final note from the IAAM District IV meeting in Vancouver comes from Warren Buckley, CEO of the new Vancouver Convention Center, and long time venue manager, including five years in Singapore, before his return to Vancouver.

“I use the 80-20 rule. Go where the revenue and yields are, focus on your loyal customers, not the price shoppers”.

Our book recommendation is Four Seasons by Isadore Sharp. A great read about the founder of the Four Seasons Hotels, with some great insights on customer service and how they have managed to remain one of the world’s top hotel brands.

Thanks and remember to contact us if you are looking for a company to look at your current food and beverage operations, with a focus on how to increase your revenues.