

# Hungry for Sales

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**(By Charlie Sislen)** When COVID struck, few industries were hit as hard as the restaurant business. Overnight, popular and busy restaurants had "Closed" signs posted in their windows. For many, that closed sign became permanent. Those that survived had to pivot their business model to depend on takeout and delivery. Even those that did make the transition struggled to stay afloat.

Now that America is opening up again, tremendous pent-up demand for dining out exists. So what does this mean for radio?

First – many of the restaurants that survived the shutdown have lost their brand. They need to re-establish their brand and invite their customers back. In doing so, they need to ask questions. What made them a destination before COVID? Has that changed? Radio can help these restaurants return to their previous levels, and at the same time grow their business. Restaurant owners should build a schedule around times that their establishment needs to attract customers. Often this means taking advantage of lower demand time periods, like nights and weekends. Remind the listeners of the enjoyment of dining out with family and friends.

Second – as mentioned earlier, many of these food establishments did not survive and the facility was forced to close. It is my belief that for every establishment that did not survive, a new food establishment will eventually open to replace it. In other words, new businesses will fill the void of those that are no longer here. If the demand exists, someone will fill that void. And yes, the demand is there.

This is a great opportunity for a radio sales rep. It doesn't matter if it is a national chain or a locally owned single-location establishment. These new businesses need to get the word out, tell potential customers what they are about, where they are, and that they are open. Radio can play a big role in helping to make their opening a successful event and also attract listeners who are hungry to eat out (sorry for the pun). New businesses need to build a brand from scratch and establish a presence in the market.

The opportunity for radio is there. The demand exists. Be ready to tell the story about how your station can drive consumers to these food establishments. The habit of eating out was temporarily derailed. Now that it is making a comeback, you can drive customers in the right direction and help these businesses reestablish their brand.

Smart sales reps will build a pitch, and even a compelling deck, on why their station is the right one to jump-start the business.

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