

SUCCESS

Money, Education, Teamwork, Leadership, Idea, Strategy, Plan, Management, Skills

THE BLUEPRINT

Having spoken to a number of hospitality businesses in Ireland's Ancient East, consultant and trainer, Anthony Beale, is convinced that there is a blueprint for success.

I've been in the hospitality industry for over 25 years so I've witnessed many changes in how we deliver the product. A number of events have rocked us: recessions, foot and mouth, globalisation and, more recently, the uncertainty surrounding Brexit. Unfortunately, we lost the run of ourselves during the boom when, sadly the 'get them in and get them out' mentality was rampant. However, the great operators of the past and today never lost sight of what being in the hospitality business is about - giving people a wonderful time and great memories. This used to be called 'delivering service' but today it is 'delivering the experience.' In my not so humble opinion they are the same. The core values of genuineness, sincerity, and wanting to always deliver your best are what the great operators have in common. Sensing what people want, having a strong vision, and being able to clearly communicate and lead were all skills employed by these leaders in their fields.

I recently interviewed 20 successful hotel, restaurant and gastro pub operators in Dublin, Meath and Louth about what they believed were the key ingredients of their success. I wanted to see if there were commonalities across the sector when it comes to creating a

successful hospitality business. I'm happy to say that I found more similarities than differences and the exercise confirmed one of my core beliefs that 'success has a system' and that it leaves clues and can be predictable for anyone that follows what works.

There were stories of starting up on their own, to continuing in the family business and bringing it to the next level. It is amazing how many operators turned what most would see as failure into success. For example, Ross Lewis from Chapter One wanted to get into hotel management but failed the interview to get into Shannon - he has since been enjoying unparalleled success for over 23 years. Conor Woods from The Bay Tree Restaurant in Belvedere House B&B in Carlingford dropped out of college where he had been studying auctioneering before the food industry got a grip on him.

Jon Paul and Charly Egan from the Black Bull Inn bar and restaurant in Drogheda, Patrick Corscadden in Bellingham Castle, Des and Stephen Buckley from FX Buckley's, Vincent and Olivia Duff of the Headfort Arms in Kells, and Roseanne Donegan of the Monasterboice Inn all took on and built up the family name, taking their businesses to the next level. For other operators, it was a case of necessity being the mother of invention. Michael Gavigan from The Central in Navan

and Michael Hughes from the StockHouse restaurant in Trim were both badly hit when the property crash came. They needed to start again so they decided to carve out new careers in the hospitality industry.

All of these operators understand the value of continuous learning and of improving their skillset. Pól Ó hEannraich, former Head Chef at Dax, and his brother Páraic in Bloom Brasserie and Wine Bar on Dublin's Baggot Street stress that discipline is integral to delivering a top-class product, whether it is two or 200, the highest level of quality and service must be consistently delivered. This opinion was echoed by Paul and Fiona McCullagh in Zucchini's restaurant in Navan. Martin McGowan from Scholars Townhouse Hotel in Drogheda says he has learned that patience is indispensable when you are striving for success. "You are going to have to deal with bureaucracy from time to time and you need patience for that," said Martin. According to Michael Hughes, it is vital that business owners play to their strengths and know their weaknesses. This was echoed by Ross Lewis, who said that picking the right experts to help you run your business was the way to ensure speedy growth.

FINANCIAL CHALLENGES

All of the business owners that I interviewed spoke of the fears that they had to contend

with, including the fear of failure and embarrassment if their plans did not work. Everything was on the line for these people. They took financial risks. They had large investments that they were not 100% sure would work out. Yet, once they made their decisions, they got stuck in. They dealt with all the obstacles head on. The more they worked, the better things worked out for them. In fact, most of the operators said that they used their fears to fuel their success. All of the hospitality operators that I interviewed faced major challenges in terms of coping with banks and creditors during the recession. They all endorsed a head-on approach as the best way forward in overcoming these obstacles. "Financial acumen is key", said Donal McGeough from the Windsor Bar & Restaurant in Dundalk. "Understanding your figures and your cost base and cash flow is what kept us going in the tough times."

All of the operators agreed that finding and building the right team was a core challenge. Everyone shared a variation of the core belief that your team is everything. Deirdre from Ariel House said that 90% of the success of the business is due to the team. "They are everything," said Vincent Duff of the Headfort Arms, while Shauna and Ann Kelly from the Corkscrew Brasserie, which is located in the Boyne Valley region of Co Louth, said that the only reason their business was so successful was the quality of the team that they had working for them.

FAMILY LIFE

Great sacrifices have been made on the road to success. Time was the number one sacrifice common to all. Family life is definitely different for these operators. "We still have our family time, we just do it at different times to everyone else," said Martin McGowan. "Without the support of my wife Jessica it would not be possible," said Ross Lewis. Many felt lucky that they worked in the business with their family, such as the father and son team of Des and Stephen Buckley, brothers Pól and Páraic Ó hÉannaí in Bloom, and Jay and Charly Egan at the Blackbull Inn. The husband and wife teams that I interviewed were Michael and Orla Hughes, Michael and Tara Gavigan, Fiona and Paul McCullagh, and Danny and Dymphna

Clockwise (l-r): Ross Lewis; quality cuisine at Zucchini's; Ariel House.



ARC
STUDIOS

CK
COLM KERR
PHOTOGRAPHY

BRANDING
BROCHURE PRODUCTION
COMMERCIAL PHOTOGRAPHY

OUR CLIENTS

ASHFORD CASTLE
WWW.ASHFORD.IE

UNITED

CUSACK
SOUTH AFRICA

K

THE
JOHNSTOWN
ESTATE
HOTEL & SPA

CARLTON
HOTEL
DUBLIN AIRPORT

Ireland's only exclusive design and photography
studio for the hospitality sector.

T: +353 (0)44 933 0000 E: aisling@arcstudios.ie

[f](https://www.facebook.com/arcstudios) www.arcstudios.ie [t](https://twitter.com/arcstudios)

TALKING HEADS

Vincent Duff,
Owner, Headfort Arms Hotel

Patrick Curran,
General Manager,
Knightsbrook Hotel

Patrick Corscadden,
Owner, Bellingham Castle

Martin McGowan,
Owner, Scholars Townhouse Hotel

Deirdre McDonnell,
General Manager, Ariel House

Michael Hughes,
Owner/Partner, The StockHouse

Fiona and Paul McCullagh,
Owners, Zucchini's

Ann and Shauna Kelly,
Owners, The Corkscrew Brasserie

Conor Woods,
Owner, Bay Tree Restaurant

Colm Devine,
General Manager, Bru Bar and Bistro

Pól and Páiraic Ó hÉannaich,
Owners, Bloom

Ross Lewis,
Owner, Chapter One

Michael Gavigan,
Owner, The Central

Philip Foster,
Owner, Snailbox Restaurant

Danny Fitzpatrick,
Owner, Fitzpatrick's Bar and Restaurant

Michael Heaney,
Owner, PJ O'Hare's

Donal McGeough,
Owner, Windsor Bar & Restaurant

Jay Egan,
Owner, Blackbull Inn

Roseanne Donegan,
Owner, Monasterboice Inn

Des Buckley,
Owner, FX Buckley's



Clockwise from below: Bellingham Castle; quality fare at Zucchini's; the interior of Zucchini's restaurant; food preparation at Zucchini's.



Fitzpatrick. Martin McGowan and Philip Foster work with their entire families in their businesses. The Kelly family in the Corkscrew Brasserie have no less than seven family members working together. Many were in the position of not being able to participate in the usual family occasions. "It can be tough," said Danny Fitzpatrick from Fitzpatrick's Restaurant. Most of the operators spent a great deal of time growing and developing their business. However, they all seemed to be genuinely happy doing what they were doing.

LIVING THEIR DREAMS

"It's never been about the money", said Conor Woods. "I am living the dream; I am a chef owner." Seeing customers thoroughly enjoying themselves is another great pleasure that these operators derive from their businesses, and was an aspect of their work that was highlighted by Bloom, FX Buckley's, The Central and The StockHouse. In fact, all of the operators that I spoke to love to see their customers having the experience they wanted to deliver. Meeting and exceeding budgets was important to Patrick Curran from Knightsbrook Hotel in

Trim, Colm Devine from Bru Bar and Bistro in Drogheda, and Deirdre McDonnell from Ariel House in Dublin 4.

DEFINITIONS OF SUCCESS

The definition of success ranged from peace of mind to enjoying the buzz and bustle of a vibrant and busy premises. Loving what you do and being happy when you get out of bed were definitions that were shared with me many times. A lot of operators took great pride in what they regarded as the uniqueness of their product. Stephen and Des Buckley said that knowing they have a unique brand gives them great joy in their work. "Having my name on the place, doing my best always, and delivering" is what it's all about for Ross Lewis, while coming out on the other side of adversity was Michael Hughes take on success. Doing what makes you happy is what motivates Michael and Tara Gavigan, while his love of meeting people is the driving force for Philip Foster from the Snailbox Restaurant in Ashbourne. This is reinforced by Michael Heaney of PJ O'Hare's traditional Irish pub in Carlingford who said that you have to be a people person to be successful



in the hospitality trade. For these operators the best things about being in business are the freedom to follow their ideas and visions, as well as having control over their own destinies. They all built their businesses in many ways but the common factor that came across from everyone was that consistency and word of mouth are the best forms of marketing. Many of those that I interviewed use social media very effectively, making it personal for their customers. All of them enjoy a great TripAdvisor presence, the online word of mouth. These people have been innovative in their approach, doing different things, carving out a niche. They all have ambitious plans for their futures, from the upgrading and expansion of existing facilities to the addition of more venues.

Some shared concerns were voiced, including government policy, local and national, along with Brexit. But their confidence that these obstacles and potential obstacles would not stand in the way of their plans was evident. There were positives also – chief among them was the belief that Fáilte Ireland and Tourism Ireland had got it very right with Ireland's Ancient East. And many of the operators were reporting increases in visitor



Anthony Beale; The Central;
The Headfort Arms.



numbers as a result of this new brand.

In conclusion, if you want to be successful in the hospitality sector you need to: have a clear vision (what you want to be and achieve); have consistency in the product, in the service and with your team; love meeting people; work hard but also learn how to share the load with key people; have experts who can help you gain clarity; have the space to think strategically and develop

systems; and know that you can succeed in spite of fear. Everyone has fear but the ones that succeed still take action in spite of their fears.

About the Author:

Anthony Beale is a certified business coach, consultant, and sales and service trainer for the hospitality industry. He specialises in the systemisation of businesses.

O'Grady's ON THE PIER

*Seafood Restaurant specialising in Oysters, Mussels,
Fresh Fish, Crabs, Scallops and Lobster*

OPENING HOURS:

Lunch 12:30-4:00pm | Dinner 6.00 -10.00pm

Only 6km from Galway

Ireland's Wild Atlantic Way Restaurant 2016

To make a reservation or contact us:

Tel: 091-592 223

www.ogradysonthepier.com

SEAPOINT, BARNA, CO, GALWAY

