



MARKETING
PUBLIC RELATIONS
EVENT COORDINATION

CASE STUDY

Tequila Tasters

Blue Agave Mexican Cantina

March – Sept. 2002

Overview

The Blue Agave Mexican Cantina opened in Downtown Scottsdale in January 2001 and slowly built a reputation for quality Mexican-inspired dishes and a great happy hour. It had a steady customer base, but was not identifying and tracking it. Publicity efforts garnered regular mentions for the restaurant in newspapers, magazines and television, but the summer months were coming and more was needed. The owners also wanted to shift from the happy hour reputation and raise awareness for its wide selection of tequilas. A Tequila Dinner in November 2001 partnered with a charity to raise money and publicity, but had low attendance in part because of the September 11 downturn.

Strategy

Tin Can Marketing assessed the successes and shortfalls of the Tequila Dinner. It had received media coverage on three television stations and highlighted new menu items that used tequila in the recipes. But outreach to potential attendees and new customers was hampered by the \$65 price tag and a stigma associated with tequila. Nobody wanted to get wasted on a Sunday evening.

Tin Can suggested an alternative to a formal dinner in the form of Tequila Tasters. These low-cost events were positioned to take the mystique out of tequila. For \$20, attendees would get four tasting samples of tequilas, a sampler plate of appetizers, a commemorative shot glass and tequila fun facts. The events would be held after work, from 6:00 – 7:30 making them informal get togethers for tequila lovers or the tequila curious.

The Blue Agave would get support for its liquor distributors in print, promotional and prize materials. The distributors also brought in their tequila experts to answer questions. This support made it a “no cost” event for the restaurant.

Results

The tasters started with a bang. The uniqueness of the events and the diversity of this misunderstood liquor piqued the interest of media. A preview piece of the first event in the East Valley Tribune helped attract 30 people. Future events generated regular highlighted calendar mentions in the entertainment sections of The Rep, Get Out and New Times.

The tasters provided a foundation for the Blue Agave's customer database, which went from a list of 50 friends and family to nearly 200 regulars. Distributors also were pleased with the events as each attendee became a tequila aficionado – and new customer.

Most importantly, the events were a new revenue source. Costs were covered by distributors, attendees typically ordered dinner and / or more drinks, and the lively atmosphere on an off night brought in people from off the street. Revenues for Tequila Taster nights increased an average of 10%.