

CASE STUDY

Engaging with small businesses

This case study is an example of a small business owner's experience of interacting with the TRiFOCAL project as part of a business working group event held in October 2017.

Background

The owner¹ of a wood-fire pizza catering business attended the TRiFOCAL event following an introduction from the Greenwich Corporation Development Agency (GCDA). The event was titled the "True Value of Food" and focussed largely on food waste reduction in the restaurant industry.



Photo: massimofusaro/Shutterstock.com

The event included several talks from industry experts such as Stephen Scuffell (executive chef for Crown Moran hotels) and was hosted by celebrity chef Cyrus Todiwala OBE, DL. It also included a lunch prepared by Cyrus made entirely of food that would have otherwise been thrown away.

The key objective of the event was to help businesses prevent edible food from going in the bin and influence their customers to do likewise while also introducing the concepts of food waste recycling and healthy sustainable eating. The session introduced attendees to the 'Your Business is Food; don't throw it away' materials that provide tools for saving money and increase profits by understanding where the food that ends up in the bin is coming from by measuring it and tracking reductions and cost savings using the calculator.

Prior Attitudes

The pizza business owner stated that attitudes towards food waste within the business were already good prior to attending the seminar. They were already "quite conscious of it" and addressing food waste was part of the approach they took when setting up the business. The owner had attended previous training sessions through the GCDA. They attended the session as part of their responsibility as a food business to do something about food waste: wasting food is wasting money and not good for business.

"I can see the benefits of reducing food waste and it's written into my business plan as part of sustainability for the business."

Activity

Following the seminar, the owner downloaded materials about managing food waste and a weekly record check of food waste from TRiFOCAL resource links. The mobile food industry is very different to fixed restaurants since customer numbers are dependent on turnout at events, but the

¹ Information from and about the business owner is anonymous as part of TRiFOCAL's independent evaluation.

owner still found the materials useful. The owner also evaluated their menu and changed their purchasing behaviours accordingly.

The owner typically buys produce on the day of an event they cater for. As a result of engagement in the TRiFOCAL event, the owner started to buy produce from the supermarket that was reduced in price and close to its sell by date. This saved the owner money but meant that edible food was also not thrown away. Any left-over produce from the business itself was used. For example, left-over dough was used to make bread and any left-over vegetables were given away within the owner's network.

Further actions taken were around portion control. By weighing out portions per pizza this allowed the business to work out not just cost per pizza, but also the cost of any food wasted.² The owner was positive about this, stating that they had learnt a lot from doing it.

The business saved money as a result of the action they took. At large events, they stated that they now never had more than £50 worth of food waste and suggested this was higher before. To extend any savings in the future, they hope to increase the number of private events they cater to, further reducing food waste due to fixed numbers at those events. The business incurred no additional costs for implementing these changes.

Conclusions and lessons learned

The TRiFOCAL engagement with this business owner met its aim. The business owner claimed to have reduced food waste through a series of actions and activities after the engagement, including attempting to influence their customers about the issue.

The resources introduced by TRiFOCAL focussed the business on actions to reduce food waste and allowed the owner to implement changes faster. Overall, the owner stated that they were satisfied with the event and the materials provided. They regularly checked the TRiFOCAL website and received email updates from the project team. The owner required no immediate support but commented that this may change if their business grows and they find themselves having to manage higher levels of produce.

Regarding improvements, the owner suggested follow-up events to keep people in the industry updated and for the face-to-face element. This correlates with feedback from other participants of TRiFOCAL business working group events who particularly valued the networking opportunities provided; additional business working group events were organised by TRiFOCAL.

Want to find out more?

The TRiFOCAL resource bank hosts materials relevant to this case study:

- View the [video series](#) recorded at the True Value of Food event in October 2017, featuring celebrity chef Cyrus Todiwala OBE, DL and Stephen Scuffell (executive chef for Crown Moran hotels).
- Access the business toolkit to make changes in your business:
 - UK-based businesses: [Guardians of Grub](#)
 - Businesses based outside the UK: '[Your Business is Food, don't throw it away](#)'
 - Any business: complementary materials on incorporating [healthy sustainable eating](#) and [food waste recycling](#) in hospitality and food service businesses.
- Read more about the TRiFOCAL business engagement approach in our case study: <http://resources.trifocal.eu.com/resources/case-study-trifocal-business-approach/>

² Food waste data was not available.