

# Blueprint for better ethical storytelling in foodservice

Identifying how to communicate ethics effectively in foodservice to allow consumers to act on their desire to use ethical credentials as a differentiating factor when choosing where to eat.



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## Executive summary



- **The ethical credentials of food are becoming more important to consumers** as sustainability concerns continue to rise up citizen, business and government agendas.
- **Consumers care**, but foodservice has failed to consistently share and market the ethical credentials of its products and operations.
- **The lack of signposting** in foodservice means consumers cannot use ethical credentials as a differentiating or deciding factor when choosing where to eat.



- **Ethical credentials and sustainable sourcing provide a huge commercial opportunity.** They build brand value and provide a massive opportunity for growth.
- **Consumers want to know more.** 67% say they would like to know more about the ethical credentials of food and products when they are eating out, but less than 17% say they find this information easily available.
- **Ethics attract customers.** 93% said knowing more about the ethical credentials of a company's food or products would or could influence where they choose to eat.
- **Ethical credentials can drive brands faster than market growth**, with Unilever's sustainable brands, including Knorr, Lipton and Hellmann's, growing 30% faster.



- **Operators must commit and communicate.** Operators should commit to using ethical products, and start communicating this better, ensuring information on ethical credentials is readily available to consumers, both in outlet and online. Consumers can then start using ethics as a differentiating factor when choosing where to eat out.
- **Operators need to turn staff into ambassadors.** Educating staff to ensure they are knowledgeable about company and product's ethical credentials turns them into valuable ambassadors who can answer questions and promote ethics to customers.
- **Producers and ethical marks need to work harder** to sell stories into foodservice. This includes being more proactive and imaginative about the way they engage with operators.
- **Silos must be broken down** to ensure procurement strategy is aligned with the operator's wider CSR/ sustainability agenda to prevent cost-conscious buyers blocking the purchase of ethical products. Chefs and procurement teams must also stop hoarding information and contacts that could be a valuable marketing currency.
- **Operators need to be proactive** and ask more of producers and ethical marks.
- **Operators must be open about what they are (and are not) doing** to get support on the journey. Social media and other channels can help by creating two-way dialogue with customers. Such open approaches make it more likely they will avoid criticism for issues not yet tackled.
- **The scope of what ethics means in foodservice must be widened** to incorporate health and sustainability.
- **Operators must team up** to bring collective pressure. Foodservice doesn't have the clout of retail but if key players band together, the pressure will be there to drive improvements.



## The need - provenance and ethical credentials matter

The ethical credentials of food are becoming more important to consumers but foodservice is lagging behind at signposting ethical products, choices and company credentials. Only a few operators clearly and consistently share and market the ethical credentials of their products and business.

A consumer survey carried out for this research found that 67% of consumers say they would like to know more about the ethics of food and products when they are eating out<sup>i</sup>. But less than 17% say they find it easy to find information on ethical credentials<sup>ii</sup>. Over 53% report that they always or sometimes consider ethical credentials, such as the use of higher welfare meat, sustainable fish or fairly traded products when choosing where to eat food on the go.

This is in line with other research<sup>iii</sup> that indicates that green credentials have gone mainstream. They may not be the main determiner, but consumers expect green credentials alongside attributes such as quality and functionality.

For example, a survey by the Sustainable Restaurant Association (SRA) found that 64% of consumers believe restaurants are not doing enough to tackle the social and environmental impact of their decisions<sup>iv</sup>. Meanwhile, a Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) survey found that 77% of fish and chip fans believe that all of the UK's fish and chip shops should stock certified sustainable fish. Crucially, 39% of the respondents stated they would be prepared to travel further to get it<sup>v</sup>.

So consumers care, but in foodservice, customers can't usually choose between a similar ethical and 'non-ethical' option side-by-side on the shelf (or on the high street) as they can in retail. This is important because the resonance between an outlet and its ethical credentials could be the differentiating factor that drives the customer to choose one eatery over another.

### Ethical credentials: a definition

This report defines ethics/ethical credentials in foodservice as a commitment to higher social, environmental or welfare standards. Ethical credentials may be focussed on just one area – for example, fair treatment and pay for workers – or many, and encompass elements such as environmental stewardship, sustainable sourcing, higher welfare or free range meat and eggs, sustainable fish, organic and local/national sourcing. Ethics is also increasingly expanding to include a commitment to nutrition and health.



## A blueprint for better storytelling

This research report aims to address that balance by creating a blueprint for better ethical storytelling in foodservice. It does this in two ways.

The first is to describe how producers, ethical marks and operators can ensure that information about ethical credentials flows better along the supply chain to the consumer.

The second is to describe the most effective methods for ethical storytelling in the hospitality environment.

## Ethics affect brand value

According to a YouGov and GT Nexus survey, young consumers are concerned about ethics, sustainability and product quality. 55% of millennials (consumers aged 18-34) had changed their favourite brand in the last year. 28% said they switched because they felt that the company was not treating workers fairly, whilst 22% changed allegiances due to concerns about the brand's environmental record.

Consumers are searching out products with credible, audited supply chains, following increasing levels of mistrust among shoppers<sup>vi</sup>, especially around food production, in part fuelled by the horsemeat scandal of 2013. This is coupled with a heightened awareness of how food is produced and a growing scepticism of the food industry. Consumers are much more informed about food and where it comes from.

This increased interest in provenance, authenticity and 'local' sourcing has led to a growth in products seen to embody these characteristics, and has driven the growth in organic catering, which has seen a rise of 15.2%<sup>vii</sup>.

Investors and NGOs are also putting pressure on foodservice over issues such as health and ethics.

*"People are conscious of ethics and sourcing across all areas of their lives – there is a ripple effect. It's an interesting time. Ethics are really important to the younger generation. They can find information very easily and are actively looking for it."*

**Lin Dickens, marketing director and mentor,  
Bartlett Mitchell**



*"Foodservice is a blind spot. Consumers are used to looking for the MSC logo on packs in the supermarket, but foodservice hasn't developed in the same way as a result of not being put under the same level of scrutiny. There are real issues of 'greenwashing' in the foodservice sector where companies regularly say: 'we source sustainably' but these claims often won't stack up because of a lack of proven traceability and third-party certification."*

**George Clark, UK commercial manager,  
Marine Stewardship Council**

## Ethics under cover

Yet information about the ethical credentials of food and food-related products are hard to find in hospitality. Foodservice has been under a lot less scrutiny than the retail sector. Consumers haven't yet come to routinely expect to see information or ethical kite marks on menus or on products to demonstrate ethical attributes, such as higher welfare meat. Yet our research indicates that 73% of them would like to see information about ethical credentials on the menu.

Insiders admit that even those operators that do specify certain basic standards for products, such as the use of organic milk in tea and coffee or childrens' meals for example, may be reluctant to publicise it because it could raise questions as to why only the one product line, such as milk, is organic, and not others, such as yoghurt or ice cream.

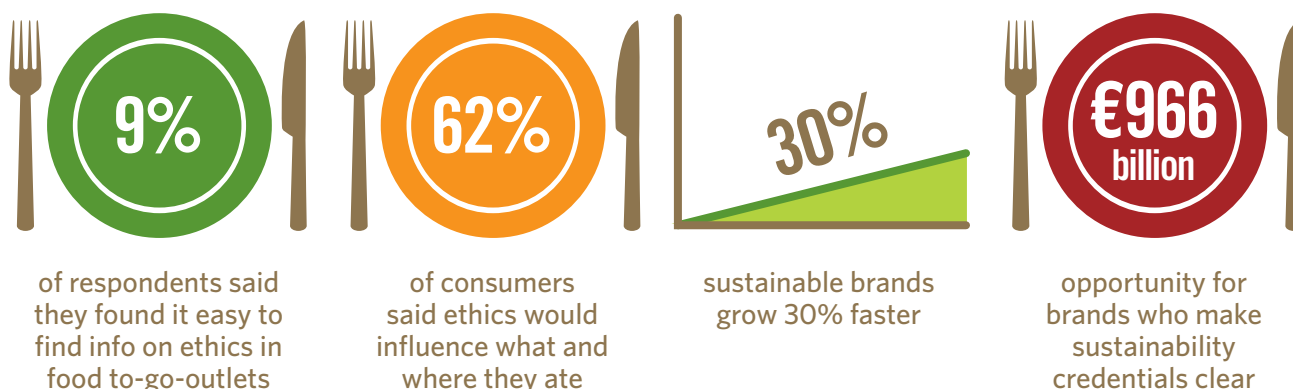
In addition, many caterers are reluctant to give space to ethical storytelling because of their desire to reduce 'noise' in an already cluttered hospitality environment.



**73% of consumers  
would like to see ethical  
info on menus**



## The sell - ethics provide commercial opportunity



### Ethical sourcing as a solution

Ethical sourcing answers the consumer need for provenance and transparent, credible supply chains. It typically encompasses attributes such as fair trade, higher welfare meat, sustainably sourced fish, organic and local sourcing (see definition box). With the health agenda rising in importance, ethics in foodservice is gradually expanding to include nutrition and health.

In a Footprint survey<sup>ix</sup>, 62% of respondents said that knowing more about the ethical credentials of a company's food and products would influence what and/or where they chose to eat (and a further 31% said it might). Over 73% wanted to see this information on the menu. 57% wanted to see it on signs in the outlet.

### Ethical signposting in short supply

Yet for consumers, the high street can seem like an ethical desert, with signposting few and far between. Only 9% of respondents said they found it easy to find information about the ethical credentials of food and products in food-to-go outlets, and only 17% found it easy to find information in restaurants.

It is only those operators whose commitments to ethical sourcing are part of their core business ethos, such as the Jamie Oliver Restaurant Group, Starbucks, Leon Restaurants, Pret A Manger and McDonald's, who really celebrate the ethical credentials of their products in a significantly visible way on the high street.

The launch of the Soil Association's audited ethical restaurant marks aimed at consumers: 'Food for Life served here' and 'Organic served here' should help diners in contract catering environments more easily identify restaurants whose credentials have been audited.



## Ethics support high street sales

Ethical credentials and sustainable sourcing translate into good business. In 2015, the brands that Unilever put to ‘purpose’ as part of their Sustainable Living Plan grew 30% faster than the rest of the business and delivered nearly half of growth in 2015<sup>xi</sup>. This includes three of the company’s biggest brands: Hellmann’s (free-range eggs), Knorr (sustainable farming) and Lipton Tea (Rainforest Alliance). Other Unilever research<sup>xii</sup> found a third of consumers (33%) are now choosing to buy from brands they believe are doing social or environmental good. It concluded that a €966 billion opportunity exists for brands that make their sustainability credentials clear.

McDonald’s too saw substantial business uplift when it repositioned itself a few years ago to serve Rainforest Alliance tea and coffee, and committed to buying British with many other product lines. Bartlett Mitchell consistently note a typical 20% uplift in sales when it introduces ‘Perkee’, its fairly traded coffee brand, in its client sites. Last year, Leon Restaurants recorded a 7.8% growth in like for like sales, adding to the previous year’s 23%. And in the summer of 2016, the company secured a funding deal of £19m with OakNorth Bank to facilitate Leon’s regional expansion. The ‘natural’ fast food restaurant chain attributes this growth to its strong ethical stance.

“OakNorth Bank were happy to lend to us based on the way we do things – that is, doing the right thing, not necessarily the easy or cheap thing,” explains Orla Delagry, head of communications, Leon Restaurants.

Selfridges had a dramatic uptake in footfall in the month after they announced they had been awarded the Soil Association’s Catering Mark. The independent chippie, the Kingfisher Fish and Chip Shop, saw its sales increase by 20% when it hit the record books and the headlines for serving the highest number of sustainable fish on its menu.

A survey by the National Restaurant Association found that nearly all of the Top 20 Food Trends in 2015 related to sustainability and health<sup>xiii</sup>. Unilever’s own consumer research found that 54% of consumers want to buy more sustainably. Consumers want it all – high-performing products, at the right price and with a purpose that they can connect with.

*“People are genuinely interested. We know people travel further distances to come to our shop rather than using their local one. Breaking the record to get highest number of sustainable fish on our menu generated a massive amount of conversations and increased sales by 20% overnight.”*

**Craig Maw, owner, Kingfisher Fish and Chip Shop, winner of the Best MSC UK Restaurant Menu 2016**





## Ethics help clinch deals for contract caterers

Contract caterers report that their commitment to ethical values can be hugely valuable in winning and retaining contracts. Many have committed to ethical accreditation and initiatives across the board, such as Compass Group's routine use of fairly traded sugar. Others use their corporate commitment to ethical sourcing as a lever to drive their clients into committing to using a wider range of ethical products than they would naturally consider.

Some have even designed their own, ethically or sustainably-focussed ranges. For example, Sodexo has Green & Lean, a set of menus designed to be healthy for both people and planet. Compass Group has the 'EATFAIR' retail bakery concept, taking a lead in advertising the Fairtrade credentials of composite products like baked goods, whilst also highlighting often overlooked commodities such as sugar. EATFAIR sells bakery goods made with Fairtrade ingredients whilst also giving an additional 5p donation to Fairtrade projects for each product sold.

*"For our clients, we are part of their supply chain – why wouldn't they want us to be ethical? There are only benefits, no down sides. And it makes commercial sense. When we introduce fairly traded coffee in our sites – sales go up by about 20%."*

**Lin Dickens, marketing director and mentor, Bartlett Mitchell**

## All the way up the supply chain

Distributors and suppliers have also been reacting to increased demand for ethical products in foodservice by massively expanding their range of fairly traded, free range, MSC, higher welfare and items with other ethical properties. Bidvest Foodservice even produced a guide for its clients to explain what all the different accreditation schemes mean and to highlight the range the distributor stocked in each.

*"It's the centre of the conversations we've been having – if you're a caterer, how do you make ethical choices in a world of paper cups, sustainable fish, animal welfare and so on?"*

**Catherine Hinchcliff, head of corporate marketing,  
Bidvest Foodservice**



### Ethics is an important recruitment tool

Many caterers also report that sustainability and good business ethics are an important recruitment and retainment tool. One shared that the most common questions asked by graduates focus on sustainability and ethics. Ensuring that it is easy for potential recruits to know about ethical programmes and approaches is also key.

“People want to work for ethical companies,” explains Lin Dickens, marketing director and mentor, Bartlett Mitchell. “Bartlett Mitchell have strong retention figures, which is unusual in hospitality. In our team survey, our ethical stance is always top. High staff turnover stats are horrific in terms of costs to businesses. I recently received an email from a client’s employee applauding Bartlett Mitchell’s credentials saying it was ‘one of the reasons I enjoy coming to work!’ There’s a sea change happening. There is no way I would have got an email like that a few years ago.”

#### Case study: Ethics in action

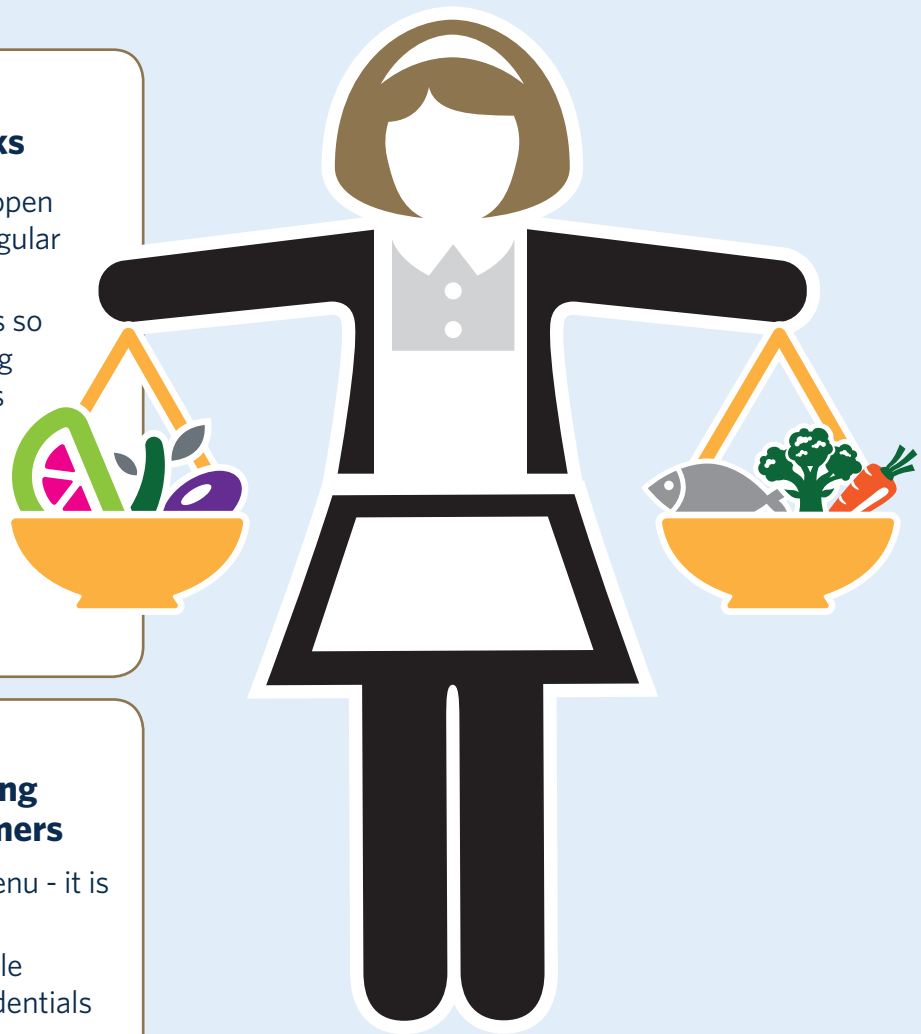
Fairtrade premiums enabled sugar cane farmers in Jamaica to make 30% more income because they could reliably get their cane to the mill. Cane starts losing sucrose once it is cut, but badly maintained vehicles meant that contractors employed to take the cane to the mill often failed to turn up on time, resulting in farmers losing up to 25% of their yield. Farmers decided to use the Fairtrade premium to invest in contractors’ truck parts and proper contracts. The result? A 30% uplift in income.



### The solution

#### - producers and ethical marks

- Keep communication channels open with operators so they have a regular flow of information
- Get high level buy in from clients so buyers are supported in choosing products with ethical credentials
- Target store managers who have the flexibility to run ethical promotions
- Educate staff in outlets by including ethical marketing on packaging



### The solution

#### - winning strategies for selling ethical credentials to customers

- Put ethical credentials on the menu - it is where customers expect it
- Train staff - they are an invaluable touchpoint to communicate credentials and ethics
- Create advocates by getting staff to meet producers
- Make it personal by using human stories
- Show customers their impact to motivate them
- Keep messages simple - too much info will confuse people
- Use shorthand - like established logos - to make message simple
- Demonstrate "what's in it for me?"
- Think interactive for maximum effectiveness
- Harness social media to engage directly with the consumer
- Use newsletters to build stories over time
- Use every opportunity and touch point to tell stories
- Think subliminally to communicate messages

### The solution

#### - operators

- Focus more on ethics in outlets
- Turn staff into ethical ambassadors
- Buyers need to be unblocked by ensuring procurement strategy prioritises ethical products
- Ensure chefs and procurement teams share ethical stories
- Get marketing teams to meet producers so communications can use producer stories
- Be proactive and ask more of producers and marks
- Be open about what you are (and are not) doing
- Widen responsibility to incorporate health into sustainability
- Bring collective pressure



## The solution - producers and ethical marks

### Producers and ethical marks need to work harder to sell stories into foodservice

Foodservice supply chains are typically long and complicated. This means ethical features, benefits and stories can be lost before they get to the outlet, making it harder for producer stories and ethical benefits to reach consumers.

This research demonstrates that foodservice is interested in ethical credentials and sustainable sourcing but that prioritising ethical storytelling in outlets is not at the top of most catering companies' agendas.

The solution? Producers and ethical marks need to work harder to sell stories into foodservice. This can be done in four ways:

#### 1 Keep communication channels open

Keeping a regular flow of information from producer/ethical mark to operator is a key way to ensure that operators are aware of how ethical benefits and stories can fit into their campaigning and promotional activity. If the producers and marks aren't proactive, it leaves the operators to dig around, which often leads to opportunities being missed.

*"We want producers and ethical marks to share information with us, including videos and images. We can then share and use these in the most relevant way. It also allows us to ask further questions and build up the stories we share within the business."*

**Katie Howard, head of project management,  
Foodbuy (Compass Group UK & Ireland)**

#### 2 Get high level buy in

Directly approach senior management to sell the importance of ethical procurement and sustainable sourcing and how it ties in to the client's company-wide strategy.

### 3 Target store managers

Identify and target store managers who have the flexibility to run their own on-site promotions so that information, collateral and buy-in goes straight to those who have the ability to share it with the end consumer.

### 4 Educate the gatekeepers

Include messaging on crates, boxes and packaging to use every available opportunity to communicate the benefits of ethical credentials to staff in outlets. Include samples of marketing collateral such as posters in boxes so it ends up in the hands of staff, with clear messages that more copies, information, help and marketing materials are available.

#### **Producers need to be careful of causing consumer confusion**

The plethora of existing marks means that many operators only opt for those that already have strong recognition and which allow complex messages to be transmitted in a logo, such as with the Fairtrade mark which has a 95% awareness rating. This means that an operator does not have to spend time explaining what its offer is; it just has to show the mark.

However, there is industry concern that the movement of some big brands, such as Cadbury's, towards developing their own ethical branding, albeit one overseen by the Fairtrade Foundation in Cadbury's case, will cause consumer confusion and ultimately undermine the value of established marks



## The solution - operators

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### 1 Focus more on ethics in outlets

Consumers do care about ethical credentials when they're eating out. However because ethical information is currently so hard to come by, consumers are not able to use it as part of their decision-making criteria.

If more operators provided information about ethics, ensuring information on ethical credentials is readily available to consumers, both in outlet and online, the indications are that consumers would use it. With 73% of survey respondents saying they wanted to see ethical credentials on the menu, this seems to be a minimum requirement.

### 2 Turn staff into ambassadors

At the heart of every interaction, staff have the potential to become valuable ethical ambassadors, especially as consumers want to know about ethical credentials from staff, as well as on menus and signage<sup>xiv</sup>.

Educating staff to ensure they are knowledgeable about company and product ethics has two major benefits. The first is that it enables them to answer customer questions and communicate information about ethics unbidden, especially as ethical credentials make interesting and engaging talking points when chatting to customers. This is also important as not being able to answer a customer question on a topic such as fairly traded products or animal welfare communicates a lack of genuine business commitment to the issue, potentially devaluing any efforts that have been undertaken.

The second is that better awareness of the company's ethical and sustainable commitments typically increases staff loyalty.

Producer visits are also a powerful engagement tool. Company-wide competitions for recruits for producer visits can be really effective at creating staff engagement and excitement across the board. For those who go, the experience often creates long lasting impressions and inspiration, turning them into advocates or champions for the cause.

### 3 Buyers need to be unblocked

Procurement strategy must be aligned with corporate strategy. Producers and suppliers of ethical or sustainably sourced products consistently report that getting cost-conscious buyers

to commit to products that carry ethical premiums is hard. This can be especially challenging in cases where the procurement team and buyers are not even direct employees of the business, but consultants or outside agencies.

The situation is aggravated additionally because procurement, producers and marketing teams often operate in silos. This means that buyers' priorities are not always aligned with an operator's wider CSR/sustainability/marketing agenda. However, for producers, it can be hard to cultivate relationships outside of the buying team. As one producer admitted, getting past buyers to talk about ethics was challenging because "no-one else wants to talk to you", with approaches to other members of senior management largely fruitless.

"Our typical conversations are with buyers, not marketing or sustainability teams, and buyers are usually interested in the best value for the business," explains Fraser Chynoweth, foodservice sales director, Tate & Lyle Sugars. "Buyers are not always aligned with that company's CSR agenda because they are prioritising cost."

A few, such as Compass and McDonald's, have taken care to link the buyers and procurement and marketing teams to the corporate responsibility team to enable corporate responsibility to explain and specify ethical standards. However, this is not an industry norm.

"We're very conscious of the responsibility that goes with sourcing," explains Katie Howard, head of project management, Foodbuy (Compass Group UK & Ireland). "We're aware of the impact our purchasing decisions can have, so take great care to find ethical, sustainable products. It's not necessarily about the cheapest product, but the best product for the consumer and the environment."

## **4 Ensure chefs and procurement teams share**

It isn't just producers who suffer from silos. Chefs and procurement teams often inadvertently hoard information and contacts, failing to realise the importance of passing information on to marketing teams, leaving them unable to share positive procurement stories. Teams must be made aware of the value of sharing, and systems should be put in place to ensure it happens regularly.

## **5 Get marketing teams out meeting the producers**

Industry, marketing and PR professionals agree that creating a personal connection enables the creation of advocates, which leads to the better selling of stories. Getting marketing teams out to meet producers will give them a rich vein of material that can be used in sustained campaigns across multiple marketing channels.

"Getting out to meet the producers has been the missing link," says Stephanie Howson, restaurants editor, Jamie Oliver Group. "When you meet these people, like our Norfolk chicken farmers, they have so much to say. They really care about what they are producing but if I hadn't done that digging - I would never know, and would not be able to include that information in our marketing campaigns."

## 6 Be proactive and ask more of producers and marks

Producers and ethical marks agree that, apart from a few notable exceptions, operators are not particularly proactive in seeking information. The operators who are communicating their ethics more successfully, such as Compass Group's work with the Fairtrade Foundation and Tate & Lyle Sugars, tend to be the ones who have forged partnerships with producers and ethical marks to work with them on running consumer-facing campaigns.

"Whilst ethical marks are important we also invest time to build close relationships with our suppliers who are generally good at supporting us. This ensures we know what our suppliers are doing and build a story to help our customers understand," explains Julia Edmonds, managing director, Lexington Catering. "Many of our suppliers come out to client sites and talk about the ethics behind their products. We've also developed an app that allows consumers to search for more information on individual products and our suppliers."

"Developing relationships is very important," agrees Matt Drew, head of food and beverage, National Trust. "We've got a great relationship with Clipper and the Soil Association. This is down to having shared values, and their keenness, openness and willingness to work in partnership. I do think that the foodservice industry at large has a role to play in getting stories across to customers and it needs to be proactive. We all have a duty to effect change."

## 7 Be open about what you are (and are not) doing

Operators must be open about what they are (and are not) doing to get support on the journey. Social media and other channels can help by creating two-way dialogue with customers, whilst consumer surveys and other customer engagement methods can pinpoint the issues that customers care about most.

By its very nature, transforming a supply chain to become more ethical and sustainable takes time, which often translates into operators making changes incrementally and prioritising certain products. This can make some operators reluctant to publicise the good work they are doing in case it encourages the media and consumers to find fault, potentially raising questions about the products or practices that have not yet been tackled.

However, whilst understandable, this approach does not enable consumers to choose between an outlet that is working hard behind the scenes and one that is not even trying, leaving the consumer unable to even factor ethical considerations into their decision-making. High levels of consumer support for ethical credentials in foodservice indicate that those companies who are working hard to be ethical will benefit from publicising their efforts in an honest, transparent and authentic way; one that acknowledges that their efforts are part of a journey.

Even those companies that are doing it well, such as the Jamie Oliver Restaurant Group, which is firmly committed to animal welfare, admits that their messaging is inconsistent with information on welfare on the overall Jamie Oliver Group site but not on individual restaurant websites. However, a provenance campaign for 2017 is set to tackle this with provenance stories a huge promotional focus.



## **8 Widen responsibility to incorporate health and sustainability**

The scope of what ethics means in foodservice is widening to encompass all impacts, be they in health, fair pay, working conditions or the environment.

When operators start to look at their impacts, many find that the majority – in some cases as much as two thirds – of their impacts come from their supply chain, and not their own operations.

Truly responsible and ethical businesses are taking this on board, and altering their long-term strategy to address the issues that their supply chain raises, whether that is reducing the water use in a business-critical crop like tomatoes or looking at ways to reduce emissions from chicken production.

## **9 Bring collective pressure**

Often the issue for foodservice operators is that one company's buying power alone isn't enough to force its supply chain to change. Foodservice doesn't have the clout of retail but if key players band together, the pressure will be there to drive improvements.



## The solution: winning strategies for selling ethics to consumers

### Effective strategies for ethical storytelling in hospitality

Based on detailed industry research, this 13-point guide outlines the strategies which effectively communicate ethics to consumers, taking into account the challenges of an already cluttered foodservice environment. Its purpose is to make it easy for foodservice to meet the consumers' currently unfulfilled desire to use ethical criteria as part of their decision making criteria when choosing where to eat.

#### 1 Put ethical credentials on the menu

67% of people want to know more about the ethics of food and products when eating out and 73% want to see that information on the menu. A symbol or one word descriptor will do if space is tight. The key is to get it out there where consumers can see it.

*"The expression 'food tastes better when you know its story' is seemingly true. Without a shadow of a doubt, there is growing consumer appetite for this information. We want to help consumers but also inspire the industry and other fish and chip shops."*

**Craig Maw, owner, Kingfisher Fish and Chip Shop**

#### 2 Train staff

Staff are an invaluable key touch point to communicate ethical credentials, and they have the power to really bring ethics alive. After menus and signage, our survey found that consumers want to know about ethics from staff. Yet staff can often be in the dark about ethical credentials such as whether meat is higher welfare, and if it is, what that actually means.

Training to ensure staff understand the ethical components of menus and practices means that they are then able to communicate ethical credentials unbidden, as well as answer any questions consumers have, fully and credibly. It is also a way to engage staff on their company's sustainability commitments, which typically increases staff loyalty.

### 3 Create advocates

Taking staff members to meet producers can be hugely inspiring, often leaving lasting impressions that transform employees into advocates. Company-wide competitions for recruits for producer visits can drive interest at the start of a campaign, and then the winning employees can provide marketing collateral for the whole year.

### 4 Make it personal

It's basic marketing, but human stories sell. Using photos, individual names and positive stories creates a connection between the customer and the producer. As with all communications, the more relatable a story is, the more effective it will be. Find ways to link consumers with producers so people realise they share the same hopes, aspirations and fears, and that they have more in common than they have apart. It tells them, "when you buy this product, you affect somebody far away, but it is someone like you and not someone extraordinary".

*"People need to feel part of the story – and they want to know how that story ends. So, you can say that 500 people in Malawi got fresh water because of Thirsty Planet water, but better if it's specific and personal. So tell them that because that outlet sold a certain number of bottles of Thirsty Planet water, that person helped to provide fresh water for a specific number of people in a particular village in Malawi."*

**Lin Dickens, marketing director and mentor, Bartlett Mitchel**

### 5 Show them their impact

Linking a consumer's choice with a direct, positive impact, provides motivation and reward, and gives people that warm glow that makes them feel they've done something good. Innocent's 'Chain of Good' campaign, in which a humorous ad linked average consumer 'Mark's' decision to buy an innocent smoothie in the UK with good things happening to schoolboy 'Joseph' and his family in Uganda, was a light-hearted and effective campaign which succeeded in linking consumer action with tangible benefits for producers.

### 6 Keep it simple

Trying to communicate too much in one hit will create information overload. Choose several key messages that are most relevant to your business and focus on communicating these. Boil

it down, make it clear and concise and keep messages simple, without being simplistic, so people can link their action of choosing an ethical product or business with a tangible result. Tate & Lyle Sugars' sugar sachet stories did this effectively by including twitter-length stories from Fairtrade cane farmers on the backs of sugar sachets.

## **7 Use shorthand**

Well-known ethical marks convey messages simply and clearly. The plethora of ethical marks, and their varied nuances, can often cause confusion amongst the general public. However, many of the well-established marks have spent a long time building up consumer trust and brand identity, making them a valuable shorthand for conveying complex messages and trust to consumers.

## **8 Demonstrate "what's in it for me?"**

Answer the unconscious question of "what's in it for me?" Look for the angles that show how an initiative is beguiling and interesting – and then demonstrate why that's good for the consumer too.

## **9 Think interactive**

Interactive elements are hugely effective, so think questions, live feeds, Twitter engagement, apps, QR codes and competitions. So, in a fish and chip shop, think digital menu boards which highlight MSC fish on the menus, videos running in shop showing the sustainability story of the fish and QR codes on the box which tell consumers where their fish was caught and by which boat, much like MSC award winner the Kingfisher Fish and Chip shop has done.

## **10 Harness social media**

Social media, and especially short YouTube style videos, can be hugely effective at getting information out there. Forums like Twitter also allow companies to engage directly with consumers, to answer questions and address concerns.

## **11 Use newsletters**

Staff and customer newsletters are effective ways to communicate ethical efforts, with updates and stories presented and built upon over time. Leon, Jamie's Italian, Nando's, as well as many of the contract caterers' clients, all use these as regular opportunities to tell stories, as well as to build trust and knowledge.

## 12 Use every opportunity

Use every touch point you can to tell stories – from menus, posters and table talkers to putting messages on napkins and greaseproof wraps. Every interaction is an opportunity.

## 13 Think subliminally

From Costa dusting a chocolate frog on top of a cappuccino to bring to mind their partnership with Rainforest Alliance, to displaying fresh produce to indicate health and freshness, there are multiple subtle ways that messages can be transmitted, so whilst transparency is key, you can reinforce subliminally.

### Research description

Footprint Intelligence was commissioned to conduct this piece of independent research on ethical storytelling in foodservice by Tate & Lyle Sugars. The research for this report comprised a mix of desk-based research and semi-structured interviews with foodservice experts and ethical mark representatives, as well as other opinion leaders linked to industry. Over 30 experts were interviewed. An industry focus group also brought operators, ethical marks and suppliers/producers together to debate the issues. Footprint Intelligence is indebted to the industry experts who generously gave their time and insights for interviews and for the focus group.

A consumer views survey of 100 participants was also conducted by recruiting participants in person in London, and through recruiting volunteers through social networks.

- i Footprint survey on ethical storytelling conducted December 2016-Jan 2017
- ii Footprint survey on ethical storytelling conducted December 2016-Jan 2017
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## About Footprint Intelligence

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With the ever-shifting sustainability debate, accurate intelligence, enabling businesses to make informed decisions, is vital. Footprint Intelligence is Footprint Media Group's research and analysis division helping companies develop successful strategies in the context of responsible business practices.

Footprint Intelligence aims to drive, promote and share best practice by helping industry to answer some of the most pressing sustainability questions of our time by taking on the challenge of asking tough questions and finding answers. We use research and industry insight to bring industry together to find workable solutions, revealing opportunities, trends and challenges.

### Report author

Amy Fetzter is head of research and analysis for Footprint Media Group. A journalist, author and consultant specialising in sustainability, Amy is passionate about helping individuals and organisations become more sustainable and more successful. She is the co-author of "Climb the Green Ladder: Make Your Company and Career More Sustainable". She has also worked for Sodexo, Hewlett Packard and Unilever. Amy has an MSc with distinction in sustainable development from the University of Surrey, winning the Roland Clift Award for Environment and Sustainability Research.

### Analysts

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