

1 RED ENVELOPE DAYS A SUCCESS

JAMES BAINBRIDGE MBII
THE TILBURY, DATCHWORTH, HERTS

We always aim for consistency and quality. The more people are being careful with their money, the more they're going to look for good quality that's value for money.

We're doing a lot of targeted marketing with our local communities, with special offers made to people who are on our mailing list. We've just finished our Red Envelope promotion: anyone dining with us during December received a Red Envelope, which offered 25%, 50% or 100% off a meal in January and February, so it brought people back. They don't know what's in it until after their meal. It kept us as busy in January and February as we are in March to May. And for quiet times, we'll email our mailing list with a discount or free drinks offer.



2 MAXIMISING FUNCTION SPACE

BUDDY LOVE MBII
FLYING FISH, WINDMILL HILL, SOMERSET

We've got a wedding barn and fantastic function space, and I've been thinking of ways to maximise it. We've only got 17 weddings this year, which is not a lot, but it is something. But I've also had Platform Four, a theatre company from Winchester, staying here for two weeks to rehearse. The British Amateur Theatre Society is coming to practice for a show they're doing, and Taunton's Richard Huish College will use the space for their music students.

All of this activity in the barn is attracting new people and that's feeding into the restaurant. I'm going to continue to market the space as a practice venue for amateur societies, musicians and bands. Apart from that, we have a smaller, but high quality, menu. People are coming out, just not as often, so they're looking for a great, high quality experience.

TEN to ONE

AS WE LOOK AHEAD TO THE WARMER SPRING DAYS AND SUMMER MONTHS, NIGEL HUDDLESTON ASK MEMBERS...

'How do you plan to attract new customers and retain existing ones?'



3 GREAT GARDEN

TARA ADAMS MBII
THE GREYHOUND,
BROMHAM, WILTS

When we came to the pub six years ago there was old wooden decking, which we improved during lockdown by laying Indian stone and

covering it with marquees, creating more outdoor seating. In 'lockdown two', we built a beautiful garden kitchen. We're now finishing phase three. We've taken down the marquees – they were really great, especially as we didn't need planning permission, but they were quite ugly, so we've replaced them with a beautiful pergola. We're basically utilising our garden – in addition to indoors this year – which pretty much doubles the covers.

We've already got an event booked for the Jubilee weekend. There's a carnival procession in the village and after that we'll be firing up the barbecue and having a live band. We're looking forward to going full throttle when the better weather arrives.

4 PORK PIE NIGHTS

TERRY COLE
THE ROYAL OAK, CHAPEL ASH, W MIDS

To attract new customers you have to give people a reason to come, so we're trying new things: we have a Pork Pie Club on a Sunday night; we're doing quizzes again and we've changed our live music offer. We don't have big bands anymore, just acoustic music, which people like to come to listen to while they're having a meal and a chat.

Our Pork Pie Club is proving popular. We get eight or nine people on a Sunday night who wouldn't normally come in. It works by people nominating a pork pie from different butchers – most of the local independent butchers in the Black Country have their own twist on a pork pie, with black pudding or Branston or game, for example. So, we have a little bit of a feast with some cheese and pickles, then chat about the pie and rate it, before going back to the butchers to tell them how they've done. It's just a little social gathering really.





5 CHANGING THE MENU

COLUM MCCARTHY MBII
THE GREYHOUND HOTEL,
CARSHALTON, SURREY

Having an up-to-date menu and changing it not only seasonally, but also by lunchtime, evenings and at the weekend. Our weekends are about fantastic roasts, while for lunchtime we offer open sandwiches at the right price point. In the evenings, it's all about seasonal dishes – fish or meat, such as lamb during the spring.

We're driving our menu massively through social media. We start posting about our Sunday roasts on Tuesday, across all three platforms and continue right up until Sunday morning. We track our bookings and we're seeing the success of that. On a Sunday morning there might be 140 bookings, but then we hit the 9am social post and by noon we've got 40 more.

6 TALKING UP THE POSITIVES

SEAN WHITE MBII
QUEEN'S HEAD, PINNER, MIDDX



A big part of retaining customers has been about building confidence. Older people in particular have been cautious, although they have a loyalty to the pub and don't want to let us down. Our message is: "Things are normal; we're still

doing fine beers and excellent pizzas" to constantly talk up the positives.

We've got plans for early next year to expand with a new restaurant and function room at the back of the pub. We have a pizza offer, but we want to expand the food offer; at the moment we're 95% wet, but that will change. It's a co-investment with Greene King, and will show customers that we're investing and positive about the future.

7 TOP SERVICE AND GREAT QUALITY

TIM TOMLINSON MBII
THE WHITE CROSS, LANCS

We want to make sure we offer the best service, which has always been our number one priority. We used to have deals to attract people midweek and on quieter nights, but we've not restarted those yet, as it has been difficult with cost increases.

Summer is a good time for us and my focus is on getting the service back to pre-Covid levels. Before the pandemic we had a very experienced team, but with a new and



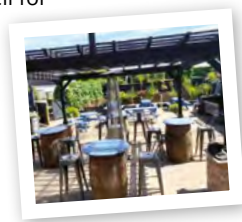
relatively young team and two years without much development and training, it's important to get them focusing on service. We will start some offers for Monday nights, but we've never been a big

discounter; it has always been more about the quality of service and growing trade.

8 THINKING ABOUT THE OUTSIDE

STEVE EDMUNDS FBII
THE SHIPPONS, IRBY, MERSEYSIDE

The main thing is the marquee. It first went up in April 2021; that's where the grant money was invested. We've been doing work to make it more of a permanent feature. It gives us an extra 44 covers and has made us think outside the box in terms of how we satisfy customers who are sitting outside. It has worked extremely well for us in terms of recovering from the pandemic a little bit. It's more of a European/continental feel we're trying to create in the courtyard at the back.



10 HERE FOR THE REGULARS

JEAN WILLIAMS
THE GRIFFIN INN, GRESFORD, WREXHAM

I'm just doing what I've always done [Jean has just notched up 60 years in the pub trade – read full story's on page 9]. It's just an old-fashioned pub. There's no food, no jukebox and we don't have Sky Sports. We have our regulars, and we're just hoping for the best.

We've got customers who we haven't seen for a couple of years and they're just coming back now, most of them. We have got new people coming as well, so hopefully everything will work out okay. We're not really doing anything differently; it's not that type of pub. It's knowing the regulars and being here for them. I think part of the trick is just looking like you're enjoying yourself.



9 EXPANDING THE OFFER

CHRIS BLACK MBII, LICENSEE OF THE YEAR WINNER 2021
PITYME INN, WADEBRIDGE, CORNWALL

We've just launched our new menu for spring and summer. We've expanded the offer to try and attract a wider group of consumers. It's more seaside-based with lots of locally-sourced fresh fish. We've broadened our vegan and vegetarian options to give more variety to people looking to cut down on their meat consumption.

We are currently just getting set with plans for our garden area, to create as much dining space as we can outside – and offering takeaways.

We're also recruiting heavily, so that we can open for longer hours in the summer and offer more food options throughout the day. It's taking a lot longer than we expected – we're recruiting across many platforms to give us the best chance.

Basically, we're just trying to get set for the summer: to broaden our appeal and make the most of every opportunity.

