

Ground Coffee Society

won over by digital ordering during COVID-19

Challenge

Like many, on 20th March, everything changed for the Ground Coffee Society. From a thriving and bustling artisan coffee and brunch cafe, it has been forced to adapt to circumstance, becoming a delivery only service offering coffee, brunch and groceries.

Prior to the pandemic, the popular coffee shop in South West London did offer takeaway but not delivery. It had purposefully steered away from pre-ordering as it was their perception that the human interaction and “stopping in” to get a coffee was part of culture. It was, they felt, what made its store and the independent UK coffee scene so compelling.

When the COVID-19 crisis hit, Ground Coffee Society was quick to react, ramping up the controls it had in place to protect staff, suppliers and customers. It followed all guidance on social distancing and supported the government directive to ensure it didn't attract large crowds.

Tim Grant, Managing Director of Ground Coffee Society explains, “In preparation for social restrictions, we decided to start a new takeaway service, adding a small market stall to the front of the shop from which coffee as well as care essentials and groceries could be ordered by members of the local community.”

With queues quickly building, the team realised the need for a management tool. They chose QikServe, an online ordering and payment portal which promised to have the service up and running within 48 hours. That decision has proved vital, it's helped it reduce queues and the team plan production around timed collection slots.

When the mandate to close eventually came, the team behind Ground Coffee Society was accepting of the decision. Understanding the ethical and legal reasoning, it closed the doors on the store entirely, moving first to a collection and delivery service, and then delivery only.

Solution

Today the business is occupying a dual space, both as a coffee shop and restaurant, and as a grocer. It is supplying its local area with in-house delivery and reviewing options for a broader delivery capability.

“Grocery is not what we, as a team, do. It's very new to us and long-term, it's unlikely to be retained as part of the business model. However, in these tough times, we believe there is a market for our coffee and brunch, as well as a need for treat boxes and groceries.”



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The community agrees. It has been extremely supportive of the efforts the Ground Coffee Society is making to serve them. People, it appears, want to put their money into local businesses, and this has proved heartening for the staff during this stressful time.

Results

Since launching the online ordering service, the business has taken 750 orders, with most customers already making 2 or more purchases. Groceries, like eggs and veg boxes are selling well, as is the coffee shop's traditional best seller, the flat white.

Part of this success can be attributed to marketing. The team admits this has been a challenge compared to what they're used to, however they have seen positive results from Facebook advertising and word-of-mouth has proved powerful. When customers discover an outlet serving good quality produce within government guidelines, they're telling their friends and neighbours so they can try it too.

Looking to the future, Ground Coffee Society feels positive, the events of today are allowing it to reinforce

its position and a support to its local community, something which has always been core to the company ethos.

"For any business continuing to operate, like us, it's going to be hard. What's easy, however, is to go into crisis mode and get drawn into the day-to-day. The key thing is to keep running the numbers, be precise in your direction and super clear in your communication.

In their own words...

"Once the pandemic has passed, and everyone starts to get back on their feet, we hope to continue pre-order and delivery, giving customers what they want as they return to normality. This experience has already changed the way we think about pre-ordering coffee for collection. We see how it can help us reach a wider range of customers, letting everyone enjoy the product in the way that they prefer."