



Breaking the Rules

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In the restaurant business there are certain “rules” you’re supposed to follow in order to be successful, but many operators break these rules and see sales and profits rise. Pizza Today takes a look at how operators are breaking five rules and flourishing:

- **Always set aside money for marketing.**

Two Boots, based in New York, has no marketing budget. “Instead, we give away about 10,000 slices of pizza each year,” says owner/co-founder Phil Hartman. “Getting our pizza into the mouths of those folks is a great opportunity to showcase our product.”

- **Don’t open on “quiet” days.**

When every restaurant in town is closed on Christmas Day and New Year’s Day, look for an open Russo’s NY Pizzeria. Owner Anthony Russo opens every day of the year besides Thanksgiving.

“Days (are) never so quiet that an operator loses a day of sales,” says New York City restaurant consultant Arlene Spiegel. “Reaching out to a new clientele should be the focus — not shutting down.”

- **Don’t expand too quickly.**

Tony Gemignani opened Tony’s Pizza Napoletana in San Francisco in 2009 and has grown to 11 pizzerias in less than six years. What’s vital — along with great employee infrastructure and a team that shares your passion — is finding good leases on your buildings, he says.

- **Launch with a grand opening.**

New York City’s Pizzeria Brunetti opened its doors with no fanfare in October 2013, which gave owner Jason Brunetti an extended, month-long “friends and family” situation — albeit with paying patrons, too.

- **Focus on entrées and alcohol — not side dishes.**

Entrées and alcohol may be the drivers for restaurant business while side dishes typically constitute three to five percent of sales. But at Whitewater, Wisconsin-based Toppers Pizza, Topperstix represent a quarter of annual sales.

