

Social Firms UK Annual Conference
Shaping The Future: Supportive Employment, Successful Businesses
28 June 2006

WORKSHOP vi: Making Impressions & Saying Ciao!

Facilitated by Sheila Kelly

Notes by: Lu Dash

Background:

Catering is often considered by those considering Social Firm or social enterprise development. Sheila Kelly of Café Nova Interchange (which has developed the licence of Café Ciao) discusses the attractions of catering, why these can sometimes prove fatal, and how mistakes can be avoided.

Key Points:

Objectives:

- Explore potential pitfalls
- Models of good practice
- How to identify support services/resources

Outcomes:

- Understanding the importance of health assessment
- Three issues that may be barriers in health related issues for people working (disabilities)
- Local/national services develop your enterprise.

Questions

1. Why is catering seen as an attractive proposition for setting up a Social Firm?
 - accessible
 - low start up
 - variety of roles/skills involved
2. What skills, knowledge and expertise is needed to set up a Social Firm?
 - highly regulated business
 - business experience (knowledge of market, market research, finance)
 - health & safety issues
 - that beneficiaries want to work in proposed 'Social Firm'
3. What are the key ingredients for a successful catering business/social enterprise?
 - good quality food
 - competitive prices
 - location, location, location
 - start-up costs

- good manager
- unique selling point(s)
- good relationships.

4. Why do catering businesses fail?

- Lack of planning
- Not understanding the market
- Assumptions incorrect
- Not responding to market/customer needs

Learning points:

- Project was funding led
- Being entrepreneurs
- Change of culture in social arm
- Our competitors – we could not sell tea/coffee
- over-optimistic of the market size
- insurance
- employing professionals/sub-contractor
- branding – whose name is it?