

MARKETING LEARNINGS FROM THE SUCCESS OF EL QUIM

I'm on an extended holiday in Spain and will not return to active duty until next month. So, I'm reposting articles. This article is about one of my favorite restaurants in Barcelona, El Quim. I hope you find it as nourishing and satisfying as I find this restaurant.

"La Boqueria," el Mercat de Sant Joseph, is the biggest market in Catalonia, and the oldest in Europe at more than 180-years. It is situated in the heart of Barcelona, on Las Ramblas. It is so large and is frequented by so many people, Barcelonans and tourists alike, that it is a city within a city. Within the more than 1000 stalls is El Quim a small countertop restaurant (actually, a stall) that feeds an average of 300 people each day for lunch. I'm currently in Barcelona and look forward to queuing-up for a countertop seat at El Quim to indulge in a few of the unique and delectable dishes being served there.



La Boqueria

El Quim De La Boqueria

El Quim is owned and operated by Quim Marquez Duran since 1986, the year La Boqueria celebrated its 150th-anniversary. The current and enduring success of El Quim is not due to its longevity. Rather its longevity is due to its success built upon the passion, skill and art of Quim. Where other restaurants in La Boqueria serve traditional Catalan fare such as Escudella (Catalan stew made from pork, chicken, chickpeas, vegetables, potatoes and spices), El Quim has dared to be different in those dishes and created totally new sensations (such as combining fruits with meat, which had not been done in Barcelona). Not different for difference's sake but a difference that showcases Quim's skills in delighting the palettes of his patrons.



Richard with Chef Duran



Kitchen at El Quim



Richard with his daughter Katie at El Quim

Quim backs-up his imagination with exceptional skill. His skill was born from his choosing to work, and learn from chefs, in leading restaurants at night, when La Boqueria was closed. While his day started in the wee hours of the morning (4:30) in his little stall in La Boqueria it ended in another restaurant the next morning (2:30), only to be repeated day in and out.

Quim honed his skills and allowed his art to express his imagination. He brought innovation to the market in cooking processes (vacuum packing), use and mix of ingredients and creating entirely new dishes such as:

- Deboned pig's trotters with onion black pudding
- Baby vegetable and baby squid timbale, beautifully presented
- Fried egg timbale with layers of Iberian ham and Piquillo peppers
- Eggs with foie gras and wild mushrooms
- Ox tail risotto
- Cheesecake with passion fruit marmalade



One of Quim's specialties featuring foie gras

La Vanguardia, the Spanish speaking newspaper, wrote, "Quim's fame is so well deserved that many of the city's restaurant owners go there for lunch before heading off to their respective businesses." Even Ferran Adria, the internationally acclaimed chef and proprietor of world-renowned El Bulli (which he closed to experiment and pursue new artistic freedom) dined at El Quim.

Quim states some of the valuable lessons he learned in a book published about him and his restaurant, El Quim de la Boqueria - 25-Years:

"To create, you have to connect with the product. And you only achieve this if your mind isn't on other things."

"I had noticed that many people demonized the egg, avoiding it, believing it was a second-rate food. I had to make them see that it was a fabulous product, with which hundreds of innovative and exquisite dishes could be made. A humble fried egg can be art if it's done well!"

"I didn't want to imitate anybody else. I wanted to surprise diners with unexpected and innovative preparation techniques, always based on traditional cuisine."

"I realized that I needed to keep growing, become more innovative, bold and daring."

In his wisdom borne from experience and imagination we marketers can learn valuable lessons from Senor Quim.

Make your marketing matter more:

1. ***Think differently*** - One of the most important yet overlooked principles in marketing is to *think* and *act differently*. There are four ways to compete: price, muscle, superior execution, and being different. We are not talking about being different for mere difference's sake. Our difference must be relevant to our target customer-segment and essential to winning them over.
2. ***Connect with your product*** - Understand your product, not the mere physical aspects of your products such as features and attributes. Oh yes, they are very important. But consider the whole product, which is made up of tangibles (i.e., the physical features and attributes) and intangibles (i.e., non-physical elements such as supporting services) that complete and add-value to your brand offering. Importantly, become a devotee of your product. Experience it. Use it. Know how it works and why. Understand where and how your customers interact with it. Do what you can to leverage its potential by evolving and building upon it.
3. ***Focus*** - It's all too easy to become distracted with the many scheduled meetings and conference calls, demands for reports, emails to be addressed, etc. Everyone is so busy that multi-tasking has become the norm rather than the exception. (By the way, studies suggest multi-tasking can lower your IQ by 10-points!) We are distracted with minutiae, which serves to dilute our attention and focus on things that really matter in making a difference. Where should we focus? We should focus on ways to better serve the customer than competition, develop a performance-driven culture and brand, create brand loyalty, and change the growth acceleration rate so we may drive incremental sales growth. Focus is about making choices regarding where to put our attention and resources. It means being choiceful in undertaking those things, and in ways, that really matter in making a difference.
4. ***Imagine the possibilities*** - Eggs are generic. So are most products regardless of the category. They work in the same ways, do the same things, and produce the same results. But like the egg, there is a multitude of ways in which your product

may be served-up to create a brand that your target customers will prefer. All it takes is imagination that transforms "what is" into "what can be" with the brand, its business model, its communications, and marketing initiatives within all marketing mix elements.

5. ***Go counter to the herd*** - If you want to create a leadership brand then it's essential to demonstrate leadership thinking. Following the herd is not, nor will ever be, leadership thinking. Challenge yourself, your team, and all assumptions. Experiment with the novel. In the words of designer Marty Neumeier, "When everybody zigs, zag."
6. ***Marry art with discipline*** – Quim's culinary delights are founded in traditional recipes and ingredients. He brings his art, inspired by his imagination and skill honed by thousands of hours in the kitchen, to create his masterpieces. One must have the discipline (i.e., the science of marketing consisting of proven principles, best practices, and quality processes) if art is to be meaningful. Art without discipline is self-indulgence. Discipline without art can be effective. But art married with discipline is brilliance.
7. ***Stay thirsty my friend*** - The "most interesting man in the world," who was the fictitious spokesperson for Dos Equis beer, reminded us to "stay thirsty." A HBR article proposed that success breeds "active inertia," which, in turn, leads to decline and failure. No matter what your success today you can never let down your guard. We need to be proactive in leading change, evolving our brand to bring about the future. We cannot do it unless we adhere to the advice of the former Dos Equis lead character, "Stay thirsty my friend." Quim is forever thirsty.



Stay thirsty my friend

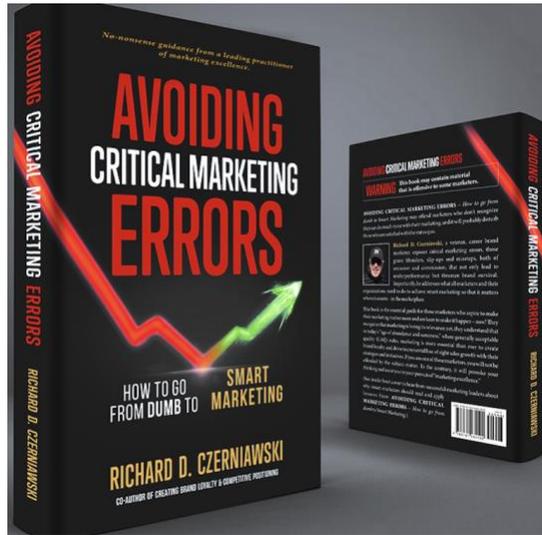
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Also, consider following me on LinkedIn

<https://www.linkedin.com/in/richarddczerniawski/> where I share my perspectives from 50 years of successful worldwide brand marketing experience in my blog THINK ABOUT IT each week.

Are you interested in making your marketing matter even more in 2023? Please read my most recent book, **AVOIDING CRITICAL MARKETING ERRORS: How to Go from Dumb to Smart Marketing**. Learn more here: <http://bdn-intl.com/avoiding-critical-marketing-errors>. It shares many of my learnings to help you avoid critical marketing errors

and suggests actions to take your marketing to the next level.



Stay thirsty my friends to make your marketing matter more!

Peace and best wishes,

Richard Czerniawski

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