

WORLD CUP

A time to keep your friends close and your suppliers even closer...

by Andy Mark

IS KNOCKING
ARE YOUR SUPPLIERS PREPARED
TO ANSWER?

The fans will be here. They have already booked. At the time of writing, FIFA's official travel partners in the UK were frantically trying to keep up with demand for travel/ticket/accommodation packages and a complete sellout was imminent. Over and above the thousands of fans on their way to our shores is a significant media contingent and support personnel corps. They will arrive several weeks before the event kicks off on 11 June 2010 and stay for some time afterwards. We're talking about an event twenty times bigger than the Rugby World Cup, the enormity of which has perhaps not filtered down to the public. It seems that the organisers have done everything right to ensure the success of the biggest sporting spectacle in the world. The stadiums are certainly ready.

If there is a grey area, it will be around transport issues; even with the 2 000 extra busses imported for the event, car hire and local flights are likely to pose something of a challenge for visiting fans. The teams will be using chartered aircraft flying into ancillary airports situated close to the games, so for them turning up on time for their matches seems assured. Of course, you probably won't have to do much travelling during the event, because you will be hard at work running your establishment.

With all the planning being done on a national level, it's perhaps time to spend a few hours contemplating your business and how your own preparations for the World Cup are going. It's what the insurance industry call 'enterprise risk management' and if you are going to maximise your opportunities and minimise your risks, the time spent is essential. First off, marketing your establishment may not be the most important thing on your agenda. With a massive influx of tourists you may have all the clients you can handle anyway. Any attempt at ambush marketing the event will see the FIFA police come down hard. It could just be that the best strategy is to keep on doing whatever marketing is working for you right now.

What could be of much more importance to your personal World Cup success is to manage your supplier relationships better than you ever have before. First prize is to try and obtain the personal cell numbers of critical decision makers at every one of your suppliers – the last thing you want is to be put on hold during times of crisis:

- Imagine the disaster if your credit card machine goes offline, even for a couple of hours on a busy night? Call your bank and find out what arrangements they have in place should you need them over this period. The same goes for your POS support people.

- Review your entire supplier database and have a contingency plan on hand. What if your establishment, famous for its ribs is suddenly faced with a shortage of the product? This is a very real threat. As you read this, the Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries is considering severe restrictions on the importation of pork, which could result in a serious shortage of spare ribs. The restrictions are being considered in response to the threat posed by the porcine reproductive and respiratory PRRS virus.

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- Potatoes are also currently scarce and expensive, with Simba able to meet only 70 per cent of current orders. This should be remedied by World Cup time but perhaps some thought should go into a menu plan that incorporates items guaranteed to be readily available.

- Road closures: Your position close to a new stadium could also be your biggest downfall as many roads will be closed or access restricted on match days. Just what you don't want when you are waiting for an

- urgent gas delivery for your kitchen.
- Fresh produce: The likelihood of a shortage of fresh produce is real. Germany imported tons of extra fresh produce during the last World Cup. Make sure your grocer is your friend.

- Security: Chat to your security company and local police about a strategy to implement should the patrons packing your venue suddenly become rowdy if their team loses. While 41 000 police have been trained specially for the World Cup to bolster the current police force; if hooligans threaten your establishment, it is going to be your own security personnel that make the difference. Train your staff and keep contact numbers for emergency services handy.

- While on the subject of security, this may not be the best time to saunter off to your bank on foot with a bank bag slung over your shoulder. Our highly efficient criminal gangs will also be looking at the World Cup as a period of opportunity.

- Staff training: Serving an extra ten meals or drinks an hour per staff member will impact your turnover. Train for efficiency and speed. Friendly and fast service will not only have you your patrons coming back, it will bolster your (and your people's) earnings in a positive way.

- Out of stocks: Some distributors like Edward Snell & Co. are confident they have got the numbers right; so says brand manager, Grant Sayers, "We believe that stock levels are a vital part of our plans for 2010, particularly when it comes to global brands such as Grant's Blended Scotch Whisky and Glenfiddich Single Malt Scotch Whisky. These fully imported brands will be ordered in sufficient quantities in advance." Other suppliers may not be as on the ball and, while you may be tempted to over-order prior to the event in an attempt to ensure supply, it is always better to have a reliable supplier carry your stock for you.

This is by no means a definitive guide to risk planning for your establishment during the World Cup. Only you will know the exact threats and opportunities that surround your business. But if I can leave you with one piece of advice; make friends with your suppliers. Then put your new friends' numbers on speed dial.

Will it all be worthwhile? Yes, say the experts. Some 350 000 visitors are expected to spend around R9.8 billion for the duration of the event and our GDP will receive a boost of over R21 billion. Here's hoping you get your share!