

Contract Catering - UK - October 2012

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“With consumers continuing to cut back on areas of secondary expenditure, the lunch market is more vulnerable than dinner occasions which benefit from associations with ‘experience’ and leisure. As such caterers have to balance the contrasting demands of employers looking to cut costs and reduce risks with the need to innovate to keep up with the high street and offer employees a dynamic and appealing offer.”

– Helena Spicer – Senior Foodservice Analyst

In this report we answer the key questions:

- What can the B&I caterers do to position their offering as having added value?
- Can operators more proactively chase footfall through menu expansion to bolster revenues?
- How can canteens invigorate menus to engage workers looking for more than ‘refuelling’?
- How can operators cater for the sharp differences in what employees want from their lunch breaks?

The UK contract catering industry continues to suffer from exceptionally tough market conditions, due largely to the vulnerability of many of its sectors to public sector cuts which have proved rife in the face of a continually weak UK economy. As such, there is pressure on operators to innovate as they fight for market share in sectors experiencing waning footfall and those facing falling spending.

This report discusses the contract catering market as a whole, although the focus of the consumer research sections of this report is on the Business & Industry (B&I) sector within the contract catering market.

Contract catering is defined as the part of the foodservice industry which supplies meals to third-party organisations. This encompasses a wide variety of businesses and institutions, as detailed in the Segment Performance section of the report.

In B&I, contract caterers are the prime source of on-site catering for multi-employee workplaces. Contract caterers provide the skills, equipment and personnel and often investment in premises to operate the catering function, allowing the company or organisation to concentrate on its core activities. The sector is diverse in terms of the nature and variety of institutions that it supplies with each of these sectors having its own unique issues as well as shared ones for the industry.

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