CJ’s Cookhouse

What’s Cookin’? In the Kitchen with CJ Simmons

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CJ’S Cookhouse, located in Columbus, Ohio, is a professional catering and cooking company. While the company has a modest following on social media, their audience can be

widened greatly by employing the services of the WR Franklin, Inc. Public Relations firm. By expanding their social media presence (they are currently using only two of the top social sites) and creating a functioning website, CJ’s products and services can reach many more end-users in and around Columbus, and beyond. We can build upon their presence by creating a brand awareness campaign on social media. This allows us to simultaneously give their current followers more of what they love and introduce the products to a new audience.

 CJ’s Cookhouse was founded on September 22, 2018 in Columbus, Ohio. Chenese J. Simmons, also known as CJ, acts not only as the Chief Executive Officer for the company, but also the head chef. Per the Facebook page, CJ’s provides event catering, corporate catering, meal planning and personal chef services in Columbus and Cleveland, Ohio (Facebook, 2019). Additionally, the company’s services are available to non-profit organizations who my benefit from catering and meal planning expertise. As of now, Chenese is the only actual employee. As business grows, she expects to be able to hire an assistant and more employees. Since the company started in 2018, her clientele has increased by 66%, and her services are currently being used in Columbus and Cleveland, Ohio. The company is still in its first year, so the future looks bright for them. Simmons says “just over a year ago, this was a dream. The year has been a good one” (Simmons, 2019).

 When taking on clients, Simmons sets up a one-on-one meeting to get to know the prospective client, as well as their likes and dislikes. From there, she creates a meal plan or menu proposal for the client, depending on which service they require. Because of her diverse background, Simmons doesn’t have a particular style of cooking that she adheres to. Her customers are based in Columbus and Cleveland, hovering in the middle-to-upper-middle-class income brackets. She has worked with men and women, usually in the 21-35 age bracket, of all ethnicities.

 CJ’ Cookhouse is a self-funded company, as Simmons started the business with her own capital that she saved from working various day jobs. Because of this, she has no investors as of right now. The company is in direct competition with catering companies like Milo’s Catering in Columbus and Marigold Catering in Cleveland.

 According to an article in Catersource magazine, catering to business clients is definitely on the upswing nationally. Data shows a 10% increase in business catering in all dining segments, in 2015 to 2016 year-over-year (Stoehr, 2017). If you add in the increased popularity of food trucks in Columbus and Cleveland, those numbers increase. Simmons’ current desire is to increase her customer base by adding more consistent clientele on a monthly basis.

 Based on the aforementioned information, the WR Franklin, Inc. Public Relations firm will combine what has been used in the past (word of mouth exposure, Facebook and Instagram) with new strategies (an eye-catching website, visibility on LinkedIn and Twitter) to gain more exposure for CJ’s. With these additional outlets, the sky is the limit as far as getting the word further out into the atmosphere about this catering business. Once all of these outlets are up and running, the social media campaign can start across all outlets.

 Currently, CJ’s Cookhouse has a positive reputation. Based on the feedback listed on the company’s social media pages, the food and service are all top notch. There are many compliments about the cuisine and the attention to detail. This positive feedback will make it easier to push the campaign, by having those reviews put on video and shared across the different channels. CJ’s is also in talks to provide cooking lessons for Community for All People, a non-profit in Columbus. Promoting this collaboration is another way to reach new end-users.

 In the last 6 months, CJ’s has not launched any PR efforts. Being a one-person organization, Simmons stays focused on keeping her current customers satisfied. As of now, CJ’s is only being promoted on Facebook and Instagram. On those platforms, only pictures of the dishes they create as well as 10 second video clips of the food cooking are posted. The company is getting rave reviews from satisfied clients, but not much more.

 Exposure is the main problem that this campaign has to address. In order to pull in more business, people need to know that you exist. Getting information about CJ’s Cookhouse to more people (as well as the right people) is a key component in taking the company from local to national. We will get the client’s other platforms up and working, and then flood those platforms with pictures, videos, news articles and recommendations. Once the word is out, her customer base should increase, raising the numbers of monthly clients. The only pitfall I can see is getting the website created and up and running. Had the website already been done, we could have jumped right to the campaign. However, I feel that the site should be up and running first, in order to have somewhere for the social media platforms to direct the customers.

References

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