

# Case studies **CITY DELI**





## A DELI'S OPERATIONS GO INTERNATIONAL IN 11 MONTHS USING DESIGN.

### 1. The brief is not necessarily the brief

Cassiopeia LLC approached Idea Spice to make their 200 sq.ft deli in Dubai look more attractive and attract more consumers to their space. Cassiopeia owned an outlet then called as Manhattan Deli.

The first reaction we had was to stretch the scope the project beyond just a visual makeover. We brainstormed how much bigger we could take this project, we questioned the client what their ultimate fantasy and goal would be for their business. We sat together and wondered why the place couldn't go international one day. We stressed that they should be dreaming a franchise, a chain of outlets all over the world.

We redefined the scope of work as looking at ways to infuse life into this one little outlet and transform it into an international franchise-able operation using a mix of design, strategy and marketing.



### 2. Understand more of the client's business than they do

We immersed ourselves into the industry. We visited the competition, spend hours at the existing outlet relishing the taste of the food, we ambushed the team with information and research on the origin of the deli, about bread, about the trends in food, cultures, the behavior in cafes, restaurants. We understand fast food and nouvelle cuisine and slow food and working lunches. We got groups together and discussed their needs, how they ate, where they worked, what they thought. We

understood the senses, how smell and texture and color affected taste. We spoke to people in the industry, read the latest papers, studied franchise models like Subway and MacDonalads. The team studied which colors helped what cuisine and the business

workings of a franchise, we observed rituals at outlets with character. We debated about emotional experiences and observed when an establishment becomes a person, becomes a friend and a personification of your needs.

### 3. Is there a USP? If not create one...

After swimming in the sea of information and observation, we knew that the Deli can't be just another food outlet. It had to cut through the clutter and find a distinction which



would was unique and could be repeatable. It had to find a clear space in the mind of the consumer and sit there like a friend for life.

While savoring the amazing food at the Deli, we realised one day that the innovative sandwiches were simply out of this world and unlike anything we had tasted till then. We felt that if the other food at the place was a 7 on 10, the sandwiches would have consistently been at 14.

We realised that as a product segment that sandwiches were not taken. Pizzas, burgers, pastas, subs etc were all taken and with a host of me too in queue for contention with the customer's mind space.

We decided to own 'sandwiches'. We termed the food "Fresh Gourmet Sandwiches". It conjured up images of being made fresh on the spot, but by a chef with a lot of care and love with the best ingredients. You could almost smell the waft of fresh baked bread and taste the rich

meats and sauces dripping as you visualized the phrase.



#### 4. Create a distinct brand

### personality and design it cohesively into everything!

We changed the name from 'Manhattan Deli' to the 'City Deli'. We shook away any apprehensions of being a wannabe outlet and positioned as the place next door. We wrote a clear personality with a fusion of humor, old values, a huge appetite and a contemporary outlook to life.

We saw the outlet as Joey from Friends.

We then stretched this personality into every single element in the space. Every brick reeked of the personality. The persona went across the identity, the space, the furniture systems, the

uniforms, every single collateral- from toothpicks to sauces.

We handpicked every sauce flavor, tray, toothpick, the cutlery and the props. We shopped with the client with the excitement akin to setting up our own home.

We named the items in the menu, created jokes for every single item used in the space (238 jokes when we last counted) from the sauces, posters, giveaways, sachets, cups. Nothing was spared from the blessings of bad wit.

We designed every piece of furniture to enhance

the dining experience. The materials and colors were made to enhance the flavor and the personality. We worked on rituals and the vibe of the space. We worked with the clients on the pickles, spices and props which would communicate the word 'gourmet' to walk in consumers.



### Make sure a big idea is easily repeatable. That's where the client's profits lie!

We made sure we worked with the brilliant team at Cassiopeia to make sure we



documented the process and ensure the repeatability of the same. We designed manuals for the staff training, systems, ways of making the sandwich exactly the same way each time, taking the order, talking to the customer, how to deliver, decorate.



Every element of the designs was also made into an expansive brand manual to ensure that if anyone wanted to ever franchise, they were ready to run with it.

## 6. Look at ways to enhance the consumer experience and make sure the whole world knows about it.

We worked closely with the Cassiopeia team on the food and the order process, being part of the tasting and refining process. We evolved a completely new system of customizing your own sandwich and offering the customer up to 200 options.

We came up with unique marketing ideas, CRM and loyalty (called Club Sandwich). We

worked on weekend ideas to involve the family and lunch ideas for executive; we worked on vouchers and trials, we designed fliers and take away ideas.

## Sit back and watch the magic unfold.

The place was running before. The only thing that changed was the design intervention.

From the day the new Deli was launched sales tripled for the little outlet. In a month of reopening, the franchise for the gulf region was sold for a record deal. In 3 months, new outlets opened in one of the largest malls in neighboring Abu Dhabi. 10 more outlets are finalized in the region. The first store in India opened in bangalore and many more are set to come.



## 8. The numbers tell the real story

-It took 45 days from briefing to opening of the first outlet.

-The venture has converted to an international operation in 11 months.

-The outlet was shut for makeover for 12 days only.

-The design fees were recovered from 16 days of additional revenues since opening.

-Cassiopeia has since worked with Ideaspice to create a chain of coffee shops originating from Kenya, designing an outlet for waffles, ice creams and coffee and work on a themed lounge space for a Saudi based client.

-The author and designer feels he has put on 3 kilos since the project began.

**-Sajith Ansar**  
**Founder and Managing Director, Idea Spice Design**