



CASE STUDY: ENRICHING THE CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE

“Janet LeBlanc + Associates looked at more than just customer satisfaction. They recommended that we broaden our focus to better understand the end-to-end customer experience and revamped our surveys to measure perceptions and expectations about food offerings, food distribution, service, reputation and price. We received useful metrics in return, which helped us map out priorities and a clear strategy. We very soon began to see results and in 2017, we were recognized with a Best Ottawa Business Award for Best Performance Customer Experience.”

Patrick Genest, Director
Food, Conferences and uOttawa Card Services
University of Ottawa



UNIVERSITY OF OTTAWA FOOD SERVICES—STATS

Students: 42,000
Staff/Faculty: 5,000
Annual operating budget: \$1 billion
Annual food sales across campus:
\$23 million
On-campus Food Services locations: 22
Food courts (cafeterias): 2
Food trucks: 2
Vending machines: 175

www.foodservices.uottawa.ca

University of Ottawa and Food Services OVERVIEW

University of Ottawa (uOttawa) is recognized as the world's largest English-French bilingual university and has consistently been ranked as one of Canada's top universities. Its main campus is located on 87 acres in a residential neighbourhood that is walking distance to major tourist attractions, the downtown business district, a major shopping centre as well as shops, cafés and restaurants.

The Food Services department of uOttawa offers a wide variety of options and locations for all members of the university community. Its clients include not only students in residence, but also full and part-time students who commute to the campus. Other clients include university staff, faculty members and visitors such as conference attendees, sports teams, contractors, family members and future students.

Whereas universities once had a reputation for offering pre-packaged or fast food and not enough variety, an increasing number of modern-day consumers are requesting healthy, organic, fair trade, sustainable, halal, kosher, vegetarian, vegan, raw, low-calorie, low-fat, dairy-free or gluten-free meal and snack options.

CHALLENGES

Patrick Genest, Director of Food, Conferences and uOttawa Card Services, is a food industry professional who has worked in the restaurant and catering segments for the public and private sectors. When he was first hired to take over Food Services in 2009, *Maclean's University Rankings*, *The Globe and Mail* and the University of Ottawa's own student satisfaction surveys had already revealed a growing dissatisfaction with on-campus food. He also sensed there was a less-than-positive perception of Food Services as a service provider.

“I knew that people were generally unhappy,” Genest says, “but the metrics simply weren't there for us to clearly understand why they were dissatisfied. What, exactly, did our customers want and need that we weren't delivering? We knew that offering more variety at fair prices was part of the solution, but where should we start?”

“Another challenge was that unlike other universities that have large, isolated campuses, University of Ottawa is literally surrounded by off-campus eateries that compete for our business,” he adds.



CASE STUDY:

University of Ottawa Food Services cont'd



SOLUTION

When Genest contracted Janet LeBlanc + Associates—a management consulting firm that specializes in using the voice of the customer to drive business results—he was eager to transform how student satisfaction was measured and make noticeable, measurable improvements in affordable ways. From the very beginning, Janet LeBlanc + Associates was well-aligned with his vision: the firm proposed that the best solution was to modify Food Services' approach from measuring customer satisfaction to managing what customers value most about their food experience.

Janet LeBlanc, President and Founder of Janet LeBlanc + Associates, explains, "We recommended that instead of doing a spot check on service, we should tailor a full-spectrum assessment of the end-to-end experience with Food Services."

First, a customer value management program was designed. It contained five pillars of the experience: food offerings, food distribution, service, reputation/image, and payment/prices. There were additional components related to communications and vending machines. Great care was taken to design a survey that ensured clients provided feedback about the services or locations they used (and why) versus those they didn't (and why).

Once Janet LeBlanc + Associates completed the in-depth survey and analyzed the findings, three key value drivers emerged that were specific to the University of Ottawa's clients: People wanted food that was fresh. They did not want to wait for it. They also needed it to be affordable.

Genest says, "Working in the food services industry, I am always mindful that our clients are literally tasting and eating what we offer and it's a very personal experience for them. Knowing our clients wanted us to focus most on providing 'fresh, fast and affordable' food gave us the direction we needed to make improvements that resonated with the university community."

PROGRESS AND OUTCOME

Guided by Janet LeBlanc + Associates, uOttawa Food Services embarked on a seven-year customer experience transformation. The overarching goal was to reinforce the Food Services' brand as an extension of uOttawa's brand. This meant aligning itself to uOttawa's dedication to overall quality, sustainability, diversity and innovation—with a food-centric focus on "fresh, fast and affordable" snack and meal options.

Food Services followed through by implementing a variety of methods to collect, analyze and track measurable improvements in the customer experience. These included a new uOttawa Food Advisory Committee, bi-annual Town Halls with students, an annual Food Services Customer Experience survey, immediate feedback via a sentiment survey, and focus groups. It also launched Text'n tell—a software that allows students to rate the 24/7 Dining Hall on five variables and submit comments via text message.

The results have surpassed the expectations of both Food Services and uOttawa. By Year 4, Food Services had already realized 25 out of the 26 recommendations initially put forward. According to survey results between 2013 and 2016, respondents scoring 9 or 10 out of 10 increased by 13% for food service, by 65% for reputation and image, by 33% for food distribution and by 91% for payment and price. The number of people who purchased an optional meal plan increased by 263%. In less than a decade, overall revenue generated by Food Services increased from \$9M in 2009 to a projected \$22M in 2017—a 144% increase in revenue.

Regarding his experience working with Janet LeBlanc, Genest says, "Janet knew what she was talking about. She absorbed a lot of information and put in the time to really get to know us. Then she tailored a solution that allowed me to make proactive, achievable and affordable decisions. All in all, we have achieved significant improvements in satisfaction levels, customer loyalty and perceptions about Food Services."

In 2017, uOttawa Food Services was awarded the Best Ottawa Business (BOBs) Award for Best Performance Customer Experience.