



## Episode 5:

# Driving Sales & service innovations

[00:00:00] **Voiceover:** You're listening to the Fáilte Ireland Inside Tourism Business podcast, the definitive podcast for tourism operators, bringing you expert advice, insights, and practical tools to help you navigate the challenges your business is facing.

[00:00:20] **Ruth Hegarty:** My name is Ruth Hegarty, and I am your host for the first series of Fáilte Ireland's new podcast, where we delve inside food, examining trends, innovations, and tackling costs to help you run a leaner more successful food operation.

[00:00:33] Welcome back to Fáilte Ireland's Inside Tourism Business podcast. This is episode five of our Inside Food series. In episode four, we focused on reducing waste. You can listen back to that and all our previous episodes by searching Inside Tourism Business, wherever you get your podcasts. In this episode, we examine how operations and service have been impacted by COVID-19 and discuss how we drive sales in an era of social distancing.

[00:01:03] My guests today are Phillip O'Neill, General Manager of the Clayton Hotel, Dublin Airport, and Cariona Neary of Neary Marketing, who's working with Fáilte Ireland on the Service to Sales programme. You're both very welcome. Thank you so much for coming on.

[00:01:15] **Cariona Neary:** Hi, Ruth.

[00:01:16] **Phillip O'Neill:** Hi Ruth. Thanks for having me.

[00:01:18] **Ruth Hegarty:** The COVID-19 pandemic has enforced many changes in terms of how we do food and beverage service. So today we want to talk about those changes, how industry has adapted and perhaps where there is some opportunities to become more efficient, create a better customer experience and drive sales.

[00:01:32] So Phillip, I want to start with you. The Clayton Hotel Dublin Airport has remained open throughout the pandemic, so you've kind of experienced all of the ups and downs of that. Can you tell us a bit about how business has changed throughout that time and what you've experienced?

[00:01:47] **Phillip O'Neill:** Yeah, I suppose we're one of the lucky ones, Ruth, that we have remained open throughout the pandemic. albeit in a very different way to normal.

[00:01:54] I suppose in 2019, our occupancy was up to 90% and fell to between 15 and 30% throughout the second half of 2020. There's still cargo and freight coming in and out of the country, which has kept us going along with providing services to frontline workers. So, I suppose this has helped us to keep kind of the core of our team going, and we've actually kept all of our outlets and services, fully operational.

[00:02:15] So our customers still receive a traditional hotel experience. I think we're very resilient as an industry now more than ever. We appreciate every customer that walks through the door. So, I was adamant from the start that we provided a full 4-star hotel experience for those guests that were staying and this stood us in good stead, you know?

[00:02:32] **Ruth Hegarty:** Yeah, and you do have a number of F&B outlets and platforms within the hotel.

[00:02:38] **Phillip O'Neill:** Yeah. So obviously breakfast is a big one there that we serve in our Brasserie restaurant. We've kept food service in our bar going. Our Red Bean Roastery cafe is open Monday to Friday. And we also have an Italian Kitchen, which is serving kind of full à-la-carte dishes in the evening as well.

[00:02:54] So it's been an interesting journey over the last while to keep all those going, and I suppose keep in line with restrictions and social distancing and all of that, you know?

[00:03:04] **Ruth Hegarty:** Yeah, absolutely. So, can you take us through some of the operational changes that you have made to keep in line with the restrictions and maybe some of the innovations you've put in place as well to adapt.

[00:03:15] **Phillip O'Neill:** Yeah, I suppose the big one to start with was our breakfast service. So, we actually piloted a breakfast service standard for the Dalata Group at the start of this. So, where we were used to a buffet style service with a huge variety of items servicing over 700 people on a daily basis.

[00:03:31] We have to quickly turn to a table service breakfast with an à-la-carte style offering and greatly reduced numbers serving up to about 200 people a day. So, this meant a completely different skill set for the team. So, we have to provide additional training, I suppose, where many of our team are used to clearing and resetting and replenishing items, suddenly they were tasked with much more interaction with the guest.

[00:03:52] But it was incredible out of this training to see people blossom. It gave them much more confidence in looking after a guest and now we've much more proficient service as a result, and we've definitely seen a few superstars develop over the last few months as well, you know.

[00:04:06] **Ruth Hegarty:** Gosh okay, so that's kind of a positive to come out of it, and I suppose something that will be a long-term benefit to the hotel.

[00:04:14] **Phillip O'Neill:** Absolutely. Yeah, there are services much more personal now and much more efficient and the team have great confidence. And it's been a brilliant kind of upside to everything else that has gone on, you know.

[00:04:26] **Ruth Hegarty:** And then I suppose, the changes that you put in place around breakfast, and as you said, kind of piloting the new programme for the Dalata Hotel Group as a whole, has that provided a lot of learnings in terms of your other food service offerings?

[00:04:39] **Phillip O'Neill:** Yeah, absolutely. So, I suppose we've much more tailored kind of towards the individual. And so, we have one use menu, so it's on the table when you arrive in and then the servers all the table service. So, we've actually kind of echoed that throughout the building. So, it's the same style of service in our bar and in our restaurant now.

[00:04:58] So we've taken the learnings from breakfast and spread it across the operation with great success, I might add.

[00:05:05] **Ruth Hegarty:** And was there big take-up in terms of room service during the months of the summer, last year, when you were a bit busier? Did you find room service took a bit of pressure off the dining areas or what were the trends with customers?

[00:05:17] **Phillip O'Neill:** Maybe a little bit more so in the evening. So, we provided a click and collect service in our restaurant but for breakfast I think people kind of enjoyed the novelty, even more of being able to sit down at a table and get breakfast brought to them. They enjoyed the environment a lot more. So, there was a little bit more in terms of room service, but then with the type of business we were dealing with they really enjoyed coming down and having that little bit of luxury as well, you know?

[00:05:42] **Ruth Hegarty:** Okay. And I mean, you mentioned a lot of those kinds of operational changes you needed to put in place around breakfast and, Fáilte Ireland have just launched a Breakfast Innovation Toolkit, which includes loads of useful resources around developing your SOPs and workflows and training guides as well for staff and that's available on the Fáilte Ireland COVID-19 Support Hub.

[00:06:05] So definitely worth checking out for the businesses who are listening and kind of getting ready now for reopening. So Cariona I mean, Phillip mentioned there about really having to kind of quickly upskill staff who may be, have been just in a position where, you know, they were involved with the breakfast service, and a lot of that was just clearing down the tables and then, you know, suddenly they needed to be able to actually do a full table service, and I suppose interact a lot more with customers.

[00:06:30] So, how do we kind of work on upskilling staff now, and especially with kind of the COVID guidelines in place and, you know, the preparation happening now for reopening and having to bring staff back on site after a period of being away from the establishment?

[00:06:49] **Cariona Neary:** Yes, it's a really big challenge. and I think that, this whole programme about using innovation at this time is so apt because we really do need to re-imagine our recruitment and how we onboard people and how we manage the training and the coaching. Because it's a very unusual situation in that we really have to go from not 100 in a situation that we've never really had before we really have to get a team to come together as a team and to perform well. We then as business owners, we need to have much better selling and upselling taking place than maybe we could have had before because we've got social distancing in our restaurants. And so each guest is really, really important from a commercial perspective as well.

[00:07:36] But also of course we have a different market as well because we're in the Irish market and the loyalty that we need from the people in our towns and people travelling around the country is going to be so important what people say about our offering. So yes, we definitely have to go about things in a different way.

[00:07:55] And I think these few weeks that we have, or months, or whatever it may be, are not a quiet time at all. It's actually a time to really, really get organised.

[00:08:03] **Ruth Hegarty:** Yeah, so I suppose, what are some of your key tips then in terms of how, when we got our stuff back on site, I suppose how we motivate them and how we start thinking about the training. and I suppose what might be different to before COVID?

[00:08:22] **Cariona Neary:** Well, I think that I was taking to one hotelier and he was saying that we all just have to be an awful lot better. So, there's, a saying what got us here won't get us there. We really have to up

our game because can you imagine everybody's going to be recruiting at the same time and we're putting teams together for the first time and we're opening at the same time. So that's an extraordinary pressure and we need to use this time then to figure out how can we be the place where people want to work? How can we help people who aren't experienced to get to a point and to be so knowledgeable that they can create the type of experience for the guest that is so good, and that is so memorable that the guest wants to come back and that the guest wants to give us positive word of mouth.

[00:09:05] So that requires a new way of working and that's not a bad thing. It can actually be a really interesting moment for a business to rethink how it does things. So, for example, and I know this is something that's close to your heart.

[00:09:18] How we talk about our food and beverage as it were our strategic narrative, our story about how we source our food or what our food stands for. That needs to be clarified. So, we can use our time to get that clear, you know, so that when people are working with us, that they're able to go out and talk about the food in a way that's really attractive to the guest, because I remember it's so memorable for me.

[00:09:40] I remember being in working with an operation and the chef was really well-known and she particularly was strong in desserts and she always insisted that they would use Belgian chocolate. And I remember when we were doing the training, she actually realised, that nobody who was serving the guest was mentioning this.

[00:10:01] Nobody was mentioning the fact that the chocolate was nothing but the best. So, we need to help our teams tell those stories. And we can actually use this period, this quiet period now to get things like that ready. For example, if you re-engineering your menu you can start to shoot short videos of perhaps how the chef creates a dish or getting the chef talking.

[00:10:23] This is low tech. I'm not talking about bringing in big cameras. But getting the chef to talk about why a particular dish is done in a particular way, or maybe you could even perhaps feature the people who are bringing you the great supplies and tell your story well. And I have to say, I think Marcus Treacy down in the Killarney Park Hotel is doing a super job in creating – he's not doing it in a very po-faced way. It's actually hilarious if you get a chance to look at the videos, showing all these videos about how they're staying fit and are still thinking about the business, even though they're quiet. So, you can do things like that. You can start creating videos, but there's a whole lot of other elements really that we can create to help that reopening be a really well-oiled machine by the time we get there.

[00:11:11] **Ruth Hegarty:** Yeah, and I think like in every episode of this podcast so far, I think we've, we've all talked about the fact that, you know, you can do all of the work in the background, whether it's from your costings to your menu engineering, to your intentions about reducing food waste.

[00:11:26] But if you don't get your team on board and if you don't arm them with the knowledge and the skills to support the values and the objectives that you've set out, you're really at nothing. So, as you've said it's not a quiet kind of dormant period now it's really a period for reflection and preparation.

[00:11:44] So what are some of the other things that you think businesses can be kind of preparing now in advance of reopening and getting their full team back onsite?

[00:11:52] **Cariona Neary:** Okay, that's a really good question because what I was talking about before there, those elements of the little videos and so on, you can build that into your induction, into your storytelling.

[00:12:02] Or indeed you could build those similar videos into helping to upskill people when you're bringing them on board. So, one of the things that we have a habit of doing in our business is keeping an awful lot of knowledge in our heads. And the problem with that knowledge that we have in our heads is that when you walk out the door, it doesn't transfer by osmosis.

[00:12:22] We actually have to manually then train people. I'm suggesting something that we can do now that's really a good use of our time as creating these, what we call cheat sheets. and on these cheat sheets, you're focusing your attention on the dishes and the beverages, you know, say it's cocktails or whatever that are likely to be the greatest source of your sales.

[00:12:46] So, you know, the 80/20 rule where 80% of your business comes from 20% of your products and your services. So, if we focus our training and building up these knowledge sheets or cheat sheets, I have to say it so carefully let me tell you Ruth, that if we do this carefully now and build up a simple one pager that gives you all the knowledge you need in order to be able to answer any question about a particular dish.

[00:13:12] But the second part, and this is really vital, and that is that you enable the team, the staff to be able to start the conversation with the guest. Because there's actually still a gap between knowing and doing and so you need to create a bridge in the person's knowledge and help them to start the conversation. I call that the ABC sales method it's as easy as ABC. A you approach the guests, you find some way of starting the conversation B you give them a bite-size interesting piece of information about the dish or the cocktail or whatever, and C then you confirm their choice.

[00:13:45] So if you were say, for example, looking to upsell your starters to mains you're not selling enough starters. A simple approach thing what you could train your staff to say is, we've got some really lovely starters to share, and then you can talk about the starters, something that's interesting about the way some of the starters have been chosen and designed by the chef as sharing dishes and platters. And then you can just say, it's a really lovely thing. You know, people love this, or it's very popular and that's, your simple ABC.

[00:14:18] So you're not just giving people knowledge, you're literally helping them to have those vitally important conversations with the guest.

[00:14:27] **Ruth Hegarty:** Yeah, I love that, that's great and it's very kind of confidence building, I think, for the staff member, just to give them that tool as such to start the conversation.

[00:14:34] Phillip I suppose for you, what are the key kind of things that you do then in Dalata and in the Clayton Hotel Dublin Airport to kind of get the staff up to speed and how have maybe they changed a bit since COVID?

[00:14:49] **Phillip O'Neill:** Yeah, it's obviously very topical at the moment and, we're very lucky. Our HR and learning and development team put together, you know, an excellent return-to-work induction on our Dalata online training platform, which, you know, our team can log into from home or at work and this means that they're aware of our systems and protocols before they even set foot in the building. So, they go on and do an induction, which includes our keep safe programme on a kind of a return-to-work kind of information for them.

[00:15:17] That gives a real sense of security and confidence where when, when they come back to work then. So actually, the online platform has been an amazing tool over the last 12 months in our hotel alone,

over 3000 courses have been completed for a wide range of skills. So, we're using our time kind of efficiently in that respect.

[00:15:34] And it gives a sense of comfort when people come back to work, which is then passed on to the guest as well, you know, so that's been a huge benefit to us. So yeah, I suppose in terms of team briefings and stuff like that which we touched on, I'm a huge advocate of these.

[00:15:49] I always use the sport analogy you know, doing the team briefing you wouldn't send a football team out to play without telling people what position they're playing in. So, for a good service, this is equally as important. And sometimes things get a bit hectic so if you can't do to briefing before service, make sure that you do it afterwards, you know. We've continued to use the likes of Microsoft Teams for our daily ops meetings which we wouldn't have done before.

[00:16:12] So our 11 o'clock and our 3:30pm is done over Teams as well as our weekly HOD. I suppose it's more difficult to do the team huddles. So, where you would have had 10 or 20 people in the corner of the restaurant or the bar briefing them before service. it's a bit more difficult to do that with social distancing.

[00:16:28] So we tend to get one or two people together now for a quick briefing and arm them with the relevant information.

[00:16:35] **Ruth Hegarty:** Great Corina. I mean, briefings are really key, aren't they? And I suppose, what would some of your top tips be for doing really effective briefings?

[00:16:44] **Cariona Neary:** Well, let's go back to what we're trying to get to. We're trying to get to a point where our teams are confident enough to go out and represent the business in terms of promoting particular dishes and drinks and so on. So, we want them to sell an upsell as effectively as possible. Now, the funny thing is that if I stand at a briefing and I do all the talking and you're listening, even if you are listening and chances are, you're not I'm not really sure that you're going to be able to do that yourself.

[00:17:12] So what we're suggesting in terms of the briefings in our programme is that it's all about asking questions. So, you really want in the team briefing that people practice, they do a kind of a dress rehearsal and the practice, the language of selling and upselling and making it really an attractive and informing experience and the guiding experience for the guests, not a push it's very much just helping the guests to make good choices.

[00:17:37] So it's all about asking questions, and what's really fun. And, you know Phillip's talked there about the superstars. what's really, really interesting in briefings, and we have to get over this ourselves as supervisors and managers, perhaps is that you will find there is some people in your team are a lot better at selling that chocolate brownie, then you are, or than other people in the team. And if you're getting your team to do the talking, rather than you doing the talking, you have fantastic peer learning. People here, great ways of expressing something, be it about a whiskey or whatever it may be, and people learn from each other.

[00:18:12] And it's wonderful. And it's also a little it's a moment of giving and of team building and of really connecting with your team. So that's my big tip on that is make it about questions and it needs to be fun. It really needs to be fun. We don't want to go back to a school system. So, it's all about working off the positive, encouraging people and so on.

[00:18:33] **Ruth Hegarty:** Great, okay. We'll be right back to this discussion with Phillip and Cariona after a very quick break.

[00:18:39] **Voiceover:** Fáilte Ireland's new Breakfast Toolkit contains expert advice and practical tools that are applicable to all areas of food and service. You can find the Breakfast Toolkit and more helpful supports and guidance on the Operational Performance section under Strategic F&B Operations on our COVID-19 Business Support Hub at [faillteireland.ie](https://faillteireland.ie).

[00:19:00] **Ruth Hegarty:** So, Phillip, I'm wondering then about the role of technology in all of this, has technology helped you to streamline operations over recent months and has it helped you to gain some efficiencies where maybe they've been lost through having to kind of change your operations? And do they, I mean, we're talking about people and that's obviously the most important thing in hospitality. But in particular the age of COVID, you know, does technology have a role in improving the customer experience as well?

[00:19:30] **Phillip O'Neill:** Yeah, definitely. I suppose as a precaution, we removed all print materials from our rooms and, we've launched a guest platform. So, in our rooms now there's a QR code on the mirror, which you scan, and it provides you with details of our Keep Safe programme. That's our Bureau Veritas and Fáilte Ireland.

[00:19:47] And all of our guests' amenities such as food and beverage offerings are click and collect from a restaurant, shuttle services, car parking, et cetera and you can now also advance check-in and check-out via the platform which minimises contact for those who wish to use it. So, we've used the last 12 months as an opportunity to upgrade a lot of our IT, you know.

[00:20:07] **Ruth Hegarty:** Can you take us through briefly some of the platforms that you use and what their functions are?

[00:20:14] **Phillip O'Neill:** Yeah, well, obviously we have our PMS Opera, which we've upgraded now from version five to Opera Cloud, so it's much more user-friendly and very icon driven and has great reporting. We've moved from MICROS RES 3700 to MICROS Symphony in our food and beverage outlets.

[00:20:30] Again, it gives us great data. So, we've input our food and beverage costs so at the click of a button we can see how our food and beverage sales and our GP are going for any given day, months, or a year to date and out of that then we can identify our winning items, which helped with our menu engineering. We moved to Alkimii events from sales and catering.

[00:20:49] And again, that's much easier to use for our operations team, which delivers a much better result for our customers. And then the big one, as I said, was the guest platform which we use Preoday and PaxBooking to maximise efficiency and table booking. So, when you arrive into the hotel, we ask you what time you want to have your dinner at in the evening, or what time you want breakfast at in the morning.

[00:21:09] So you know that kind of maximises the efficiency in terms of our service and provides a much better guest experience. Overall, it's a much more enjoyable stay from check-in right through to the outlets and on to checkout.

[00:21:21] **Ruth Hegarty:** Okay, so definitely a role, in streamlining and a role in improving the customer journey. What about the sales journey and upselling opportunities? Have you looked to technology to help you sell and do kind of packages and add-ons?

[00:21:38] **Phillip O'Neill:** Absolutely. Yeah, I think over the next few months, a lot of our business will be mainly aimed at the domestic markets. So, we've developed some fairly compelling packages, which are available directly on our website so that's kind of encouraging the guest to commit to spending their time in the hotel and dining with us in advance of even arriving here. So, for example, we have a family package called "Go anywhere from here". That includes one of our family suites with breakfast and two course dinner in our Italian restaurant and the guest can then spend some time in our lounge before retiring to their room and as a little add on, we've included a takeaway pizza and two cocktails to bring up to the room. So, we want to provide something that little bit extra and little bit more memorable.

[00:22:19] **Ruth Hegarty:** Yeah, no that sounds very attractive for sure. I'm sure we'd all love to get away and do that. It sounds great for a family. Um, so the customer platforms and that kind of thing then for when people are already in house, are there opportunities to try and kind of upsell once you have people on site using the technology as well?

[00:22:37] **Phillip O'Neill:** Yeah, absolutely. Like I was just looking at our upsells for 2019 and for breakfast, for example you know, upsell on check-in on breakfast, generated an extra 9.6% in revenue for us. And this year I think people want to treat themselves a little bit more. So, we're focusing more on premium offerings, like cocktails or Prosecco trees to the room.

[00:22:57] You know, premium branded gins and whiskeys, and then our menu is more premium fish and cuts of meat on menus. We see evidence, you know, other people wanted a little bit more so on our guest platforms then we're able to kind of showcase this and people have much more information when deciding where they're going to dine or what sort of outlet, they're going to spend their money in so definitely the more premium offerings are where we see the opportunity.

[00:23:22] **Ruth Hegarty:** Yeah, they're fascinating insights, Phillip

[00:23:23] Cariona. I mean, coming back to the people, I mean, there's obviously a lot of opportunity there around using technology to drive sales, but we are a people business first and foremost.

[00:23:34] So I know you've been working on the Service to Sales programme with Fáilte Ireland and that's about engaging staff to sell. So, what are some of the principles behind that?

[00:23:44] **Cariona Neary:** Well, you know, in a way you have to bring everybody with you. If you're thinking about it as a system, it really runs through the whole organisation.

[00:23:51] So you're really starting from the top. If you create a Service to Sales programme, it's about the numbers as much as anything else, but it's driven by behaviours. The sale arises from somebody really enjoying being in your hotel or restaurant, and you know, as Phillip says, you know, going for the premium gins and so on, that's somebody who's feeling very happy and feeling like treating themselves.

[00:24:14] But the framework for all of this really comes from the desire for the business to maximise the opportunities, so you're looking at numbers, but you translate that down through the system. I'm looking at

things like the chef, what the chef wants to achieve in terms of numbers and throughput and managing wastage.

[00:24:33] If you consider that a really good F&B team is like the army for the chef. There's a line flowing through the whole organisation from the chef through to the server and the server knows what they're doing and knows what they want to sell in terms of representing the best possible story to the guest.

[00:24:51] So in this system, there are four parts to it. There's a part where we look at getting the GM, the HR Manager and the chef and F&B Managers on board, in terms of this is a system. It is not just a training piece. It's actually a system and an operating rhythm that you can run in your hotel.

[00:25:10] And once you master it, to be honest, this is for this situation. But what you're really building into your system is an agility. That means that you can pivot when other things happen, you know, COVID is our situation now but we'll have other situations in the future, like ramping up for Christmas or whatever.

[00:25:26] So once you have a good system in place, you can use it for anything. So, we want our senior managers on board. Then we look at getting the top team of the supervisors and food and beverage managers to understand how to use the system to run your department.

[00:25:42] And so you are looking at planning out what are the areas you want to focus on? Do you remember I mentioned earlier on that it's all about focusing your energy on where you're going to win most? And if you're looking at a brand-new team, you need to help them to be really, really good in those most important areas at the beginning.

[00:26:01] So it's about identifying your most important parts of business and you train people up in that. That's where your cheat sheets start. That's where your briefings start. And then the other thing that we have to think about is, and I think Phillip's story is so true about this. It's about food and beverage happens all through any business.

[00:26:19] So if it's a hotel, for example, you're looking at how can other parts of the business help to drive my food and beverage sales. So really, really important is front of house. So, we've got a training programme there for front of house people helping them to learn how to see opportunities to promote picnics to promote the breakfast is obviously the most important one that really our front of house people can help us on. But there's all sorts of ways that if they're attuned and if they're incentivised, they can do a really good job. And in fact, that's actually highlighted so well in that new toolkit on breakfast. There's a lovely piece about how different parts of the hotel can work together to create a success.

[00:27:01] **Ruth Hegarty:** That's super, and is there somewhere that our listeners can go to find out more about the program at the moment?

[00:27:07] **Cariona Neary:** Yes, there is because we're going to be rolling it out shortly, and I would suggest that people go to their local Fáilte Ireland representative, and they will be able to give them the information about this.

[00:27:17] We want everybody to learn about this as quickly as possible. These are a really important few weeks. Let's imagine we're going in for the Olympics and you know, what's happening there in the summer and at some stage, and we're using this time if we're athletes, we're obviously using this time to really, really build up our strength.

[00:27:35] So we want people to use this time as effectively as possible. So yes, that's what I suggest people do and do it as soon as they can.

[00:27:44] **Ruth Hegarty:** That's super thanks Cariona. I suppose Phillip, just, I mean, one area that we haven't talked too much about that is the cost side. And I mean, driving sales is obviously crucial, but you need to manage costs too.

[00:27:54] And I'm wondering, have you experienced increases in costs in certain areas with having to make these changes to operations? And have there maybe been some savings as well as in some places.

[00:28:07] **Phillip O'Neill:** Yeah, obviously, I suppose again, I'll go back to breakfast as an example there, that, you know, where you used to put the big bowl of cereal in the middle of your buffet and people would feed off that, and similarly with fruit salad, you put a big bowl out and people would portion it themselves. Now that's all coming in kind of individual boxes so that the costs of packaging and disposables and that have increased and then with table service as well you know, there's an additional labour cost.

[00:28:32] So we need a lot more people to table serve a breakfast than to buffet service. But then it was really interesting, at the start of all this that, you know, I think out of the first 100 breakfasts, we served on table service about 46 of them ordered scrambled eggs, bacon, toast, and coffee.

[00:28:47] So that's a much more efficient kind of food cost. So, if anything that has decreased overall with people, not taking 3 sausages and 3 pieces of bacon and 4 pastries to their table. So, it has been a little bit less food waste. And then on the labour side, you know, having more people there, but we've teamed people up so that the same people that are on shift for obvious reasons.

[00:29:07] But that's created a great kind of team spirit and a great consistency in service. So, everybody knows exactly what they're doing. You know, obviously, there's other increased costs in terms of cleaning and sanitisation. But overall, there has been some good sides to this, as well that, our service has improved, and our food cost is much more manageable.

[00:29:25] **Ruth Hegarty:** So, it sounds like there's some, some changes will be lasting.

[00:29:29] **Phillip O'Neill:** Definitely, yeah. And again, it's down to as you said, this is a people business and it's down to our people and the service that they're providing and the confidence that they've kind of got from both the training and from dealing with customers in a more personal way over the last few months, you know.

[00:29:45] **Ruth Hegarty:** Great. So, we're coming to the end of our discussion. but I just like to ask you both to finish up, reflecting on everything, we've talked about, what your top tips would be to every business, listening on adapting their operations and driving sales as we get ready to reopen.

[00:30:01] Cariona?

[00:30:02] **Cariona Neary:** The top tip I would give really is to have a system and to stick to that system. And that system is identifying your targets for sales and upselling, then train your people. Not only in terms of knowledge, but in terms of how they have the conversation with the guests and then track that and see what's working and embed that as your system.

[00:30:25] **Ruth Hegarty:** Phillip?

[00:30:26] **Phillip O'Neill:** Yeah, for me, similarly as I get the basics, right you know, good service equals good sales. So, focus on training and upskilling the team as soon as possible. Everyone is a salesperson. I think as things open up, there'll be huge demands. Get the training done now, share the targets with the team. You know, as I say, what gets measured gets made. So, share targets and, give people the incentive to get there.

[00:30:49] I think as a nation, we've become very good at telling people what they can't do. And in hospitality, I think we need to focus on telling them what we can do. We have a lot to offer.

[00:30:58] **Ruth Hegarty:** That's it for Episode 5 of the Inside Food series. You can find practical tools on SOPs and training in the Breakfast Innovation Toolkit on the COVID-19 Business Support Hub at Fáilteireland.ie.

[00:31:09] Thanks so much to Phillip and Cariona for joining us today. We really appreciate them coming along to share their expertise. I'll be back in the next episode with Karl Purdy of Coffeeangel and Louise Palmer Masterton of Stem & Glory when we will take a deep dive into the importance of data analysis. Join us then for more insights and advice.

[00:31:28] **Voiceover:** The Inside Tourism Business podcast is brought to you by Fáilte Ireland, the national tourism development authority. Subscribe now on your favourite streaming platform and join us next time for more expert advice and insights.