

Geoff Alexander of Wow Bao on Branding Dark Kitchens

Takeaways from this episode:

Brand with a Soul – From their start in 2003, Geoff Alexander and Wow Bao have made it a point to share their story. That allows for a deeper connection with audiences and a way to show the heart behind a virtual brand.

Let Go To Grow – Geoff Alexander ran Wow Bao's social media in its early stages with great success. However, as the business grew, he had to make a difficult decision for the company to continue to scale upward.

Box the Brand – With Wow Bao being a self proclaimed “dark kitchen”, meaning there is no brick and mortar presence for its virtual locations, Geoff Alexander and his team use creative marketing to build brand recognition.

Wow Bao CEO and President Geoff Alexander learned that in order to expand a restaurant concept you have to “wow” with impressive branding.

Dark Kitchens are a fairly new concept in the restaurant industry, but Geoff Alexander and Wow Bao have found a way to carve their own lane in the virtual kitchen space.

Wow Bao CEO and President Geoff Alexander said his company's Dark Kitchen Initiative is a way to turn the lights on in existing kitchens and give them more business.

The dark kitchen concept allows for Wow Bao menu items to be cooked and prepared in the unused areas of already built restaurants and commercial kitchens and delivered to customers everywhere with third-party platforms.

“We believe in dark kitchens.” Geoff Alexander explained on the Restaurant Influencers podcast with Shawn Walchef of CaliBBQ Media. “Where that comes from is every restaurant has capacity. And especially during COVID, you lost your dining room, you didn’t need all of your kitchen space... And we believe we can help turn the lights on in that dark area.”

Innovation has been Geoff Alexander’s calling card for his entire career. Prior to his full involvement in Wow Bao, he spent two decades working on multiple campaigns with Lettuce Entertain You, a major restaurant brand. That opportunity led to him branching off into Wow Bao.

Wow Bao serves “Hot Asian Buns,” soft fluffy dough that is filled with savory or sweet flavors and steamed to perfection. They also offer a number of other fast Asian street food offerings and specialty drinks.

During its early days, Wow Bao revolutionized the relationship between diners and restaurants and implemented technology staples, such as self-ordering kiosks, mobile loyalty programs, and bicycle delivery.

From there, the revolution continued as Geoff Alexander made his mark in the fast casual space. He helped introduce Wow Bao 2.0, a concept where customers would order on an iPhone or iOS and receive their order from an animated cubby. Just two years later, Alexander and his team launched 100 Wow Bao Dark Kitchens in 60 cities across the country.

Despite making its way by turning the lights on in dark spaces, and the lack of brick and mortar stores, Wow Bao is still a strong presence despite overseeing virtual kitchens.

“We have a soul,” explains Geoff Alexander. “You can socialize – like we exist. We’re not a brand that just made ourselves last night, who had some packaging and threw some food in.”

Work ethic. Innovation. Passion. These are the pillars that have made Wow Bao the first and only company to claim the top spot on the Top 100 Fast Casual Magazine Movers and Shakers list twice, both in 2022 and 2019.

“We believe that life’s too short for uninspired food. We’re here to transform the fast-casual experience from every day and expected to extraordinary and inventive,” Wow Bao promises on its website.

“We promise to put a “wow” in our guests’ day with an incomparable food experience that engages, excites, and exceeds expectations.”

NOMINATE A RESTAURANT INFLUENCER – Do you know someone who is killing it on social media? Let us know by emailing influencers@calibbq.media or sending the @calibbqmedia team a DM on social media.

ABOUT RESTAURANT INFLUENCERS:

Restaurant Influencers is brought to you by Toast, the powerful restaurant point of sale and management system that helps restaurants improve operations, increase sales and create a better guest experience.

Toast – Powering Successful Restaurants. Learn more about Toast.

Popmenu is also a sponsor of the Restaurant Influencers podcast. We wanted to share with our audience this powerful opportunity to help your restaurant reclaim the power of your phone now. Learn more about Popmenu Answering.

<https://www.entrepreneur.com/video/430459>