

A quick catch up with...

Tom Allchurch, CEO at Bigham's

Former Unilever and Amazon executive turned restaurant entrepreneur, Tom Allchurch, is now heading up premium ready meal brand Bigham's. We caught up with him to chat about his role and how Bigham's has grown its customer base to nearly one million, during his three year tenure.

You've been CEO at Bigham's now for over three years. Can you describe some of the businesses key achievements during that time and what role you and your team have played in ensuring success?

We've continuously improved our quality which has allowed us to double the size of the business. We have so many ideas on quality improvements, its almost never ending. We've also improved productivity and by continuing to do so, will allow us to invest more in marketing, grow sales and profits for our retail partners, and hopefully justify increases in distribution and range. We've also built a great team which we continue to develop and grow.

How is Bigham's seeking to keep manufacturing costs low amidst rising food prices and changing consumer habits?

Our job is to be as lean as possible, and if we are, that will offset food cost inflation. We listen very carefully to our consumers, and make sure that our dishes are the ones that they enjoy the most.

The food industry has taken some knocks this year, how do you see the sector evolving in light of the recent scandals? What impact would an increase in demand for fresh/chilled products have on Bigham's?

The message from 'horsegate' is that cheap food can mean corners are being cut. We are growing because consumers know that they can trust us to have long term relationships, with the right suppliers. We have been adding capacity steadily, and that will continue.

Bigham's has grown very quickly since you joined the business in 2010. What organisational challenges have you overcome so far and what further challenges do you anticipate facing as Bigham's gets bigger.

The only challenge is to make sure that we attract and recruit the very best and most passionate people possible. We are very clear

about where we are going and how we want to go there, and we all naturally want to be part of something special.

You were an entrepreneur yourself for many years, prior to the sale of Fresh Italy, and prior to that you enjoyed a fifteen year 'blue-chip' career with Unilever and then Amazon. What key learnings have helped you most today, in your role as CEO?

I've learned that it's important to do something that you are passionate about and that companies striving to improve every day to offer the best quality products and services, are the ones that succeed. It's important to take action to develop better products and services quickly, rather than spending your time managing processes. I hope by working at Amazon during the early stages and working for myself, I understand what Charlie feels and also, that I know how to help a company evolve through a period of rapid growth.

What attracted you to the opportunity at Bigham's? Why should other people consider joining the organisation?

Charlie is passionate about making the best food for people to enjoy, and we have a culture underpinned by a determination to improve every day. What we are doing here at Bigham's is something that lots of people identify with and want to be a part of. As our reputation grows and we get even better at what we do, we anticipate more people wanting to join our business.

What are the ambitions for Bigham's over the next 12 months?

We want to make more improvements to our quality and productivity, become better known by consumers, and sell more food for our retail partners. Our focus is on getting people to try Charlie Bigham's in store, because we believe once they have tried our products, they are very likely to become regular customers. We've got 700,000 people eating Bigham's now and hopefully we will reach the one million mark, very soon.

Tracking our service performance

Nigel Wright is committed to offering outstanding customer service across all of its markets and part of that is seeking regular feedback from customers so that we can continually improve our service.

Collecting valuable data helps us to refine our processes as well as develop training programs for our teams. This in turn gives us a strategic advantage in the marketplace by allowing us to review issues and then make immediate improvements, across all areas of our business.

In 2012 our International Consumer Business NetPromoter Score was 95%. That means that 95% of customers would recommend our services to others.

Each month we survey clients and candidates to find out how they perceive our services. As well as the NetPromoter score we also ask customers to rate different aspects of our service on a scale of 1-5 (five being excellent and 1 poor).

To the right is a table representing data from over 550 consumer client/candidate responses in 2012. An overall percentage has been calculated for each category.

As you can see our relationship building, quality, service and professional knowledge are all rated between 75-100% (Very good to Excellent).

If we delve into the detail, the chart below outlines fourteen of the key factors central to the candidate engagement process. All categories are rated above 3 (Good) and over a third are rated 4 (Very Good) and above by consumer candidates served in 2012.

Similarly, clients are also content with the overall service they received. Out of twenty three customer service factors, none fall below a rating of three (Good). Some key areas central to our business ethos such as sector specialism, and professionalism and communication are all rated above 4 (Very Good).

In any aspect of performance measurement the objective is to analyse results and look for ways to improve scores. This is what we will endeavour to do throughout 2013.

Customer Service Ratings 2012



Candidate Ratings 2012



Client Ratings 2012

