

A man in a dark suit and light-colored shirt is holding a glowing blue sign that says "REBRANDING" in white capital letters. The sign is held between his hands and has a bright light effect. The background is a dark blue gradient with some light effects.

# REBRANDING, REALLY:

## HOW TO TAKE YOUR NEW BRAND FROM CONCEPT TO EXECUTION

So you've branded your company. You have a vision, you've articulated the key elements that your brand represents, you've created your logo and other brand materials. Now you have to implement the brand elements in your franchise.

It's one thing to have a brand, and it's quite another to bring that brand to

life. My partners and I at RAMMP Hospitality Brands bought and rebranded the heritage Canadian steakhouse brand MR MIKES. Blending the beloved elements of the brand with new elements that brought it into the present and will enabled it to expand into the future.

When we came up with "steakhouse casual" branding, we wanted to create the un-steakhouse steakhouse. MR MIKES breaks the traditional rules of dark lighting, tablecloths and fancy plates. It's a, casual come-as-you-are environment.

Once we had developed that conceptual branding vision, we got down to the nuts and bolts and rolled out the brand.

Here's how we did it.

### Create your space

Inside and out, our new MR MIKES SteakhouseCasual locations exude the new "steakhouse casual" brand identity. They have a feel of approachability, family, and community alignment. Every restaurant, has branding that connects it to the community it is in, shows the brand heritage, and uses other touchpoints to create a casual atmosphere.

The physical design of your building — interior and exterior — has to tie into your brand.

Proper flow is important, too. Your guests should experience your brand seamlessly from the moment they roll into the parking lot to when they sit at the table. Everything they touch and see should align with your brand message.

“Whatever brand attributes you want to embody, connect to the community in ways that make sense for your brand.”

### Study up

When you educate your staff about the brand, they can carry that knowledge into everything they do in your business. Team knowledge and buy-in is incredibly important. We provide extensive online training about the brand and process for our products in the kitchen.

We train all levels of staff: servers, back of house, host or hostess, managers, shift supervisors, franchisees. Everyone needs to go through an online training program, with different modules they need to pass to progress. We also train franchisees in an eight-week training program. We can monitor who has completed their online training modules and provide additional materials when required.

This way all our staff are trained to deliver consistent information and service. They're also trained to become trainers themselves.

### Design your menu with purpose

The next major touchpoint guests experience is the menu. The menu itself needs to look and feel like your brand, as do all the items on it and their descriptions. At MR MIKES SteakhouseCasual, our menus put an irreverent twist to the traditional formal menu you'd find at a steakhouse.

### Make back-of-the-house magic

There's an elaborate system that goes on behind the scenes in our purchasing, prep and cooking. We've designed every detail of delivery to make sure our customers get a consistent, great product that looks and tastes great, and reflects the MR MIKES SteakhouseCasual brand.

From the back of the house, the idea is to have consistent product across the chain.

The first element we look to in order to accomplish that is our ingredients. We

have a very focused ingredient deck with quality ingredients from our trusted suppliers.

A consistent product is very important. Every business is going to have a different way of creating this, but we do it using systems to sequence our food preparation. For instance, if you order a medium steak with fries, the steak is going to take 15 minutes to cook, so our system lets the back of the house know when to cook the French fries so that they are done at the same time as the steak. This way, the customer gets hot steak and hot fries, both perfectly cooked.

### Brand the product itself

Beyond excellent ingredients and great flavour, we really wanted our food to visually embody the MR MIKES SteakhouseCasual brand as much as possible, so the guest experiences the brand in the flavours, aromas and visuals when their meal arrives at the table.

For instance, we serve certain dishes in signature dishes rather than on plates. You might get your beer in our customized stein rather than a beer glass.

Those touchpoints give you a differentiation from the guests perspective.

### Distinctly brand the different areas or products you offer

At MR MIKES SteakhouseCasual, we don't just have a bar. We have an Urban Lodge.

It provides the ying to the yang of our steakhouse casual dining area. The design is distinct — a rustic lodge mixed with more urban chic. Our use of board games and music programs might make you wish the Urban Lodge were your own rec room, and our liquor, wine and beer program reflects the Urban Lodge's mix of sophistication and relaxed



Alan Dickson

irreverence. It is not a sports bar, but a place where people can socialize and enjoy themselves.

### Connect to the bigger picture

Whatever brand attributes you want to embody, connect to the community in ways that make sense for your brand. We specifically went into communities that would connect with the MR MIKES SteakhouseCasual brand.

One of our biggest attributes is our franchisees that embody the brand in their communities. They're locals that actually live in the areas where our franchises are based, so they know everyone and they genuinely want to build those communities, supporting through many different sponsorships and events. Our community involvement is something we're really proud of.

### Market Yourself

Ensure your messaging both internally and externally aligns with and reinforces your brand position. Understand who your target market is and don't try to be everything to everybody, differentiate your brand. Know where you can intersect with your customer in all forms of media.

**Al Cave is a partner in RAMMP Hospitality Brands owner of Mr Mikes Steakhouse Casual, Al has extensive experience working with start-ups and leading restaurant brands in the franchise industry.**

<http://www.mrmikes.ca/>