



How Assessing Intangible Assets Helped a Leading Restaurant Group Raise Capital and Improve Performance

The Challenge

Michael Lachowicz, owner and proprietor of Restaurant Michael and George Trois in Winnetka, Illinois, has enjoyed a long-standing reputation both as Chicagoland's premier French chef and as a successful restaurateur. As a visionary business owner, Chef Michael recognized that he needed to take a step back from his day-to-day responsibilities to focus on the big picture. He understood the benefits of spending more time working "on the business" instead of focusing on the daily minutiae.

Chef also was intrigued by the notion of further identifying and understanding the intangible assets he had in his restaurants and how he could build on the assets that truly mattered to the growth of his business. His continual drive for excellence compelled him to hire Saltare Solutions to assess those assets and discover areas that needed improvement, or that could be impacting performance. Additionally, he wanted to attract new investors and prepare for a significant capital raise to fund a planned renovation and rebranding of Restaurant Michael.

Our Approach

After several conversations with Chef regarding his goals and expectations, we performed a *Saltare360* assessment of the organization, focusing on the four key intangible assets: human, strategic, intellectual and market capitals.

Our team began by conducting interviews with key staff members to ascertain the culture in the organization, as well as employee engagement and alignment with Chef's overall strategy and vision for the restaurants. The greatest benefit from Chef's perspective was the newfound understanding of what motivated his employees and why they chose to stay employed at the restaurants.

Also, by offering his employees a forum to express their opinions, he further opened lines of communication and created a more level playing field for his interactions with them. Furthermore, during the course of the interviews we discovered a significant issue that, if allowed to continue, could have had a detrimental impact on the restaurants' culture and performance.

Likewise, in the intellectual capital assessment, we discovered that while Chef has been successful in building an innovative, learning culture within his restaurants, there were still significant opportunities for him to advance his reputation and further grow his business. Our recommendations included establishing himself as a the unequivocal thought leader for French cuisine not only in Chicagoland, but on a larger scale, and turning George Trois into a “destination” restaurant for foodies from across the Chicago area, or even nationally.

Similarly, our findings and recommendations in the area of market capital focused on building the “Chef Michael” brand. We found that Chef needed to communicate a different set of messages focused on his inspiration and thinking about French-inspired food. This included creating a multi-brand strategy that included both high-end and more accessible iterations of French cuisine.

Impact on the Company

From Chef’s perspective, the *Saltare360* assessment allowed him to understand where he was leaking asset value, and how to build on those intangible assets that truly mattered to the growth of his business. It also clarified his role in the business, which was to “lead” rather than to “pull” and allowed him to look at the big picture rather than micromanaging.

“Saltare360 is a savior for companies looking to understand the intangible assets they have and how to build on them.”

- Chef Michael Lachowicz

More importantly, equipped with the findings of the study, Chef Michael was able to proceed with his renovation and expansion of Restaurant Michael. By including an executive summary of the study in his investor packet, he was able to quadruple his pool of prospective investors, which resulted in a lower cost of capital for his project.

For more information, please visit www.saltaresolutions.com or contact:

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