



FLAVOR UP!

New Website Caters to Your Cravings

Food and emotion are linked. Many people get cranky when they are hungry, and many become ecstatic over a good meal or swoon over an elegant dessert. Many of us have sweet memories of childhood trips to the ice cream shop with grandma and grandpa, and the sugary, toasty smell of waffle cones. Then there were the after school visits to satisfy that craving for a milkshake and a smile from that favorite teenager a year ahead of you in school. Unfortunately, a few trips to the ice cream shop also turned out sad. We recall the way the scoop of ice cream hung on the edge of the cone for a fraction of a second before it plunged to the hot summer pavement below. You can still feel the disappointment in your stomach.

Since Izzy's opened, owners Jeff Sommers and Lara Hammel tried to figure out how to make certain that customers leave the store happy—that Izzy's has the flavor customers want, and the flavor they expected when they walked in the door. For 10 years ago, Jeff and Lara have wrestled with the problem of how to answer a couple of customer questions: do you have my favorite flavor in and when will it be available?

The challenge

The questions sound simple enough, but when you make small batches of ice cream and often use local, seasonal ingredients, a customer's favorite treat can go in and out of the freezer in a couple of hours in the summer, and a couple of days in the fall/winter.

In the early years, staff filled a binder with the names of people who wanted to be notified when their favorite flavors were in the freezer, and the shift leader was supposed to make phone calls to the people waiting patiently for their coveted flavor. But at the end of a long, hot, busy summer night, that small task sometimes was overlooked. It was an imperfect and labor intensive solution, but it was a first step towards communicating with the customers who would only eat ice cream when the right ice cream was available.

Innovation and evolution

Today's technology makes it easier to connect with customers in a variety of ways, besides picking up a phone. So Lara and Jeff started thinking about how to reach people through their website. They also started mulling over ideas about how bar codes were used to track inventory for wholesale and retail businesses.

Radio frequency identification (RFID) tags seemed to be a technology that could be used to communicate which 32 flavors of ice cream of the 90 or so Izzy's produces were available at any time. They envisioned a system where data would be transmitted to their website as soon as a new tub of ice cream was placed in the dipping cabinet. They also dreamed of being able to project that information on the wall of the shop.

As they researched the technology available, they also hoped that they would be able to have constantly updated information available for customers

on their FaceBook page, and Twitter accounts, and eventually, customers with a specific craving could get an email letting them know that their favorite flavor was in the freezer. Today, the Flavor Up! system has accomplished all of those things, and customers can even put the new Izzy's flavor dot home page on their cell phone.

An innovative business community

After extensive research Jeff realized he was going to have to work hard to persuade some business partners to take on this project. It was a novel application of the RFID technology, so everyone involved was going to have to think differently about how to make it work. In addition, Jeff and Lara realized they were a small customer—their business partners weren't going to make millions off this project. They would have to do it because it was a unique challenge.

The response from local businesses was impressive.

"It made me really appreciate what we have here in Minnesota," Jeff says. "It's an amazing business community."

The Nerdery did all the programming of the website component of the project. Geometrics in Rosemount helped laser cut the aluminum name plates for the flavors. Abe Tech, Inc. agreed to help apply their experience with RFID technology to this new idea even though Izzy's would be their smallest customer. Dan Rowe and Associates came up with an unorthodox solution to problems with the antennas by using orthotics material. Boeser, Inc. fabricated metal stands, and Phoenix Technologies helped with the in-store locations of the screens. Each one recognized that this was a small job, but they looked at the project as a chance to work creatively.

Jeff says, "We have access to very innovative companies that are willing to work with you on a project because it's interesting, not just because it is going to make money."

On top of all the technical pieces of the Flavor Up! system, Lara and Jeff worked with website designer Matt Terry, who developed the Flavor Up! flavor grid, as well as the new, colorful, hand-drawn illustration on the website's home page.

The new art accurately conveys the fun, and experience of Izzy's by depicting the cozy shop nestled in

the heart of the neighborhood—a shop visited by families and at home amongst the other local businesses on the block.

Matt's flavor grid not only displays the flavors available, but hovering over the dot reveals the ingredients in each. Customers now know if their favorite flavors are in the freezer before they stop by the shop. And they can scan the complete list of Izzy's flavors on the website and sign up to get an email whenever those rarely available flavors come in.

The Flavor Up! system took 1 year to develop, but Lara and Jeff already have plans to improve it, making it more fun and fascinating—a place to play with the flavor dots even more, after you're done thinking about what you might order for your special birthday treat. But Phase II is still top secret, and some people may need some time to adjust to the first round of changes.

Will you notice the difference?

For many people, the big change they will notice when they walk into Izzy's is the projected colored dots on the wall. They aren't fancy high contrast dots, but they represent the flavors of ice cream currently available with absolute accuracy. The flavor labels are scanned 20 times a second and the data is updated at three minute intervals. People can choose their flavors knowing that if it's on the wall when it is time to order, it's in the freezer.

"I liked the old board better," says one customer after he orders.

The staff member behind the counter stumbles a little over his response. "Well, the good thing about this is that it's always right—before we used to have to climb the wall and change the labels, and sometimes we were just too busy to do it—and then we'd forget... until someone ordered it, and it wasn't in the case. This is always updated by computer—and it's always right."

The older man shrugs and smiles, "I still liked the board. It was easier to read."

The more important impact of the Flavor Up! system is on line. Customers can visit the website and sign up to be notified when their favorite flavors are in. They might get the good news that dark chocolate zin is ready to scoop in a FaceBook update, a tweet, or an

Izzy's New Home Page—featuring cool illustrations by Matt Terry!

old fashioned email, and as soon as they are notified, they'll be able to call right away to reserve a pint. If they act swiftly, they will never again, miss out on those limited edition flavors that go so fast.

Satisfied

The Flavor Up! system is one of those long, large projects that go on behind the scenes at Izzy's. Some might shrug like the customer who liked the flavors hand painted on signs and stuck to the magnetic board behind the counter. Some might claim that there must have been a cheaper, easier way to accomplish the same thing. Others might say that the

project applies too much technology to what might have been an employee training issue. But those critiques miss the point. What pushes Izzy's forward on a complex project like this is the desire to make certain that customers get what they want, and that they never leave disappointed.

"It isn't just an issue of efficiency," says Jeff. "I'm not motivated by return on investment—I'm motivated by doing things right."

Going out for ice cream is a special occasion. And going out for Izzy's ice cream is even more of a celebration because of the taste and quality of the treats. And now, whether you've been waiting all summer for grapefruit sorbet, or you just wanted to make sure that the dark chocolate zin is still available, you'll know before you walk in the door that your craving will be satisfied.

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I got an email that my favorite flavor was in, so the next time I was in the neighborhood, I stopped at the shop—and it was already sold out. Do I really have to rush into the shop as soon as my flavor is made?

We make our ice cream in small batches and with this great weather we've been having we've been busy, so you may have to move quickly to make sure you can get to your flavor before others do. Our new website and RFID system make it easy to inform you when your flavor is up, but then you have to respond if you can't stop in right away, by calling our shop to reserve a pint or quart. That way you won't have to break the speed limit on your way over to the shop. **Call 651-603-1458.**

When I walked into Izzy's, my favorite flavor was up on the wall, but when it came time to order it had disappeared—not on the wall and sadly, not in the case. What happened?

Our colorful flavor dots on the wall are updated every three minutes. Infrequently, we will run out of your favorite flavor, the moment you walk in the door. So you look up at your choices and find your flavor, but as you wait to order the Flavor Up! System updates as we switch out the empty container. Your flavor dot disappears and unfortunately, you have to choose another flavor. Please keep several flavors in mind, just in case the one you want is gone when it is time to order.

SUMMER HOURS
M–Th: 11 AM - 10 PM
Sat. and Sun 11 AM - 10:30 PM

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We are turning 10!

Jeff and I thank all of you for buying Izzy's Ice Cream over the years and supporting our ability to make great ice cream. Now that we are 10, we continue to strive on using the highest quality ingredients we can find. On July 29th we are having Izzy Day. It is a tradition at Izzy's on our birthday to give away free izzy cones. If you prefer, we can add the "birthday izzy" on top of your regular ice cream cone purchase. So that means if you buy any single or double cone, you'd get two izzies, your regular izzy and the extra "birthday izzy."
IT IS OUR WAY TO SAY "THANKS!"



IZZY DAY July 29, 2010

- 11 AM–2 PM: Waffles with MN maple syrup, butter and cream cheese ice cream (\$1.00 per mini-waffle treat)
- 12 Noon–3 PM: Kids activities along sidewalk. Games, Ice Cream Cake Walk, Prizes and Free Balloons.
- ALL Day: Free Izzy T-Shirt Give Aways Each Hour
- ALL DAY: Enter our Raffle Contest and Win a Free Ice Cream Sundae Social (at Izzy's) for up to 10 persons with Kitchen Tour from Owner. Enter one per customer Winner decided at 9 PM.
- ALL Day: Free izzy scoop (one per customer) cone or purchase any single or double cone and receive an extra "birthday izzy" on top (one per customer).
- ALL DAY: Flickr Birthday Raffle: Enter our Birthday Raffle to Win a Free Izzy's Hot Dish (32 izzy scoops in a red Hot Dish). Snap a photo on July 29th with you and your friends/family eating ice cream at Izzy's. Upload your photo to Flickr and tag it with Izzy's Ice Cream 10th Birthday. Your name will be entered in our Hot Dish raffle. Deadline for submissions is August 4. The winner will be announced August 5.

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