

Opdrachtgever: DECS (Sara Lee/DE)
Publicatie: Shared Values, voorjaar 2007
Doelgroep: Medewerkers van Douwe Egberts Coffee Systems (DECS)
Bijdrage: Interview met een klant van DECS



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“A steady factor in our daily lives”

DECS has its customers all over the world, in every possible line of business. Who are these customers, what market developments do they anticipate and what do they think of us? Lars Weissbarth, kitchen chef in a convalescent home in Baden, Switzerland, tells about the impact his choice for the Cafitesse system has on the elderly in his care.

About two hundred people live together in the Regionalen Pflegezentrum Baden, a convalescent home. These are senior citizens who daily need nursing care. The home offers a wide range of therapies, such as physio and ergo therapy. It also has an in-house pharmacy.

In the kitchen, Lars Weissbarth oversees the daily preparation of three hundred hot lunches – in Switzerland, lunch is the main meal of the day. Together with breakfast and dinner, these add up to around eight hundred meals each day.

Lars Weissbarth – who is not only a cook, but who is also trained to look after specific dietary needs – has been in charge of the kitchen since February 2003. Nevertheless, he is seldom found at the stove. “I am the linking pin between kitchen, residents and external parties. I regularly tour our home to ask residents if the food and drinks please them. Every now and then I hear some complaints, but never about the coffee! Residents are so content with the coffee; I fear they would crucify me, if I would deny them their Cafitesse coffee.”

A cafeteria is also part of the convalescent home. It has been equipped with three conventional coffee machines, which use regular bean coffee. Everywhere else in the home, coffee is brewed for residents, visitors and personnel, using liquid coffee concentrate and Café Milc. White coffee is the most popular hot drink for all who use the machines in the home. “They all want proper coffee with whipped milk and cream, just the way they’ve always had it. Many say the Cafitesse coffee tastes much better than the conventional coffee in our cafeteria. It has an extremely rounded taste. When put together with milk, it makes a great mixture.”

Weissbarth’s most important target audience consists of the residents. For them, several criteria determine a good cup of coffee. “First of all, the coffee must be hot and look like an old-fashioned cup of milky coffee. Older people, who are having troubles lifting a heavy cup, drink their brew from transparent plastic cups. Then it’s crucial the coffee looks appealing. The smell is also important; it must smell like fresh coffee.” To ensure these criteria are met with, Lars Weissbarth has had the coffee evaluated. “We have tested DE-products and its competitors at our various locations and asked people which they preferred. Douwe Egberts easily won that competition.”

Market developments

Lars Weissbarth thinks the Cafitesse system currently in use, is very innovative. “For our organization, this is absolutely the best.” Nevertheless, he has a suggestion: “Perhaps in the near future, the machine will get room for a third tank, to serve hot chocolate. This drink is very popular in Switzerland.”

A resident asking for anise, cinnamon or another tasty additive to spice up their coffee is something Weissbarth can hardly imagine. “Our current residents would certainly not approve. But who knows what might happen in ten or fifteen years from now? Future residents may have become accustomed to drinking such coffee and may want to continue doing so. I have my qualms, as the sense of taste decreases as age progresses. I wonder if adding such refined nuances to a coffee is worth the effort.

Customer relationship

The Cafitesse machines are like Weissbarth's babies. Before their introduction, he worried if he could convince the management and residents of the necessity of their introduction. After a short matter of time, it was clear he had worried in vain. "Only after a few weeks, it was crystal clear these machines are perfect for us. No-one at the home would like to go back to the way things were before. These machines have become a steady factor in our lives." Weissbarth is more than content with Repa, the Swiss distributor of DE-products. "Many other firms could take Repa's customer service as an example. The service has always been excellent. In the three years I've worked with them, I have never had any reason to complain. I am truly enthusiastic."