

“How to Face the Challenges of Today's Markets”

“How to face the challenges of today’s market”

Christopher Freeman



As Paul has said we have a one shop business in Crouch End, North London. The shop was built as a bakery in 1850 and has been in our family since just after the Second World War. We are in a good High Street position. We serve a little over 6,000 customers per week with an average spend of just over £3.00 per head. To give you an idea of where we are, you see lots and lots of chimney pots I am pleased to say. Just off the top of the picture you will find Alexandra Palace and just off the bottom of the picture you’ll find both the new and the old Arsenal stadiums that do give you a little bit of a landmark as to where we are.

A little bit of history, because like many family firms we come with lots of history, good and bad. The main picture on the right hand side is the shop about 100 years ago and the four gentlemen in the picture, the one in the white coat is my father standing outside the shop some 30/40 years ago, and going from the top right downwards, my grandfather, my great grandfather and my great great grandfather. My great great grandfather was the first baker in our family. They were Wesleyan non-conformist farmers or farm labourers in Northamptonshire and unwelcome in the vicinity because of their beliefs, so the two brothers got on a hay wagon and came down to London in 1820. The one who is my great great grandfather got off at Highgate and started working in the bakery, and seven years later started his first business on Highgate Hill, roughly opposite the Whittington Hospital today. Perhaps

if it wasn't for them we would have ended up working for Thomas Adams in Northamptonshire.

A few pictures of old family businesses. The one on the top right is my grandfather's shop in Enfield town. Sadly he is no longer with us. My father being the younger son wasn't invited into that business, or his brother didn't want him there. Perhaps some things never change in families, so hence he came to Crouch End. The large picture on the left hand side shows my great grandfather's shop on Highgate Hill at the time of Queen Victoria's either Golden or Diamond Jubilee in 87 or 97, and the small picture on the bottom right shows a family business in Wellington, New Zealand. Many of my family went to New Zealand in the 1850's. Some stayed and some came back obviously.

Myself standing outside the shop, altered very little over the generations, and inside the shop with one of the Saturday girls who is my little daughter. Probably the most famous landmark in Crouch End, after us dare I say, is the Clock Tower which was built in 1895 to celebrate the saving of open spaces from development. Its funny how 110 years later nothing has changed, we are still fighting against development. Any bit of land, any garage that appears that isn't used has now got flats on it.

A little bit about our employees, I won't go through it because you can read that much quicker than I can. Safe to say we have approximately 40 staff in the one shop. You'll see we have one support worker. For those of you who are not aware I am registered blind, I have no central vision I can only read most things of normal print with a 10 times magnifier. So in terms of looking forward I am probably the biggest handicap to the business. We also have two bakery staff on NVQ Bakery Level 2 training and three on Bakery Service NVQ Level training. We have trained lots of people over the years, not so much recently. In my father's time lots of Master bakers in and around our part of the world owed their training in no small part to him.

Looking at costs – many of you will see our production wages are high. I think this is entirely due to the fact that we have a lot of very skilled and long serving staff. Our bread foreman has been with us almost 40 years. We've a number at 30 years and quite a few over 20 years. And long service and loyalty of course comes with a bit of a price attached to it.

The chart there gives you a breakdown of our sales by our departments. We are still selling quite a lot of bread compared to some other High Street bakers, about 19% of our turnover. Our sandwich and roll production is also at the same level, and

morning goods, pastry goods, pound cakes, that type of item at 20%. Celebration cakes at 9% and savouries and bake off also around that 9/10% mark. It is something we seem unable to get any higher.

One thing we have improved on a lot in the last twelve months is our lunch time platters and that's helped to replace some of the competition we have been facing, and that's something I think bakers can do particularly well on.

Some shots here in the bakery. We have a separate confectionery and bread bakery, finishing room, cake decoration room, sandwich room. So the top left hand picture shows my bread foreman of some 40 years service to us and one of our trainees who really is a very enthusiastic and skilled young man and we have great hopes for him in the future.

The top right picture shows our sandwich room. Our second language in the firm is Portuguese. I took on one European Brazilian a few years ago and with her came her whole family, in fact came two families. Two sisters with all their family and they are truly wonderful workers. The only trouble is when one gets married we have a mass exodus for that weekend. There's always a downside.

The bottom left picture is in the confectionery bakery and the right hand is our finishing room.

In the past, like many of us, and I owe the picture of this what I call bakery baggage to my friend Tim Catches who talks about the bakery baggage that we carry, particularly those of us that are in family businesses. We have always done things this way, we always sold this, we never done that, I think sometimes can be an incredible handicap to us. We never used to buy in anything, we never used premixes, it was always scratch recipes. Until recently we had no Tesco Express, no M & S Simply Food and I was pleased to read in the BB at the weekend that Greggs are feeling the heat of them as well as us. So it's nice to know we are not alone in that respect. There was no one-stop shopping and no bake off in the shop. That to me always seemed ridiculous that we bake off in a shop when we are baking it 20 feet away behind a wall, but now we do that. In the past we also didn't have things like this just outside my shop, 30 foot up on a pole is a lovely camera. Unfortunately it photographs everything that stops and that has caused us some quite serious problems in recent times. Customers pull up and think they can just pop in to collect a birthday cake find that when they get home 3 or 4 days later there is a parking ticket for £40.

In present times now we buy in some savoury products to supplement those that we can't easily make ourselves. Things like some marzipan figures, some chocolates. Up until about ten or so years ago we didn't sell cold drinks, we now sell a range of those and always looking for different things. Smoothies for example are a recent innovation which we find go well, there's a good mark up on them and it's interesting to see how much the supermarkets charge for things like that. They are generally more expensive than us, and you know they are jolly well buying at a much less price than we are. Our Bean to Cup coffee machine helps to keep the Starbucks and Costas and all those at bay. We get people coming into the shop with a Starbucks coffee in their hand but they come into us to buy a Danish pastry or a muffin or something. Just trying to get people to buy both from us so they don't get out of the habit of coming into us, I see as a concern. You want to make sure that we are getting both items of the sale, pushing ourselves. Although we've advertised heavily and it's surprising when you say to people "by the way we do fresh coffee, they say oh I didn't know where is it?" Its right there in front of you.

Facing today's challenges. Some of the things we've tried and succeeded at and some things we've tried and failed at. I would always campaign strenuously against opening on a Sunday. We are a family firm, I work pretty long hours to make sure we get some quality time as a family together. In the end we relented last autumn and we've been opening on Sundays ever since. It has proved to be successful. Sadly Crouch End is a very very busy area on a Sunday, lots of people around, but we've managed to run it with one supervisor and two shop staff, but no bakery staff at all, and I think that has enabled us to make it successful. It does mean sadly that we are selling products on Sunday that are available on Saturday, something we wouldn't do other days of the week.

Farmers Markets we've had a crack at. Alexandra Palace has a famous Farmers Market and we were in there before Christmas selling our Christmas goods, such as puddings, pies, trying to go with high value items. We are not allowed in there to sell bread because it's something to do with the guy who runs it, his brother in law or something is a baker, which seem a bit like restrictive practices but they seem to be able to get away with it.

Office catering as I mentioned earlier, platters of sandwiches and snacks for lunch time. We do a lot of work for that, a lot of it for the local authority and more so for other offices and companies around. That is a market that really we can do so much better than M & S and the like. M & S I believe want three days notice, we'll settle for a couple of hours and its using our products and we can extend it so much more than the sandwich bars by using our own bakery products on to that.

Of course like everybody, we have our website. We are not a secure site to do business on email like Stephen Hallam, but it has generated lots of enquiries and helps to push the business along and also gives us a profile.

Quality of service – nothing new in that but I think it is dreadfully dreadfully important. In this day cutting down of staff levels, I think people come into bakers shops, particularly at lunchtime, they are short on time, they probably have a shorter lunch break than they used to have, they expect to be in, out, and served quickly. Its something we pride ourselves on and work hard at to turn our customers around really quickly. Yes it does mean I think at other time we maybe have more staff than we really need but you've got to decide which is more important, an extra member of staff at £6.00 an hour doesn't take many sales to earn their keep over busy times.

Low Salt – that again has been an issue for us. We are in a very faddy area, they are very 'right on' and into all the latest things going on and think they know everything about everything, and probably they know less than they really do. So we have been doing some work on reducing salt and have reduced it down, and of course hydrogenated fats coming with that as well at the same time as we have been working on salt.

The GI diet to us has brought some great benefits. This came about through a BCA southern area meeting where one of our members James Dorrington brought this loaf along and said I think this is really something for the future. You know it's a great loaf and we're selling lots of it and it's a good price. So we took that back and that's been successful for us. We've recently extended it into a range of sandwiches selling as GI and low calorie and with some different fillings in at a premium price. Again that's been successful for us.

We work with some of our suppliers to get some special products. Our flour miller, David Wright, has produced a number of products for us as a bespoke item. I think its interesting to note that even as a small business you are able to get this sort of help from your suppliers and don't think that you may be too small for it. They know if they won't do it there is somebody somewhere who will.

We do work with dairy free, egg free, anything free type of celebration cake. In Harringay where we are we have the highest child asthma rate in the country for some reason. I suspect it's probably because we are in a dip, there's huge amounts of traffic. And not only asthma allergies but kids round our way seem to have all sorts of allergies. My son's best friend at school is one of those unfortunate kids who is allergic to the world. He carries one of the analeptic shock pens with him 24/7, so

it's made us realise that there were these kids that couldn't get an ordinary birthday cake so we try to address that. I don't think it earns us any money, I'm pretty sure it loses us money but it does provide a service and I think that is what being in the community is about. I for my sins get involved in current issues going on in and around Crouch End. We've had a big issue of Hornsey Town Hall where the council has vacated; we've lost 200 council jobs right next door to us which is a big blow. The Council set up a partnership board to see what was to be done with it; it's likely to be turned into a world cultural Arts Centre at some point in the future. It's also been on the television, it's generated a huge amount of interest, tremendously divisive feelings locally, so I've stepped back from that one because that's too hot.

We try to keep our shop profile high by supporting local events as I know all bakers do and get involved in things that are perhaps a little safer and less controversial.

At Christmastime we produce a leaflet. We have 20,000 of them printed, 8 pages of it which we distribute around our local area. It's our major advertising campaign of the year and as well as promoting the shop we are also promoting the area. It's something we have done for a number of years and costs us about £2,000 in total and I think its money well spent. We put a lot of effort into Christmas, a huge huge effort and it's absolutely exhausting. But I think it is the one time when a baker can really put himself in front of the customer, if you can show what you can really do.

I mentioned Farmers Markets; we also had a go at the French Markets – a big mistake. We were told by lots of people the French would love our products and there was nothing quite like it in France. I think in fairness we chose the wrong market at the wrong time, it was a Bologne Christmas market and we should have gone for a food market. I'm not sure Bologne was the right place; it seemed to be rather insular. We certainly experienced a bit of French hostility and why when these French markets come over here, I don't know. So we didn't have quite the same experience as was reported in the BB the other week by Elaine Ede, I think, in the West Country. I think they probably did rather better than us because there was a consortium of them over there.

I talked about working with our suppliers – that's myself with Chris Wyle of G R Wrights. Wrights like us are a fifth generation family firm and we are very grateful for their help.

As I say, like everybody we have a website. I'm told it's quite good, in fact I'm told by some people it's extremely good. There must be something right about it because

the guy that does our IT work for us has just bought himself a £60K Merc, I hasten to add not at our expense.

Facing today's challenges – I am also a member of the BCA, The Bakers Company, the National Association and I think it is going to meetings, talking to people, networking with people, having friends that are supportive and are prepared to talk candidly, that is a great benefit.

These are some of our platters that we produce. We recently managed to find – in times past we used to wrap them in cling film which is the most dreadful thing to wrap anything in because it squashes, spoils, it never does quite what you want. We managed to find some plastic bags recently so that the presentation when they go out is vastly improved and as I say now accounting for some 7% of our business and growing very quickly.

We produce a wide range of products in the bakery. We aim to produce good quality and covering all different seasons. Here you see some chocolate moulds at Easter time, Simnel cakes, fancy cakes, hot cross buns of course.

Celebration cakes are an important part of our business. We are always looking for something a bit different or a little new. Two wedding cakes were ones that customers came to us with an idea and we've incorporated. The one in the middle – well that's something new for us, for all of you. It's Civil Ceremonies. We did two on the very first day – one for TV and one for a client. One has to realise of course there wont be any Christening cakes to follow from them. But in Harringay we celebrate diversity and that's part of it.

Here's a couple of our Celebration cakes – the one on the left is for the Telegraph Weekend magazine, I think the 40th anniversary. Photo cakes to us are a great Godsend because reality is so much better than trying to produce a figure or mould that is exactly what you get.

Our Christmas window there – we produce some super Christmas windows and devote a great deal of energy to them. We won a prize for our Christmas window a couple of years ago with the Bako competition and we get lots of really favourable comments from the public.

Just a little bit about our Christmas leaflet there that I mentioned earlier. On the right hand page half way down one of our Christmas puddings. We still produce our Christmas puddings the old fashioned way in china basins. This one is a Cornish Blue, which is a special china pattern and we are trying to keep ourselves into the gift market a little bit as well as just for food. For those command a fairly hefty premium and we sold just under 100 of those ones this Christmas.

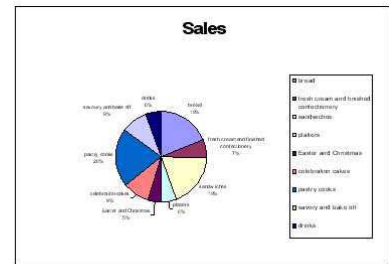
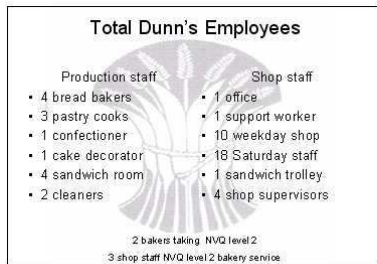
Just a few shots in the shop last Saturday. We have 18 or so Saturday staff. This was last Saturday and the shop was fairly full of products, showing a bake off oven there. Young black lad at the front is a male model and if you've got any teenage daughters like me you'll find him in some of their magazines.

I would also mention some of the other things we've been involved in over the years. We've had a number of approaches to do adverts in the shop, or commercials. They are great. They are jolly hard work, but my goodness you've never seen money like it. We did one for BT with Bob Hoskins a few years ago, probably ten years ago now and they wanted this and they wanted that, they said well can we have this, and how much is this and out come the readies. In case Mr Brown is here, yes, they did go in the till. And about five years ago we did one for Wrigley's Spearmint Gum which was a great one because everybody locally referred to it as the Dunn's advert because it actually started off with a shot of the outside of the shop. It was the one where the guy from reality TV was smashing up cream gateaux on the counter and it really was done when the shop was open. It was quite incredible. But it paid a lot of money.

Now you wouldn't expect to hear something from me without hearing about National Doughnut Week which since its inception in the early 90's has raised some £545,000 for Children's Charities and takes part this year on the 6 – 13 May. This is a Craft baking trade fundraising and profile launching event that can really bring the Craft sector together and achieve lots of good local publicity which is really what you and us all want, national publicity doesn't really help but if you get your picture on the front page of the local paper or on your local radio station then I think its very good for you. I think we've helped lots of bakers get that message across over the years.

In moving forward I think the High Street is a difficult place to be. It is challenging but I'm optimistic about the future, and that's my future, or rather my exit – this is my 13 year old son who is desperately keen to be a baker and take the business on in spite of seeing the hours I work. So I'm extremely lucky in that respect because I feel as a family business you are the custodian of it for the time you are running it, it is not your money, its something that you have a responsibility to, you have a responsibility to your staff, to do the best for them as well as for yourself, so I am confident about the future. We have had some difficult times recently but I'm sure the future will be good for us.

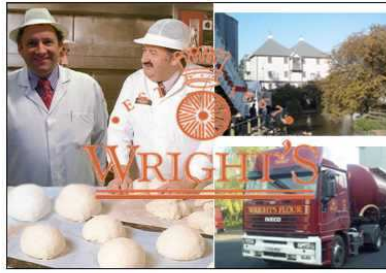
And that ladies and gentlemen has been added in by my young son.



Facing today's challenges

- Sundays
- Farmers market
- Office catering
- E business
- Quality of service
- Low salt
- GI multi seed
- Working with suppliers
- Dairy free egg free etc
- Current issues

- Shop profile
- Support local community
- X-mas leaflets
- Wheat free

Five Generations of Master Bakers

News

6 October 2008

Master Baker is a proud title, but it's also a responsibility. It's a title that has been passed down through five generations of the Wright family, from the late Mr. Wright to the current Master Baker, Mr. Wright. The Wright family has a long history of baking, and it's a tradition that they are proud to carry on.

2 October 2008

It's an honour to be named a Master Baker. It's a title that has been passed down through five generations of the Wright family, from the late Mr. Wright to the current Master Baker, Mr. Wright. The Wright family has a long history of baking, and it's a tradition that they are proud to carry on.

1 October 2008

It's an honour to be named a Master Baker. It's a title that has been passed down through five generations of the Wright family, from the late Mr. Wright to the current Master Baker, Mr. Wright. The Wright family has a long history of baking, and it's a tradition that they are proud to carry on.

Dunn's Bakery Buffet Platters

 Cake	 Savoury
 Fruit	 Ciabatta

 Huge Rabbit & Duckers!	 Hot Cross Buns
	
	

 Multi Choc Delight	 Cerise
 Civil Ceremony	
£395 Contact us for more information	2 Tier 5", 7" £278 3 Tier 5", 7", 10" £325 Contact us for more information

	 Birthday
	Cake price from £33.00



DUNN'S BAKERY

Christmas 2008

Leaves Christmas Pudding

The name for Dunn's traditional Christmas pudding has been passed down through the family. The name is a tribute to the family's long history of baking, and it's a tradition that they are proud to carry on.

Dunn's delicious pudding in a collectible ceramic tin

A traditional Christmas pudding in a collectible ceramic tin. The tin is a tribute to the family's long history of baking, and it's a tradition that they are proud to carry on.

Mince Pie

A traditional mince pie, made with a rich, fruity filling and a buttery crust. It's a tradition that they are proud to carry on.



Dunn's Bakery

National Lottery

£545k

HELPING TO BUILD A BRIGHTER FUTURE FOR CHILDREN WITH SEVERE DISABILITIES

WHAT MAKES THE CHILDREN'S TRUST SPECIAL?

The Children's Trust is a charity that provides support and services for children with severe disabilities. It's a charity that is dedicated to making a difference in the lives of these children.



Produced and directed
by Lewis Freeman