

# Five Things You Should Know Before Opening a Bookstore Café

by Nicole Sullivan  
Owner of Denver's BookBar

More and more entrepreneurs are choosing to enhance the bookstore experience by adding food and beverage service for extra income and sustainability. If you are considering this hybrid business model, it is very likely that the idea to open a bookstore came to you first. Adding a stream of income probably was secondary. Whether you are adding a café, wine bar, full-service restaurant, or anything in between, you will encounter twice the challenges as well as twice the satisfaction of doing what you love.

**Are you ready to open a bookstore café?** Here are five things you should know:

**1. You will be opening and operating two businesses.**

Opening and running one business can be difficult enough. When opening a hybrid store, you are essentially opening two different businesses with different processes, systems and even vocabulary. The trick is to meld them, as seamlessly as possible, into one model. You will need to be able to modify your accounting, human resources, receiving, and other back office processes in order to accomplish this goal. You will want to think twice or more about opening this type of business if you don't have a passion for connecting these two industries.

**2. Expect to navigate more requirements and regulations.**

From location to inspections and taxes, the requirements and regulations of city, state and federal agencies vary between retail and food and beverage businesses. This creates more back office work and certainly more training on the part of both you and your staff. Bringing in additional professionals to help navigate the daunting processes is highly recommended so you learn the skills you'll need — and begin fully prepared.

**3. Funding can be more challenging with a hybrid business.**

Just as if you were opening two separate businesses, your funding needs can be expected to increase exponentially. In addition to funding your bookstore operations, you'll need to fund café equipment and inventory. You will need to be more selective of locations, which could mean more expense on rent and build-out. Banks may be more hesitant about lending money on a new, hybrid business model, especially if you are new to both businesses and haven't gotten the support you need for a successful launch.

**4. Hiring, training, and scheduling becomes more involved.**

In order to keep payroll costs low while keeping your schedule flexible, it helps to cross-train employees. They'll need new skills, especially if they have no prior experience in the food and beverage business. Be prepared to invest in building these skills and creating an environment where everyone is ready to serve customers in a variety of new ways.

**5. Your marketing message changes to embrace your new competitive advantages.**

There are many examples of how best to market a bookstore, but adding food and beverage introduces extra considerations. The new message is one of community and experience. You will want to promote your higher margin items (food and beverage) while not missing the whole reason for your business – the books. Developing new marketing messages allows you to expand your competitive advantages ... and give people more reasons to stop in!

**Nicole Sullivan is available to help you determine the best options for your business.**

Contact The Bookstore Training Group of Paz & Associates  
MKaufman@PazBookBiz.com • 904.277.2664