

# Piratz, burgers and lost pizzazz

Did you catch my blog post last week on what I consider a rebranding #fail for Piratz Tavern? Robert Freeland did, and he shared his thoughts with me (and I thought I would share them with you, with his permission of course)

*Hi Deborah,*

*I agree with your prediction that the Corporate Bar and Grill angle Spike TV's "Bar Rescue" guru, Jon Taffer, thinks will save the sputtering Piratz Tavern will die its own death. The first article I read about the makeover had Taffer proclaiming the need for an "executive burger" joint in Silver Spring...whatever an executive burger is.*

*I've had plenty of enjoyable times and grogs at PT, and will miss its one-of-a-kind shtick. The thing that displaced it attempts to strongarm pretention into a dive...an antithetical marriage, like matter and antimatter...Boom! I think Taffer missed the one about understanding a region's audience before dictating what they need.*

*I walked past CB&G this evening, after leaving a very-packed Quarry House across the street (where the burgers are great). It was open but dead, consistent with your forecast. Ground beef and low inventory rotation don't get along well.*

*Best,*

*Robert Freeland*

We'll keep tabs on the new place, but unless "executives" develop a taste for these burgers, AND flock there religiously every lunch, I doubt the new place will survive. These days, competition is stiff for any dollars. How do you stand out from a crowd? In this case, the shtick was the attraction. Substituting a generic experience in a place with little foot traffic is a sure-fire way to lose business.

Katie Aberbach at [expressnightout.com](http://expressnightout.com) seems to agree in her post *Walked the Plank*. What do you think will happen?

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## **The weekly communications #fail: rebranding gone wrong**

Yesterday, as I was reading The Washington Post, I came across this item, regarding a makeover for a Silver Spring, MD bar.

The bar, formerly known as Piratz Tavern, was targeted by Spike TV to be redone. Apparently, the bar's sales had been slumping and the owners appealed to the "Bar Rescue" show. Piratz had a pirate theme—the waitstaff dressed up as pirates, there was rum, and "pirate-themed" food. The decor was pirate-casual (you know, skulls on the wall-like).

In comes the Bar Rescue staff and Piratz Tavern becomes, are you ready for this? Corporate Bar and Grill, serving gourmet burgers to executives not interested in being pretend pirates.

Corporate Bar and Grill? Seriously? Could they have chosen a more generic name? A more generic menu? I am not a betting

person, but I would bet that this won't result in higher earnings, except if they are charging much more for these executive burgers.

Perhaps what Piratz needed was not a complete rebranding to become a generic grill, but instead, an effective way to market a quirky spot that is a bit out of the way for foot traffic. If foot traffic was the issue before, it will still be an issue now, regardless of whether the food is better.

If you have something different, I think you should exploit it. Becoming just like everyone else is rarely a way to get ahead of the crowd. Becoming more generic is this week's communications #fail.