



Why Benchmarking Works Best When It Gets Uncomfortable

Last week's article sparked a wave of emails — most saying, *"Darren, my clients don't like looking at Top 20% numbers because it makes them uncomfortable."*

Good.

That discomfort is exactly where the change starts.

If benchmarking feels comfortable, it's not shifting behaviour. Clients don't improve when they're told they're "close to average." They improve when they see a gap that punches them in the chest — a gap they can't ignore.

Take a café I reviewed recently. Doing 9% net profit. The industry "average" was 8%, so everyone relaxed. But when we showed the Top 20% number — 22% — the mood changed instantly.

That's the moment benchmarking works. Not the report.

The realisation.

And here's the human side: nobody wants to be left behind. When clients see where the best operators sit — and how far ahead they actually are — FOMO kicks in. Not the social kind. The financial kind.

"Why am I not there? What am I missing? What are they doing that I'm not?"

Fear of missing out is a powerful motivator.

So is fear of being the one business that never improves.

Show clients the top numbers. Let the truth do the heavy lifting.

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