

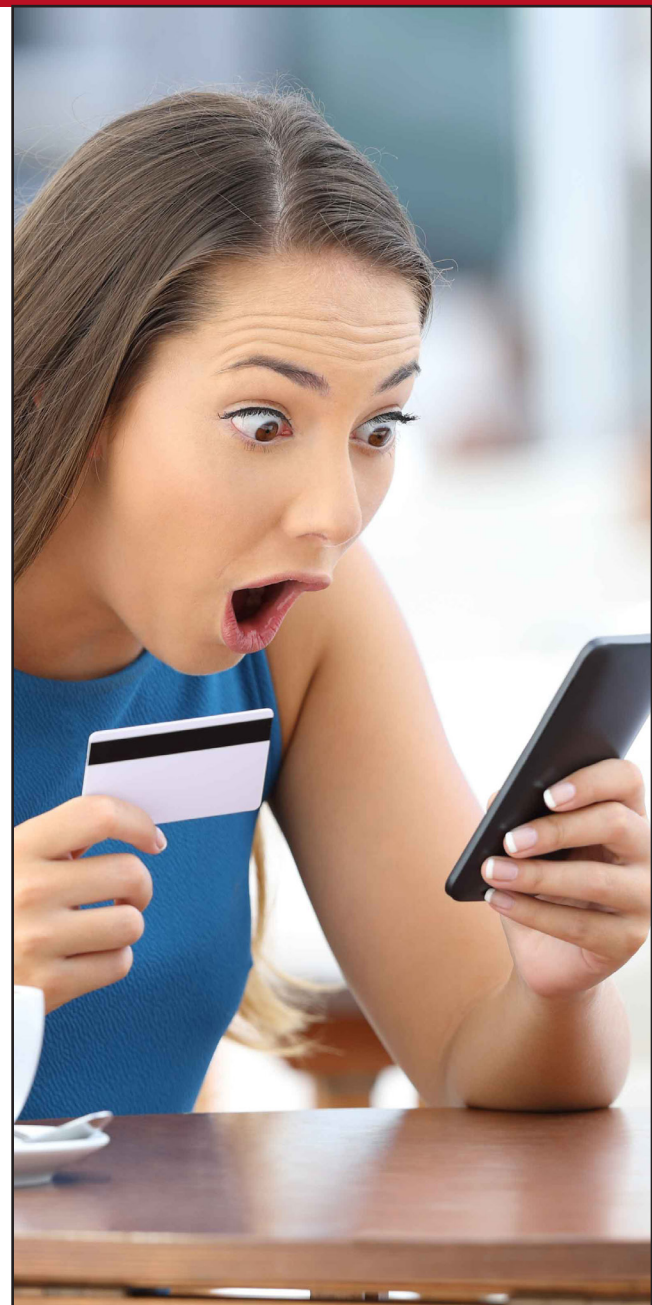
Foodservice Updates

In This Issue

- [Making the right decisions on tech](#)
- [Consistent allergen awareness across your brand](#)
- [What's your market position?](#)

When it comes to building loyalty, play the long game

Name a major restaurant brand and chances are that it has re-launched its loyalty program over the past year. As competition has increased along with consumers' need for value, more brands have reinvented their loyalty programs to meet the moment. If your program hasn't had a refresh in a while, make sure it's not only driving return visits but also allows guests to earn rewards in ways that work long-term for both your business and your guests. For instance, Sweetgreen Chief Marketing Officer Daniel Shlossman said in an interview with PYMNTS that points-based systems, for example, can lead to situations where guests become rich in rewards and ready to redeem them, while the restaurant has to respond to the high demand by degrading the value of the rewards. For that reason, Shlossman said, Sweetgreen decided to offer a gamified approach that rewards guests in exchange for certain kinds of purchases – and enables to brand to provide different offers to different kinds of guests. If you have a loyalty program, have you tested it to better understand how guests will be able to redeem rewards months down the line? Do you have the flexibility to recalibrate your program to manage the demand? Are you offering the kinds of rewards that provide a little incentive for different subsets of your most loyal guests?





Tech Talk

Making the right decisions on tech

Whether you're looking to slim down your tech stack this year or integrate new tools, your technology is likely to be the nerve center of your business going forward. Your ability to harness it and have your staff using its full functionality will be critical to managing your business in real time and course-correcting as needed. At a recent Fast Casual Executive Summit, restaurant leaders shared their thoughts about using technology to the greatest advantage. Eric Knott, COO at PDQ Restaurants, emphasized the need for employees beyond the tech team or restaurant leadership to be involved in selecting, testing and determining the need for new tech. "Anytime we evaluate any technology, we bring in a resource group of individuals from the organization to weigh in and get opinions," he said. "That could be a cashier, somebody that works the drive thru, a store manager. So we have a good group of opinions on how it touches each of them." These representatives can help you appreciate the nuances of integrating new tech with your service model and what functions are more important to solving existing problems. Beyond that, they can also make for helpful ambassadors and potential trainers of the tech down the line when you're trying to increase buy-in across your team.



Consistent allergen awareness across your brand

In a recent webinar from Food Safety Magazine, Hal King of Active Food Safety explained how pervasive food allergies are among consumers and also identified some allergy-related vulnerabilities foodservice businesses may have. Specifically, he said food allergies affect about 15 million people and cause 30,000 visits to the emergency room. What's more, a study conducted over a 13-year period found that half of the deaths that link back to food allergies were caused by a restaurant or other foodservice establishment. Here's where foodservice businesses can help minimize those figures: The two primary controls that restaurants can use to avoid triggering a food allergy are avoidance messaging for the guest (on menus and other signage where food options are displayed and ordered) and prevention (by being attuned to allergens potentially being introduced by suppliers or during food preparation). King noted that one area where many restaurants fall short is on digital menus, which he said rarely include avoidance messaging to alert people to allergens and/or to the likelihood that the kitchen won't be able to guarantee the absence of an allergen. How well do your digital menus – on your website, app, social media and elsewhere – promote allergen awareness across your brand?



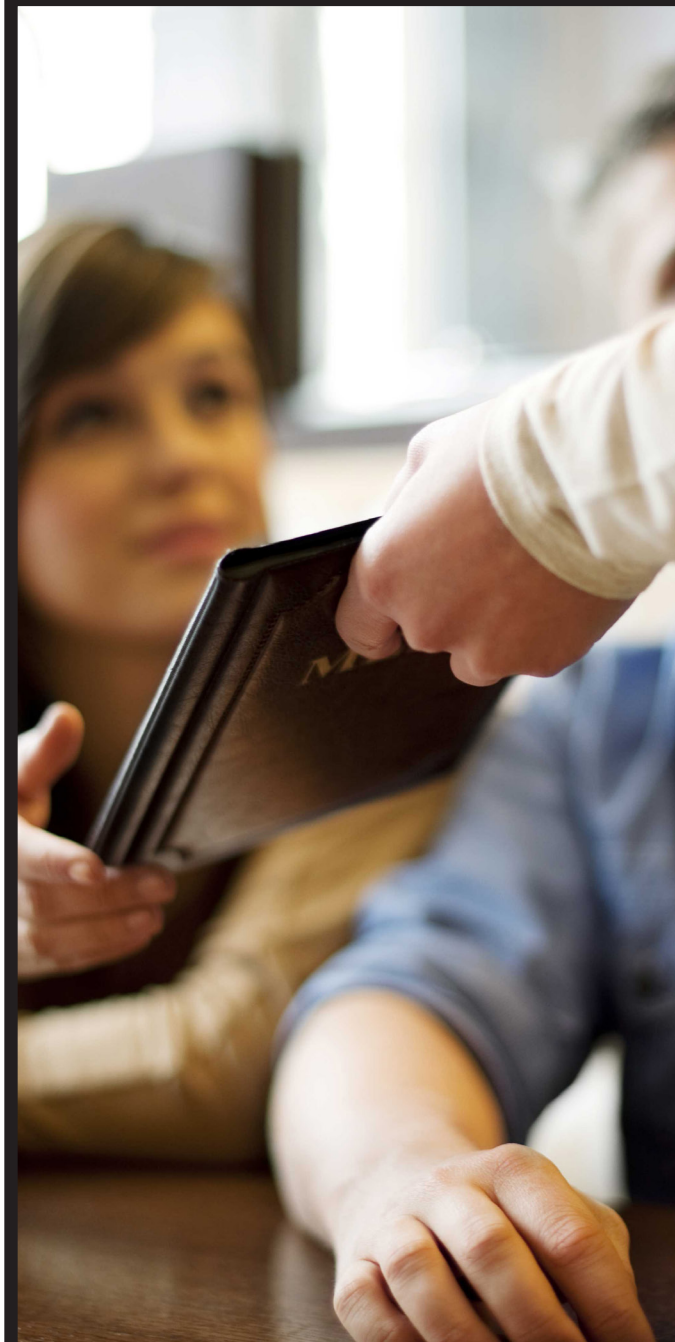
#FoodSafety

Foodservice CEO

www.foodserviceceo.com

What's your market position?

In 2023, the growth of the restaurant industry outpaced population growth by approximately three to one. It's no wonder that it's so challenging to keep a foodservice business going – nevermind growing. But if growth is your goal this year, it's a good time to dig into the diagnostic tools that can help you more readily see what your business is doing right, how it compares to the rest of the market, to what degree your competitors are chipping into your customer base, and what actions make sense for you to take to seize the growth opportunities that become available this year. Even if you have a talented team and tech tools that give you real-time insight into what your business needs internally, you also need to collect market intelligence to strengthen your outward view. It's important to helping you assess (rather than intuit) where there are pockets of potential in the market, how well your stores are likely to perform within it, and what your business offers in comparison to what's nearby. The investment in this research can pay off by giving you a better sense of when to sell a location, whether to acquire a complementary restaurant, or where to look for real estate so you can move more quickly and confidently when opening a new location. Or perhaps it can reaffirm that you should focus on growing in place. Maybe your best approach to making your business distinct from the competition is about offering some new promotions, rotating menus, or elevated dining experiences that offer higher perceived value.



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