Foodservice Updates

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Making gig workers a bigger part of your staffing strategy

Staffing is a perennial challenge in the foodservice industry. So could that be a sign that it needs an overhaul? The National Restaurant Association is studying potential solutions – and increasing numbers of gig workers may be among them in the years ahead. About one-quarter of the restaurant operators surveyed in the association's recently released State of the Restaurant Industry 2024 report said they would consider using gig workers to supplement staff. It may not be a huge leap, considering many foodservice staff work part time and turnover is frequent enough that many restaurant workers are newcomers. However, the similarity has raised concerns in certain jurisdictions due to potential conflicts around third-party contractors classifying their gig workers as "independent contractors" and excluding them from the benefits and stability of full-time employment, according to a Restaurant Dive report. Are gig workers currently part of your staffing strategy – or could they be in the future, particularly around busy periods when you anticipate needing additional support? How could your tech stack support this change? If your suppliers are also hiring more gig workers, how are they ensuring consistency and safety in their products? How might your approach to training – as well as your approach to hiring management roles—need to change if you had more gig workers stepping in to fill gaps on your staffing schedule?

Tech Talk

Tapping into tech to reach the bottom 80 percent of guests

Your top 20 percent of guests are gold – and hopefully your loyalty program is already making it well worth their while to continue giving you their business. Still, there is a lot of potential in the remaining 80 percent of the guest pool, particularly at a time when even those not in your loyalty program are giving you a partial data trail to work with. Are you seizing opportunities to boost your traffic this season with visits from those guests? A recent Nation's Restaurant News report shared that at FSTEC, the technology conference held in Dallas last fall, restaurant leaders addressed how they are trying to boost traffic by targeting the 80 percent. Responses ranged from using anonymized credit card data to track these guests and then expose them to ads on social media, to using targeted ad features paired with geofencing technology to attract guests who have the restaurant's app. In your own restaurant, how can you use what data you have on your bottom 80 percent of guests, then identify areas that might help you nudge these people to visit? Maybe some of these guests have kids and will be looking for a snack to pick up after soccer practice – or an easy meal for a group afterwards. They could be prime targets for discounts designed to drive visits at certain times of day when you could use the traffic (and possibly be more apt to join your top 20 percent of guests as a result).

Want to lower your risk of cross-contamination? Focus on these areas.

When the U.S. Centers for Disease Control (CDC) led a study investigating the various factors that contribute to the cross-contamination of food in restaurants, they found more frequent cases of contamination in businesses that were lacking food safety training and certification, as well as those without handwashing policies. Contamination risks were present in restaurants that didn't require manager certification or train workers in food safety, for example. As for handwashing, the risk for contamination was greatest in restaurants that didn't have policies detailing where, when and how often to wash hands, or on the need to minimize bare-hand contact with ready-to-eat foods. Unfortunately, 60 percent of the foodborne illness outbreaks reported to the CDC each year connect back to restaurants, so it's worth zeroing in on these areas if improving food safety is on your list of priorities this year. Having a staff discussion about handwashing is something a restaurant manager can do right away to help lower a restaurant's risks – particularly at a time when seasonal viruses are common.

#FoodSafety

Foodservice CEO

Make better data-driven decisions

From the start of a restaurant's day through the end, there are hundreds of decisions to be made about the business. Data can help operators ensure they make the best decisions possible – from where in the dining room to seat a guest to how to manage demand for your popular new menu item. Data's potential in helping a restaurant compete can feel practically limitless. But this can also make data management feel like an overwhelming task – like there is always going to be a task left on the table. A recent Harvard Business Review report identified several strategies to using data to guide better operational decisions. They may help refine your focus when it comes to using data for both long- and near-term needs. For example: Mining public intelligence can help you decide where to open your next restaurant – by using not only business intelligence platforms but also insights you can gain from social media platforms and menu search queries, you can gain a better understanding of what consumers are craving and where. Your data can also allow you to cherry-pick your most loyal guests from those looking for a table on a popular date, then determine which of your employees should serve them. It can help you identify at what point a long line out the door stops attracting curious guests and starts to become a labor problem. Finally, your data can help you better predict what guests will order – and allow you to reliably provide it to them – while also giving you the power to toggle between ordering channels to best manage demand. When you can get these areas right, you can drive up your experience factor – that feeling a guest gets that their money and time with you have been well spent.