

Foodservice Updates

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Upsell and cross-sell to maximize sales

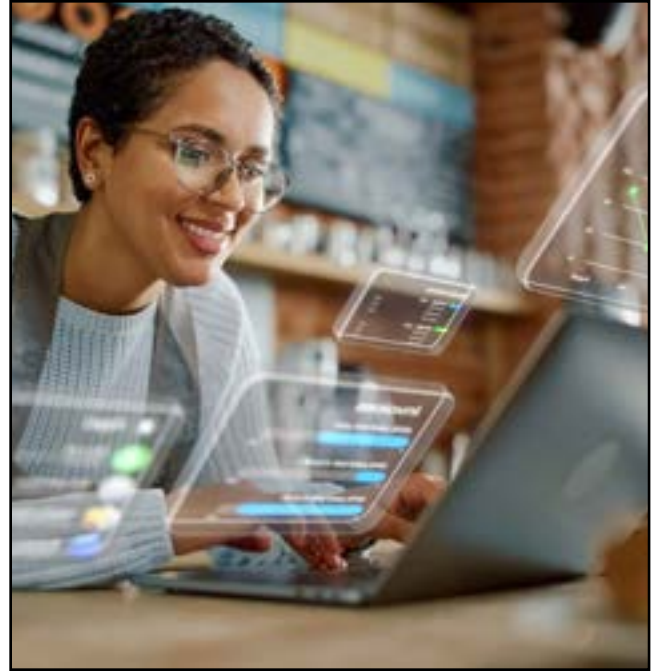
Your restaurant's efforts to upsell guests or cross-sell additional items to them may fall by the wayside during a busy shift – or if it's the responsibility of a new person on staff. But these incremental boosts in sales can mean a lot when you're trying to maximize business during slower weeks of the year. It's a good time to take a moment to make sure you're maximizing sales opportunities – whether with the help of your technology or not. If you don't have a tech stack that allows you to automatically upsell and cross-sell guests, train your staff boost their success in generating these sales by helping them choose the right moment to suggest a menu item (and doing so enthusiastically but not aggressively), giving them some specific and high-margin items to focus on, focusing on orders where your guests generally welcome some extras (delivery or takeout, for example), and ensuring your staff can pick up cues that a guest is not interested in ordering additional items. Even if you do have upselling and cross-selling capabilities through your POS, review them to make sure you're making the most of them – just in case having the technology has made it easier for you to set a task and forget about it. You can ensure you capitalize on sales opportunities if you review your guest's sales journey to make sure they are getting the written and visual messages throughout the process that feel natural to them, set various prompts/deals/promotions and then measure their success, and continuously look for ways to assess and improve each step of the sales journey.



Tech Talk

Dipping your toe into AI at a low cost

Artificial intelligence may feel like one technology that's more in the purview of larger, well-resourced brands than smaller ones, but increasingly, restaurants of all kinds are demonstrating how the technology can be helpful – and it doesn't have to come at great expense. To be sure, AI is embedded in tech tools that help restaurants schedule staff and anticipate traffic flow. But a panel at the recent Fast Casual Executive Summit revealed that brands are experimenting with AI in a range of simpler ways that may make a difference to restaurants that haven't already adopted a lot of tech. Your loyalty program, for instance, should use AI to help you pinpoint lapsed guests and target them with the right messages. Even using ChatGPT for free (or for a low subscription cost) may help you generate new ideas for hashtags in your social media posts, fine-tune job descriptions you can use to recruit staff, or come up with taglines to use in your online advertising.



Want to build trust? Be transparent about your tech



As you adopt new tech tools to gather data that helps you identify ways to improve your business, your methods of collecting guests' personal information are evolving too. Some of this change is likely happening behind the scenes – perhaps the advertising vendor you're planning to hire has a data protection policy that doesn't quite align with your values, but that isn't clear unless you scrutinize the fine print in your contract. If you can make it your practice to understand how your business will be processing guests' data, what steps you're taking to protect people's personal information, how and where to post your policy, and how to discuss it with guests when asked, you can help ensure your guests will trust you with their information and be more willing to share it.

Trends

Making customization manageable

One way restaurants can make the dining experience feel more special to guests is by allowing customization – enabling guests to order a dish the way they want it. But at a time when restaurants need to operate as efficiently as possible and may lack experienced staff, customization can be a strain. According to Restaurant Dive, Starbucks has experienced labor challenges with complicated drink orders in the past, and its recent introduction of four holiday-themed cold-foam flavors aimed at driving demand beyond the holiday season may compound that issue. It's something to consider if you are weighing options to increase the customizability of your menu. Even if those efforts seem small, they need to strike the right balance with the labor you have available to carry them out. At your restaurant, have you maxed out your tech-driven efforts to make your experience feel more personal? Having automations set up to send a guest a coupon for a free dessert on their birthday can feel personal, as can sending targeted, preference-driven promotions to guests through your loyalty program.



Review your staff health protocols – and your back-up plan

Nothing can spoil a guest's appetite like being served by an employee who is clearly under the weather. On the flip side, providing an environment that feels safe to guests makes a positive statement about your hospitality. Now that we're in the season where viruses are common – and guests are especially eager to stay healthy for festive occasions around the holidays – review your health protocols with staff. Monitor employees for signs of illness, reiterate your policy about when it's necessary to stay home, and consider encouraging employees to stay up-to-date with flu and COVID vaccines. Since a clearer policy about staff health may result in more absences, identify potential back-up supports that may help you keep up with traffic – from retooling staff scheduling, to using more speed-scratch ingredients that make preparation easier.



#FoodSafety

#FoodSafety

Practice safer storage

Falling objects are among the biggest workplace hazards, according to the Occupational Safety and Health Administration. By taking time to organize and store the items in your inventory appropriately, you can minimize safety hazards and also help ensure you don't use a newer ingredient when an older one is already on the shelf. To minimize injury to staff, store heavy items on bottom shelves, lightest-weight items up top, and your most frequently used items in the middle where they can be accessed (and carried) most easily and without causing strain.



Foodservice Updates

Rethinking value

It's something restaurant operators have had to prioritize in recent months: making the overall experience they offer feel worthwhile for guests. In a recent episode of the Restaurant Business podcast "A Deeper Dive," the consumer strategist Lisa Miller covered how consumers perceive the value of restaurants right now – and her research shows that operators may need to keep working to make their experience feel like a good value to guests. In her monthly surveys of consumers, Miller has found that a growing number of consumers feel their restaurant visits are not worthwhile. What's more, over half of consumers get sticker shock when they visit quick-service restaurants, where prices have jumped 30 percent since the pandemic. She says operators need to make employee training a priority to help deliver experiences to guests that feel worth the price they're paying. Still, the math may not work out for some restaurant businesses – or it may simply look better if the business model is somehow reimagined. For example, it may not be a coincidence that more restaurant hybrid business models are emerging right now. In recent weeks, the Chicago-based retailers Foxtrot Market and Dom's Kitchen & Market, which offer both fresh meals and groceries, announced they would be merging to form Outfox Hospitality. It's among the latest examples of foodservice businesses that are trying to continue to offer what restaurants do best while providing options that can elevate home cooking. As more grocery and convenience stores offer higher-quality foods, restaurants that step into this space may be able to showcase the value they offer while minimizing the overhead of conventional restaurant models.



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