

Foodservice Updates

In This Issue

- [Loyalty, your way | Focus on what sets restaurants apart – or take cues from other segments](#)
- [| Improve your fire safety](#)
- [| Seeing food allergies as opportunities](#)
- [| Putting AI in perspective](#)
- [| Friction-free payment](#)

Play the long game with influencer marketing

Thinking of tapping into social media influencers to help with your marketing efforts? It helps to be patient and flexible. The return on investment can be difficult to trace directly, and because influencer marketing is fairly new, you may be unclear about how to set mutually beneficial agreements with influencers. That said, if you cater to a niche audience and you follow social media influencers who have developed large and/or loyal followings in your space, your efforts to partner with them may help give your social media marketing exponential power. A report from CIO Coverage indicated that when the restaurant brand All Bar One partnered with 10 micro-influencers with a combined following of 200,000, they were able to increase their brunch sales by 28 percent across their 50 restaurants and bars. If you're thinking about giving influencer marketing a try, it's important to approach the right partners – ideally, people who consistently post content that is relevant to your brand, generate positive attention in the form of likes and comments, and engage professionally and responsively with their audience when that happens. In a recent interview with Expedite, Jennifer Bell, the CMO of the Lettuce Entertain You Enterprises, said their company has been working with influencers to extend their brand in new ways. She says: "I love the idea of us not telling you why you should come to the restaurants, but an influencer showing you why. That is a much more powerful message and a more powerful way to connect with customers."



Tech Talk

Putting AI in perspective

The speed with which artificial intelligence has become an everyday tool in our lives can leave people both excited about its potential and wary of its risks. The same is true about the use of AI in restaurant operations. If your staff is stuck somewhere between wanting to embrace it and resisting it, help them separate fact from fiction. AI can support your restaurant by helping your managers create more efficient schedules, predict sales and facilitate communication among staff. What AI can't do is replace human roles – it's more about streamlining tedious tasks within a restaurant, reducing errors and freeing up time for staff to serve guests. More broadly, its integration with a restaurant's existing POS can help operators more readily connect the dots between their data sources and make key decisions that will help optimize the business. There is no doubt that AI will play a key role in the development of the industry, so it's important to embrace its applications – but it still requires people to monitor it as they use it to make decisions.



Friction-free payment



Contactless payment has been on the rise in restaurants in recent years – and it still has room to grow. According to Jupiter Research, approximately 53 percent of global transactions are likely to be contactless within the next few years. As this report from Modern Restaurant Management indicates, the hotel sector has made contactless check-in and check-out a normal part of a stay – and this can extend to restaurants as well. How much friction is there to your payment process? Can guests pay when they want and easily add items to their order – without feeling hounded by a server to finish their meal or stranded when they're ready to leave but haven't yet seen their bill? Smoothing out this aspect of the guest experience can help remove some of the stress around it (for guest and server alike), simplify the experience you provide and give guests a greater sense of independence.

Trends

Focus on what sets restaurants apart – or take cues from other segments

As the gap between restaurant and grocery store prices has widened recently, the grocery stores that have managed to create café- and food hall-style spaces within their walls are drawing customers who crave restaurant-quality meals, but at a lower price point. If these dining options are becoming more worthy competitors for your restaurant, focus on providing what the grocery stores don't. That could be your attentive customer service, customized promotions, the memorable experience you provide in your dining room and at events, or prompt delivery. Alternatively, you might also take a page from your neighborhood grocery store's playbook and provide elevated retail items that allow your guests to easily prepare and enjoy aspects of your menu at home.



Improve your fire safety

Research from the National Fire Protection Association found that U.S. fire departments respond to an average of 20 fires per day at restaurants and bars. Fire hazards can increase if your equipment isn't sufficiently cleaned and maintained – tasks that can slip through the cracks when a restaurant is short-staffed. Make sure fire safety procedures are part of your staff training, so your employees know where to find fire extinguishers, how to keep their work areas clean and free from fire hazards, what ingredients and cooking methods pose the greatest risks, and how to safely exit the premises in case of fire. Conduct regular inspections of your gas and electrical power supplies, and ensure your fire alarms and sprinklers are in working order.



#FoodSafety

Seeing food allergies as opportunities

Considering that an estimated 33 million Americans have food allergies – including one in 13 children under age 18 – it would be understandable for a restaurant to shy away from serving allergic guests. But there are some restaurant operators doing the opposite and seeing real opportunity in being a trusted source of food. Dominic Jones, CEO of JPRestaurants, is among them – and it started when his child was diagnosed with a peanut allergy, according to a recent article from New Food Magazine. In the years since, his restaurant has shifted from warning allergy sufferers to welcoming them, increased the transparency of their supply chain, developed a dedicated allergy menu that eliminates the major allergens, and launched ongoing efforts to make their supply chain, recipes and front- and back-of-house processes safer for guests with allergies. (They share these efforts in a Food Allergy Approach page on their restaurant’s website.) Jones says these actions have generated revenue growth and increased guest loyalty, in addition to improving their food quality overall.



Foodservice Updates

Loyalty, your way

In uncertain economic times, your loyalty program gives you an opportunity to solidify bonds with your best guests and transform more transactional relationships into loyal, engaged connections. What's exciting about these programs is that while they are plentiful, they are also diverse – restaurants can (and should) develop their own loyalty playbook as an extension of their brand. The offers and experiences you promote should reflect your brand values. There is always room to refine your program and ensure it is effectively building your business. In a recent interview with Forbes, Savneet Singh, CEO and President of PAR Technology, suggests a range of actions restaurant operators can take to test the effectiveness of their loyalty program. Among them: Measure your program's return on investment – for both you and the guest. Track how your roster of members is growing, as well as how engaged they are. Monitor your average transaction values so you can ensure program membership leads to more spending – and take action to make improvements if it isn't. Use surveys to gather feedback from guests to ensure they are satisfied with the program. This may also help you gather a continuous stream of new ideas to help you keep your program fresh.



Team Four/Value 4 provides customized Supply Chain Solutions and Business Consultancy to the foodservice owners and operators throughout the United States. To find out how we can help your business save money contact us at:

1-888-891-3103 or visit our web site at www.teamfourfoods.com and www.valuefour.com