

Foodservice Updates

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Boost your business through segmentation

Acquiring new guests is five times as expensive as trying to change the behavior of your existing ones, according to research from In-veesp. So how can you entice a happy-hour customer to stay for dinner, a morning-coffee lover to add a breakfast sandwich to their order, or a weeknight diner to return for lunch the next day? A recent report from Modern Restaurant Management advises operators to focus on guest segmentation and follow through with personalized messaging to nudge guests in a new direction (while ensuring you're not swamping them with messages that don't resonate). It helps to consider time and place when planning your outreach. For instance, a person who comes for Thursday happy hour is more apt to take you up on a weeknight appetizer or dinner offer if they receive your promotion at a time and place where they are able to take you up on it – not on a weekend, or after they are back at home for the evening after work. You can gain insights into guests' preferences by mining your data – your loyalty program, online reservation records and even your WiFi hotspot can all inform you about when guests are visiting you and what their taste preferences are. From there, you can approach guests in a number of ways based on their behavior and when you're trying to drive traffic. That could be sending a text when they are on premise to entice them to return the next day for a deal on an appetizer, reaching out to guests visiting during slow periods and offering loyalty reward points for return visits during those periods, or contacting them shortly after a visit to incentivize them to leave a review on social media platforms where you need a boost.



Tech Talk

How user-friendly is your tech?

When you consider adopting new technology to help employees monitor and manage different areas of your operation (or for employees to interact with your restaurant, for that matter), make sure it passes the simplicity test. When you pick up a child's electronic toy, you shouldn't need an instruction manual to figure out how to use it. The same should be true of your technology. You may well have staff whose native language isn't English or young staff in charge of a particular function before they really understand what that responsibility means. Your tech should be able to carry some of that load and make the human-facing part as intuitive as possible. Think about features like large buttons, biometric scans that allow people to clock in and out, and the use of multiple languages on your platform so you can eliminate guesswork and the mistakes that may result from that. Could a consumer unfamiliar with your brand step in and understand, broadly, how to use your system? Aim to provide this kind of experience as you develop your tech stack in the years ahead.



Workforce management tech can make your restaurant an employer of choice



Perhaps you have a shift in your restaurant that no staff want to work – a major holiday approaching, a long weekend, or a particular day of the week when you anticipate higher guest traffic and want to have sufficient staff on hand to accommodate it. If you offered surge pricing around that shift, would it change your employees' minds? Much like how operators are using surge pricing on digital menus to boost profits when guest traffic is high, they can also use workforce management tech to make less-appealing shifts more profitable (and therefore more desirable) for employees. If that tech can also help employees get paid automatically following a shift, even better. As you compete for staff and try to retain your best people, the technology you use to make their experience with you smoother and more profitable can mean the difference between attracting and keeping a new employee and losing that person to the restaurant across the street. What improvements could you make?

Trends

Consider this litmus test for on-trend flavors

Are you skeptical that your guests may want to try microcultural foods or particular flavors beyond the mainstream? You may be surprised at how they respond. In a recent webinar from Datassential, experts suggested foodservice professionals look to some very mainstream sources – amusement parks and state fairs, for example – for a clear sense of how the general public responds to on-trend flavors. For example, at Six Flags Great Adventure, a “Flavors of the World” promotion happening this summer offers guests a sampling of food and drink from Mexico, Korea, Greece, France, Italy, the Caribbean and India. Guests can try such items as kheer, visinada and escargot en crouete, among other options. If you’re interested in stretching the boundaries of your menu with flavors from around the globe, consider tempting your guests with some related limited-time offers and monitoring their responses.



Avoid a hairy problem

It doesn't matter how delicious your food is: If a guest finds a stray hair in their meal, they're done – and unlikely to return. Beyond the grossness factor, hair can carry pathogens like Staphylococcus bacteria. When training your staff, ensure that any long or face-framing hair is securely pinned back with a tie and/or hat and that facial hair is kept closely shaved or in a net. It's not simply about keeping long hair from flowing freely – it's also about preventing it from being a distraction so a person won't absentmindedly sweep hair away from their face and bring it onto a food surface.



#FoodSafety

#FoodSafety

Can you put aspects of your food safety on auto pilot?

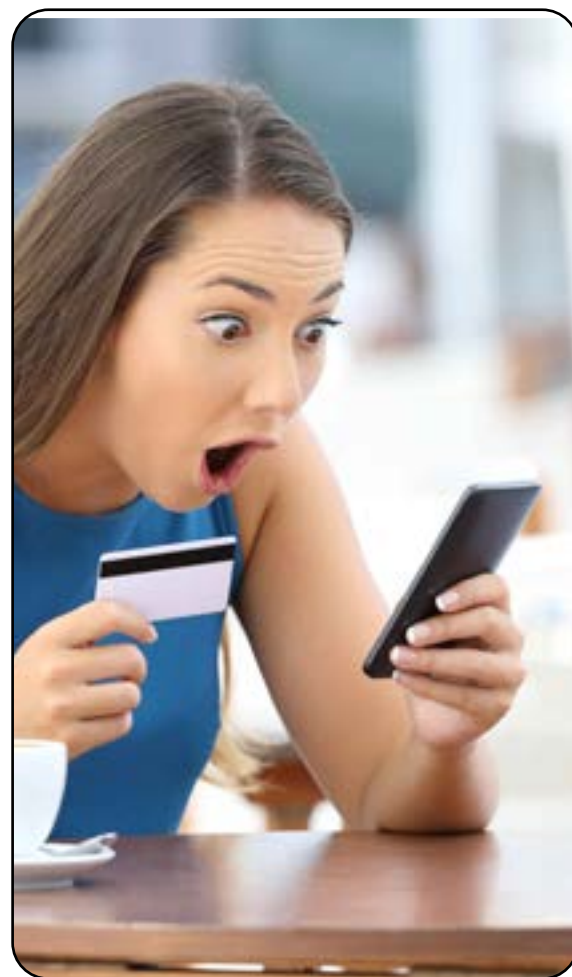
If your restaurant experiences a failure in its food safety compliance, where is the weak point that allowed it to occur? For many restaurants, it comes down to the knowledge of the front-line manager. In a high-turnover industry, that front-line manager may be new to the restaurant business, inexperienced in the area they have to oversee, and expected to take on responsibilities before they fully understand what they require. Unfortunately, that leaves your restaurant more vulnerable to costly problems. So where are your biggest risks? How much do you have to rely on your staff to interpret laws and make changes on the fly? How much are you simply hoping for the best? The training and tools you use should be able to help carry a lot of that weight – and they should be able to evolve easily in step with the changes in the surrounding restaurant landscape. Do yours?



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When guests abuse loyalty programs

We live in an age where businesses prize loyalty and are competing to get it from customers through loyalty programs. There are good reasons for it. These programs encourage repeat guests and boost a restaurant's guest-retention rate. Retaining guests can mean the difference between thriving and going out of business: Harvard Business School research found that a 5 percent increase in customer retention rates can generate a 25-95 percent jump in profits. But delivering these programs is often imperfect. Guests are looking for a deal and may find loopholes in your program that enable them to reuse promo codes and repeatedly get food for significantly less than it's worth. This is what happened recently for Mattenga's, a family-owned chain of six pizza restaurants in Texas. As Enga Stanfield, the owner-operator, shared in an episode of her "Making Dough Show" on Youtube, a twice-weekly guest at their restaurant was able to take advantage of a loophole in their POS and use a promo code 19 times in different Mattenga's locations over a short period. As a result, he was paying no more than a couple of dollars for each of his meals. Staff alerted Stanfield to the issue and she decided to "fire" the guest – a necessary step at times, even in a business built around pleasing customers. But she did it in a way that took ownership for the flaw in their system and also protected staff. She emailed the person and said they could no longer serve him. But she explained that the promo code issues were their fault – they were working on correcting them but could not afford a more advanced system at the moment. She went on to say that as a family-owned business, Mattenga's cannot serve him and still afford to pay staff and cover other costs. She then explained, professionally, that she had instructed managers to refuse him service going forward, even if he pays full price, and that any of his friends or family who misuse the system will be refused service as well. If he comes into their restaurant and makes a scene, staff will call the police. It's a situation you may encounter with guests who feel entitled – and how you handle it can impact profits, as well as the quality of your work environment.



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