

BOOST RESTAURANT SALES

WITH ONLINE ORDERING
AND RESERVATIONS SOLUTIONS



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Online Ordering and Reservations Solutions Boost Restaurant Sales

With competition for consumers' dining dollar growing ever tighter, more restaurant operators are looking for ways to offer a better caliber of guest service and set themselves apart from the pack—while simultaneously bolstering their bottom line. Online ordering and reservations solutions can prove to be highly effective in helping them attain these goals.

ONLINE ORDERING SPARKS SALES

“Giving customers the chance to order online definitely has a positive impact on sales,” says Frank Baran, vice president of operations at Fort Lauderdale, Fla.-based New Miami Subs Grill, operator and franchisor of 36 fast-casual restaurants of the same name. Twelve New Miami Subs Grill units offer customers the option to place takeout and delivery orders on the chain's website—and sales at these units are 7% to 8% higher than at locations that do not feature online ordering capabilities.

According to Baran, this is the case because the online ordering feature enables far more orders to be taken in the same amount of time, whether at a central call center or in-store. It also frees up employees to serve guests in the restaurants. “While we are taking one or two orders at our remote call center or at individual stores, we can have 10 people online placing their own,” Baran notes, adding that plans call for rolling out online ordering to the remaining 24 New Miami Subs Grill locations by summer's end, 2012.

Increased customer satisfaction also leads to increased sales from online ordering application deployment. With such technology in place, patrons need not endure repeated “busy” signals on the phone or wait on “hold” until an employee is able to assist them. Moreover, they know that their orders have been accurately recorded, because they have completed the task themselves. Also, ready online access to information about specials not only makes the ordering experience more pleasant for patrons, it may induce them to increase the size of their tab.

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Just as significantly, operations that implement online ordering up the sales ante by leveraging the system to intelligently upsell high-margin impulse menu items or other fare, based on individual customers' previous orders and/or end-user specifications. It also cultivates diners' loyalty by collecting customer email addresses and sending them promotional information in line with specific criteria, like ordering frequency and location.

Additional benefits and, in turn, additional sales—can be gleaned from integrating online ordering with a POS application. In establishments that have such technology in place, customers log on to a restaurant's website, place an order and enter their payment information. From there, the request is directed to an order review screen, signaling restaurant employees to begin preparing the food. An automatic confirmation email is sent to the customer, and transaction details are transmitted to the POS system. With some systems, customers can place repeat orders even more quickly by clicking on their previous order history.

Like online ordering systems themselves, integrated ordering/POS solutions streamline the overall Web-based meal purchasing process and increase profitability. They also make it easier to save orders from cancellation should a menu be temporarily unavailable. For example, if a patron tries to purchase a special, but that special is already sold out, a message to that effect is transmitted to the ordering system from the POS system. The customer is notified on-screen, in time to make another selection rather than having to log off and order from the restaurant down the block.

PROFITS ON THE TABLE

Meanwhile, online reservations systems help push the restaurant profit envelope by eliminating many of the inconveniences that patrons prefer not to grapple with in their attempts to book tables. "In this day and age, when technology makes it possible to do so much instantaneously, many customers do not want to wait to arrange reservations until a restaurant is open, or to waste time in a telephone queue," observes Pierre Moreau, general manager and partner of Quebec, Canada-based Group Restos Plaisirs.

For the past year, several of the company's Quebec City-area restaurants have utilized an online reservations solution that integrates with its POS system. While it would be impossible to quantify the number of reservations booked through the system that might otherwise have been lost to Group Restos Plaisirs' competitors, the technology continues to play a role in keeping its restaurant tables full, Moreau says.

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Just as significantly, he adds, the system enhances the efficiency of operations at the restaurants' host stands. It also makes it easier to comply with a guest service imperative that all restaurant phones be answered before they have rung three times. Because a hefty portion of reservations are now made through cyber-channels rather than via the phone, fewer staff members are needed to execute the latter. Employees who do handle phone reservations can perform their tasks calmly and methodically, assisting callers to the greatest possible extent, rather than rushing them through the reservations process in order to assist other callers who are waiting.

In short, while some restaurant operators are hesitant to experiment with online technology because they fear it will depersonalize their operations, quite the opposite is true. Solutions for bringing ordering and/or reservations online can help operators forge a tighter link with customers and improve the overall dining experience, kicking sales up a notch and preserving their competitive edge.

How Online Ordering and Reservations Systems Increase Restaurant Sales

- Allow more orders or reservations to be taken simultaneously
- Prevent orders and reservations from being lost when customers do not want to wait their turn in phone queues; online reservations systems permit reservations to be made even when operations are closed
- Free up restaurant staff to better serve customers who prefer personal assistance
- Enhance guest satisfaction, leading to repeat business

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and Online Reservations Solutions.**

Maitre'D offers integrations with leading online solution providers to help our customers reap additional benefits through their POS system. For more information on online reservations, visit <http://web.maitredpos.com/bookenda>.

Visit <http://web.maitredpos.com/maitred-online-orders/> for information on our online ordering solution partner.

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