How to Evolve into a Successful Omnichannel Restaurant

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In the not-so-distant past, restaurants saw signs that more people wanted to enjoy their meals off-site. Diners loved the convenience of ordering through an app, at the drive-thru, or on a self-service kiosk, and the number of chits generated in those ways grew. Restaurants wondered if they needed dining rooms at all, and some even evolved into “ghost kitchens” that exclusively catered to people who ordered food for pickup or delivery.

But fast forward to now. Consumers are enthusiastic about eating out and enjoying time in your restaurant while they savor selections from your menu. But those same customers may order dinner and pick it up on their way home from work or choose a self-ordering option or a drive-thru when they’re strapped for time. It’s not a question of whether to cater to off-premises diners or to guests in your dining room. You need to do both.

Restaurants that offer different ways to engage can grow a loyal customer base and their revenues. But they also need a solution for managing their new “omnichannel” operation to keep up with the direction that consumers and the industry are moving.

Which Ordering Options Do Consumers Want?

What it looks like to operate a successful restaurant has changed quite a bit this decade, and change continues. Watching these trends can help you make informed decisions so that you can offer the experiences your customers want.

Online Food Delivery

According to Statista, the online food delivery market will reach $429.9 billion this year in the U.S., and analysts expect it to grow to a whopping $563.4 billion by 2029. Projections also put the meal delivery market at 192.5 million users by then. It isn't hard to understand why. People like to be able to browse online, choose from a wide assortment of options, and order in advance to take some of the stress out of their busy schedules so they can enjoy their meals.

Consumers can use both third-party apps and restaurants' websites to place their orders. Apps like DoorDash, Uber Eats, and Grubhub give consumers the option to find new menus to try. On the other hand, customers can find their favorites easily by ordering directly from a familiar restaurant's online ordering platform.

Self-Service Ordering

More consumers than ever are using kiosks to order. Your customers know that self-service kiosks save time — when they use them, they don't have to wait in line to tell an employee what they want to order. But ordering at a kiosk has even more advantages. Orders are always right because customers themselves placed them. Self-service lets customers take their time to get exactly what they want, from eliminating onions on their burgers, choosing a salad instead of fries for a side, or creating a combo. They can also make decisions privately, so if they're really craving a large shake, they can order it without worrying about judgment. For all these reasons, the self-service trend is gaining steam, with the market growing by 43% from 2021 to 2023, and it is showing no signs of slowing down.

Drive-Thru

The drive-thru is a familiar option at many quick service restaurants (QSR), and QSR magazine calls it the "industry's most vital channel." But it isn't limited to QSRs. If restaurants have the real estate, they can add a drive-thru to meet consumer demand. Some restaurants are even designing creative solutions, like drive-thrus with multiple stories or a drive-thru under their buildings.

What Orders from Omnichannel Restaurant Operations Mean for the Kitchen

Expanding your business to get more customers to order in different ways can be a great way to grow revenues. But with orders coming from different places, the kitchen needs a way to keep them organized. Technology that can keep an omnichannel restaurant's kitchen running smoothly includes:

A Kitchen Display System

A modern kitchen display system (KDS) does a lot more for restaurant operations than just list the orders. It will help prioritize them, like telling the kitchen to fire orders for the dining room before orders that a delivery driver or customer is picking up. It will also inform separate food prep areas, so all parts of the order are prepared at the right time, so they're hot and appetizing when diners receive them.

Label Printers

Your staff needs to know where orders are going when they're complete. Labels communicate whether the customer is waiting in the drive-thru lane, picking up curbside, waiting for a delivery driver to bring the order to the front door, or planning to enjoy their meal in your dining room.

Printers that print linerless, repositionable labels allow your team to label cups, boxes, trays, or bags, and move the label as they prepare menu items. Linerless labels have the added benefit of no backing to remove, so there's no clutter on the counter or floor. They're also more eco-friendly because they produce less waste.

POS System as Your Command Center

Everything flows through your point of sale (POS) system, from orders to inventory information and employee schedules. It lets you have all your business, sales, and customer information in one place, making your life easier.

Your POS also gives you data you can use to personalize service and offer a loyalty rewards program that customers will be excited to join. You can also analyze POS data for smarter marketing, so you make the right offers to the right customers and see better results from promotions.

The Upside of Using the Right Tools for the Job

Making the right choices when you create your omnichannel management solution will result in several benefits for your restaurant, including:

Greater Efficiency

Time is money. Employees can devote their time to high-value tasks, like preparing food, serving customers, and managing delivery drivers, when orders automatically flow to the right place. Importantly, their time is not spent rekeying or tracking down missing orders.

Less Waste

Every year, American restaurants waste an estimated 11.4 million tons of food. Increasing order accuracy with new solutions will help you reduce waste and save money.

Keep in mind that operating more sustainably also creates a marketing opportunity. According to McKinsey & Company, 60 percent of consumers are willing to spend more on a product they perceive to be more sustainable. Let your customers know you share their concern for the planet, and you can build revenues.

Happier Customers

Deliverect, a third-party delivery platform aggregator gateway that allows restaurants to partner with the platforms like Uber Eats and Door Dash, surveyed consumers to learn what they want from restaurant experiences. **That research found:**

- 48% of consumers want food that is consistently good, every time.
- 35% want friendly staff who take good care of them.
- 26% want speedy delivery and accurate order tracking.

The right technology supports omnichannel restaurant operations that deliver it all.

A Growing Business

Omnichannel restaurant operations allow you to meet varied customer demands and keep service running smoothly. With the right technology and operational plan, you can lower costs and create new sources of revenue.

Talk to an Expert

Our team of experienced consultants will provide you with the info you need about Reflection POS as the command center and the tools your kitchen needs to stay organized and productive. Reach out to discuss your expanding omnichannel operation, and learn about solutions that make it more manageable, profitable, and successful.

About NCC

Since 1986, NCC has been delivering comprehensive software solutions to businesses in the hospitality and retail industries. Our software engineers combine years of experience in software development with a strong understanding of restaurant and retail operations to create products designed to work in a wide variety of environments. Through a worldwide network of reseller partners, NCC has installed over 50,000 POS systems in more than 35 countries. NCC products are installed in a wide range of retail and hospitality concepts, including Table Service, Quick Service, Fast Casual, Bars, Night Clubs, Delis, Frozen Yogurt, Delivery, Concessions, and more!