



Boost Profitability by Improving Your Restaurant's Customer Experience



High Competition Means High Stakes in the Restaurant Industry

As diners from the Millennials and Gen Z generations become important contributors to the buying mix, factors used to measure customer experience change and evolve. These groups demonstrate restaurant purchasing habits that are different from previous generations. From conducting online research to enjoying the convenience of ordering for carryout or delivery, these generational cohorts have high expectations for speed and quality of service. Statistics show that 90% of guests research a restaurant online before dining; 92% of those diners read reviews, and 77% trust peer reviews over critic reviews.

Modern customers place an increasing importance on the “experience” of dining and look to friends and colleagues for guidance and advice. With so much riding on review, referrals and reputation, it’s more vital than ever to make sure your restaurant puts its best foot forward.

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It's All About the Customer Experience— But What Does That Mean?

The customer experience is driven by the way your diners feel about your restaurant. It's an emotional connection that begins when a customer walks in your restaurant for the first time or when they place their first mobile or online order. It continues through the dining experience to after the food is eaten and the bill is paid. Contributing factors to the overall customer experience include the food itself, the friendliness of your staff, your location, the overall atmosphere, serving efficiency, and order accuracy. Successful restaurants aim to create positive, memorable, consistent, and enriching experiences for their guests.

To really hone in on the “experience” and what that means, it’s more vital than ever to get to know your customers by determining:

? Who they are.

Are most of your customers young, single millennials? Families with children? Business professionals? Consider demographics such as age, gender, family size, income and geography. Identifying your primary clientele will help you anticipate their needs.

? What they are looking for.

Solicit feedback and actively listen. Whether customers fill out surveys, provide feedback to waitstaff, chat with you in person, or leave comments or reviews on social media, it's important to understand what they value most so you can meet their needs. What are you doing well? What do you need to improve?

? Why they chose your restaurant.

One of the most useful things to ask is why customers chose your business over the one down the street. Your food is always a big reason, but is it also your friendly staff, your specials, the fact that you offer the convenience of being able to order online, or you offer delivery services? Today's customers are far more likely to want delivery, and not just for pizza. In fact, [60% of U.S. consumers](#) order food for takeout or delivery at least once a week.

Create Positive Customer Experiences that Boost Restaurant Profits

It's simple to make the connection between creating a positive customer experience and boosting restaurant profitability. But choosing improvements that have the most impact is easier said than done, right? **Wrong!**

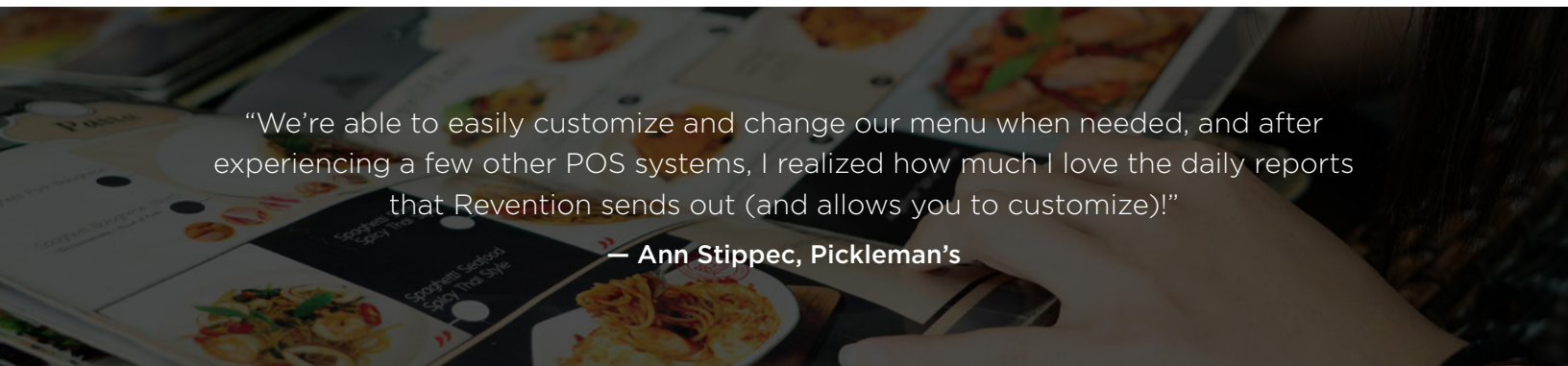
When you understand what customers care about the most, you can focus on improving in areas that that will please your fans, have them writing glowing reviews, and clamoring to comeback for more often. The happier you make your customers, the more business — and repeat business — you'll gain, and the higher your profits will go.

Here are four key recommendations to get you started:

1 Never Stop Evolving Your Menu

Just because you have customers coming back for tried-and-true favorites doesn't mean that your menu can't still be improved. If you haven't changed it in a while, it might be time to reassess. Pay attention to how your menu compares to what your competitors are offering and keep your finger on the pulse of what today's diners want. For example, [61% of consumers](#) pick healthier foods at restaurants compared to their choices two years ago, and [67% of consumers](#) said that their favorite flavors are those that they can't replicate at home.

Here is one of the areas where soliciting feedback can be most helpful. If you're not giving customers what they're looking for in a menu—whether it's healthy options, more customization, or something different—they will find someplace else that does.



"We're able to easily customize and change our menu when needed, and after experiencing a few other POS systems, I realized how much I love the daily reports that Revention sends out (and allows you to customize)!"

— Ann Stippec, Pickleman's

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Tighten Up Internal Processes

If your restaurant doesn't have a good foundation in place for workflow processes, you're more likely to make mistakes and have increased wait times. Make sure that your restaurant can provide:



Perfect Order Accuracy and Efficiency

It takes several positive customer interactions to make up for a single negative one and getting an order wrong is definitely a negative. These mistakes can be greatly reduced with strong communication between the front-of-house and back-of-house staff. One of the best ways to accomplish that is having your point of sale (POS) integrated with a kitchen display system (KDS). A KDS eliminates the need for paper order tickets, as orders are sent instantly from the POS to the kitchen.

No more misplaced or unreadable tickets—just correct, reliable orders funneled directly to the kitchen, with a timeline attached so they come out in the right sequence. The instant communication from the FoH and BoH ensures your restaurant is delivering the most efficient customer experience possible, consequently maximizing your potential profits.



Improve Speed of Service

Improving speed of service offers the ability to take more orders, thus increasing sales and the bottom line. Mobile ordering devices such as a tablet POS provide the perfect solution for not only increased speed of service, but also efficiency and accuracy. They can be used for providing tableside service, line-busting, or meeting seasonal demands. **Over 68% of customers noted that the use of server tablets improved their restaurant experience, proving a huge opportunity for restaurants.**

“Everything with Revention is so much better and easier - payroll, menu changes, coupons, inventory, you name it. The ease of use is phenomenal and my employees picked it up so quickly with no issues.”

— Stacy Smith, Mi Amore



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Convenience is Key to Climbing the Ladder of Success

One of the most important factors today's customers seek in their dining experiences is convenience. Make sure your restaurant is dishing it out—especially when it comes to how your customers can place orders.



Leverage Smartphone Apps and Online Ordering

Multiple ordering channels enable customers to order how and when they want to, whether it's through a mobile phone app or your website. Make sure that the menu ordering experience is consistent across all platforms so that diners' favorite items and customizations are available to them regardless of how the order is placed. Without this consistency, you risk customers being less satisfied with your restaurant, even if what they selected was delicious.

It's also better to have your own branded app and website or utilize a third-party delivery service that integrates with your POS, rather than using a third-party aggregator on its own.



Augment or Leverage On-Demand Delivery Support

Nearly two-thirds (63%) of consumers said they find food delivery more convenient than dining out. They also tend to spend more when ordering online or for delivery: average check sizes are 18% higher than orders placed in-store. Giving your customers this frequently-desired option is good for your profits: 60% of restaurant owners report increased sales after adding delivery services.

While diners may prefer to order directly from restaurants, sometimes you're not staffed to provide delivery on your own. In these cases, you can work with third parties such as Grubhub or DoorDash as another way of getting customers to order from you. You can even choose to offer delivery services (on-demand) only during peak hours or outside the standard service area when your opportunity for more revenue is at its greatest.

"Our online business is steadily increasing and it gives customers the luxury of taking their time placing orders. This increases average ticket size because they are not feeling rushed by an employee on the phone juggling three tasks."

— Juan Hernandez, Texas Steak Express

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Build Better Relationships

For diners, part of the restaurant's customer experience is the relationships they build with their favorite establishments. While that connection is partly accomplished through human interaction, there are other important ways to enhance personalized connections and drive repeat business.



Leverage Loyalty and Gift Card Programs

Some [45% of consumers](#) in a Mintel survey said that mobile ordering and loyalty programs were good motivators for them to use online ordering services more often—thereby increasing revenue for restaurants. And with the customer data gained from loyalty programs like order history and favorite items, you can create more personalized marketing and send relevant offers that will keep diners coming back.



Engage With Customers Through Online Channels

Leverage social media to help your advertising achieve greater reach. Respond to customers who leave reviews—both negative and positive. In the case of negative reviews, reach out to address the problem first and respond publicly. Do not debate with a reviewer online—that will never reflect well on you. Expressing personal appreciation for positive reviews will reinforce the goodwill generated with that customer and show that you value your patrons and their feedback. You can even get a third-party service to help monitor your online presence and alert you when new reviews are posted.

“Customers visit our restaurants slightly less than twice per month. However, members of our Loyalty program visit four times per month – double the rate of non-members.”

— Victor Martinez, Piezoni's



Grow Your Restaurant Profits

Just having the best menu and food might have been enough for your restaurant to survive in the past. But with heightened competition and customers who demand more than just great food, restaurants need to consistently hit the mark with a stellar customer experience to achieve success and be profitable. Restaurant technology is crucial to help create these experiences and achieve growth.



Restaurants who embrace technology and use it well can out pace their competition. The return on investment of implementing technology that helps you provide the best customer experiences will continue to grow the relationships with your customers.

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About HungerRush

HungerRush is leading innovation for the hospitality industry with its advanced restaurant management system (RMS) which gives restaurants and chains the ability to drive revenue growth by acquiring deep knowledge of their customers, and to achieve operational excellence through end-to-end integration.

www.hungerrush.com

