ELIMINATING YOUR RESTAURANT'S LARGEST INEFFICIENCIES

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INTRODUCTION

Companies in every marketplace struggle with inefficiencies, but in the restaurant world, the losses associated with these shortcomings can be especially crippling to a business's long-term goals and survival.

The market is flush with competition, not only from other restaurant vendors but from delivery services and meal kits that are improving all the time. New technologies are constantly introduced to the market while trends are always changing. These can be seen as positives of the industry, provided in-house inefficiencies have been tackled. But for those companies where this is not the case, the challenge of keeping up in an ever-changing industry grows more difficult by the day.

Fortunately, these inefficiencies are not a burden restaurants simply must bear. In many cases they can be improved or even eliminated with the proper strategy adjustments. From purchasing and labor-related challenges, to menu and creativity choices, this eBook is your guide to improving your business and establishing a foundation for success amidst whatever new challenges the market delivers in the years ahead.

CHALLENGE 1

INEFFICIENT PURCHASING

The complexities usually associated with purchasing take on a whole new level of difficulty in the restaurant industry. Products often come from different vendors (frozen versus produce, for example), food spoilage is a constant challenge, your inventory is at the whim of customer choices and there simply isn't a lot of room to store everything you need.

CHALLENGE 1

SOLVING THE CHALLENGE

The challenges of inefficient ordering practices are numerous and, fortunately, so are the solutions for correcting this problem. You can apply any or all of the following strategies to improve purchasing in your restaurant.

Buy from local suppliers

One of the most common reasons restaurateurs over-order is because they're worried about not having enough to last until the next truck arrives. And then it turns out they are left with too much. Instead, purchasing from local suppliers may allow you to enjoy more shipments in shorter windows. This allows you to purchase a smaller quantity each time, which reduces your waste and can even alleviate some storage concerns. You may also be able to drive to the facility to pick up product in truly dire situations. Best of all, purchasing local product — particularly meat or produce — allows you to offer your guests the freshest solutions possible, improving their experience.

Keep your menu fluid

One of the hardest aspects of controlling your ordering is that your inventory will ultimately be determined by your customers. However, you don't need to take an entirely reactionary stance to this matter. Creating a malleable menu can help you make the most of your ordering inventory. Whether you adjust your menu to push items you routinely over-order on or you ensure that as many products as possible can be used in two or more menu items, there are ways to use your menu to clear the back of your house rather than simply allowing customers to choose.

Take control of your inventory

First-in, first-out is a practice all restaurateurs accept, but many fail to follow through on. The result? They are tasked with ordering more product to make up for needless waste. Date stickers are an easy fix, and don't be afraid to assign a leader responsible for managing each section of your back of the house. Clearly storing product so each option is visible will also help employees get what they need and assist you in your ordering.

CHALLENGE 2

EXCESS LABOR USAGE

Like inventory, labor costs are one of your largest expenses, and if they are not adequately monitored, they will easily become your largest inefficiency as well. However, when looking at solutions to solve labor costs, it isn't always as simple as cutting staff hours. Sometimes it's easier to eat excess labor expenses if you're getting value for the spend. This gives you more options, which we will explore next.

CHALLENGE 2

SOLVING THE CHALLENGE

The most common issue of labor inefficiency is overscheduling. While it's always tempting — particularly for new managers — to schedule for that 100-year rush, your bottom line will benefit from a more aggressive strategy.

Past sales data is invaluable here because you can use it to predict what you'll see on a given day based on the past. This insight can take you beyond the obvious — Fridays and Saturdays are busier — to insights like the fact that your business increases during fair season because a bus drop-off is right across the street.

Efficient staffing also requires finding the right balance between full- and part-time employees. Full-time employees, after all, are more expensive because of their benefits, but they will usually be more committed to your company. This latter clause can't be ignored in an industry with such high turnover. Part-time employees are naturally cheaper and may be the better solution if your business is more seasonal. Matching the right employee ratio with your needs will improve your efficiency.

Finally, look for ways to do more with less. Cross-training employees increases the breadth of their skill set and can allow you to reduce your staffing needs.

Reducing your labor inefficiencies through the power of automation

One of the best ways to reduce your labor expenses without sacrificing business productivity is to automate processes whenever possible. And if you're able to automate processes that would otherwise be dangerous for your employees, your business benefits two-fold.

Let's start with one of the most dangerous jobs in any restaurant, handling fryer oil. Automating this process with Restaurant Technologies' Total Oil Management Solution removes this dangerous task from your employees' to-do list. With Total Oil Management, your restaurant's fresh and waste fryer oil is seamlessly transported from the fryers to tanks placed in the back of your store. This is all done with the push of a button, and you can repeat the process to have new oil poured into your fryers or waste oil disposed. It's safe, easy and completely labor-cost friendly.

Similarly, you can also automate the cleaning of your hoods, flues and fans with Restaurant Technologies' AutoMist™. Saving you labor expense as well as reducing your risk of a kitchen fire, AutoMist™ thoroughly cleans your hoods, flues and fans every day while your staff is home.

CHALLENGE 3

BEING TRAPPED IN THE SAME-OLD, SAME-OLD

Like our previous challenge, this is a two-part problem. Part one, for those who feel trapped in their menu. Part two, for those who feel trapped in their processes.

Let's start with part one.

Being trapped in your menu could expose you to additional inefficiencies, particularly if your menu includes several high-cost items that rarely sell. In this case all you're doing is paying for high-cost waste. Secondly, being trapped in your menu hinders your ability to keep up with the times and adjust your menu with new, exciting offerings that are sure to draw business.

CHALLENGE 3

SOLVING THE CHALLENGE: PART 1

Solving for menu inefficiency starts with taking a hard look at your menu. You may be able to do away with inefficient menu items altogether. Otherwise, look for ways to incorporate these expensive products into other aspects of your menu. If you can use such a solution in multiple ways, it will reduce your risk of wasting it.

CHALLENGE 3

The second way you can reduce your menu inefficiencies is by taking a proactive approach and capitalizing on top trends. Offering menu promos is a great way to use up excess stock and offer guests great value.

SOLVING THE CHALLENGE: PART 2

As we discussed, the industry is changing every single day — and if you remain trapped in your tired, old inefficiencies, being left behind is inevitable. Here are a few ways you can introduce change to your business to reduce inefficiencies and keep your operation moving forward.

Offer additional services

From delivery to car-side pickup, and other options, you owe it to your restaurant to explore the possibilities. The market is changing and customer delivery options are becoming a key differentiator. Adding them to your business could mean additional sales that bolster your bottom line.

Embrace new technology

Manual processes can often be inefficient, so embrace technology that streamlines your processes. Ordering stations or pay-at-the-table technology lets guests control the dining experience on their terms and frees up your staff to focus on service.

Automation

Whether it's in the front of your house or the back, automated solutions can help alleviate employee responsibilities. Solutions like Restaurant Technologies' Total Oil Management and AutoMist™, for example, do more than just save staff time on the job itself, they also eliminate time wasted in training. Given the turnover in the industry, these cuts in training time can really add up.

CHALLENGE 4

BUILDING INEFFICIENCIES

We've talked so much about the inefficiencies that take place inside your restaurant, but what about the physical restaurant itself? The truth is an inefficient layout to your restaurant can have a significant impact on your bottom line. Reorganizing your layout as much as you can will allow your staff to operate more efficiently and better serve your customers.

SOLVING THE CHALLENGE

Naturally you can't remodel your entire building, in most cases, but here are a few things you can do to improve your business.

Keep point-of-sale tools updated

This one may seem obvious, but many managers forget how quickly these need to be updated themselves. Establish a plan with your team to update at a predetermined pace and then see that everyone holds to it. It's the best way to ensure no necessary change slips through your fingers.

Remove obstacles to access locations

Your server access stations are mobile workshops that separate the back of your house from the floor. Make sure they are in a position to do just that. While these areas naturally should be kept out of sight as much as possible, an isolated location is useless. Place your access stations in areas where your servers have the most traffic, and don't be afraid to put up a partition if you feel a station could be an eyesore.

Optimize your kitchen layout

While the general shape of your kitchen is predetermined, how you place your tools along that line may not be. Consolidating like-minded areas is an easy way to reduce staff need. If you have multiple areas that don't see a ton of action even on the busiest nights, put them together and you'll be able to staff them with a single employee.

DRIVING EFFICIENCIES IN YOUR BUSINESS

From ordering to food preparation and the entire guest experience, the restaurant industry is filled with thousands of tasks — and each has the potential to be noticeably inefficient. Reducing or eliminating these inefficiencies as they appear along the path is a powerful way to improve your bottom line and keep you successful in this ever-changing, highly competitive market.

To learn more about how automated solutions from Restaurant Technologies can improve your restaurant's efficiencies, visit **www.rti-inc.com**.

ABOUT US

ABOUT RESTAURANT TECHNOLOGIES

For more than 15 years Restaurant Technologies has been a leading provider of cooking-oil management and hood, flue, and fan cleaning solutions helping more than 27,000 food service providers operate and grow their business. In addition to providing solutions that support financial and safety goals, Restaurant Technologies is also committed to helping providers grow their business by increasing efficiency, improving the guest experience and, of course, capitalizing on the latest trends. To find more industry news and information visit www.rti-inc.com. You can also follow Restaurant Technologies on Twitter @RTIoil, LinkedIn and Facebook.

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Research from the Green Restaurant Association shows a single restaurant can create 25,000-75,000 pounds of food waste per year.[1]

As such, many restaurateurs struggle with ordering properly and often order too much food, leading to food waste and higher expense. The alternative is too little food — leading to emergency food delivery, missed sales or angry customers. Either result has implications that extend far beyond your bottom line.

1 https://www.businessinsider.com/solving-food-waste-in-americas-restaurants-2016-5

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Food prices have increased 25% in the last five years, meaning the product you waste is costing you that much more.[2]

2 https://www.getorderly.com/blog/misconceptions-about-restaurant-inventory

CHALLENGE 3

SOLVING THE CHALLENGE: PART 1

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The average restaurant spends 28-35% of its budget on food.[3]