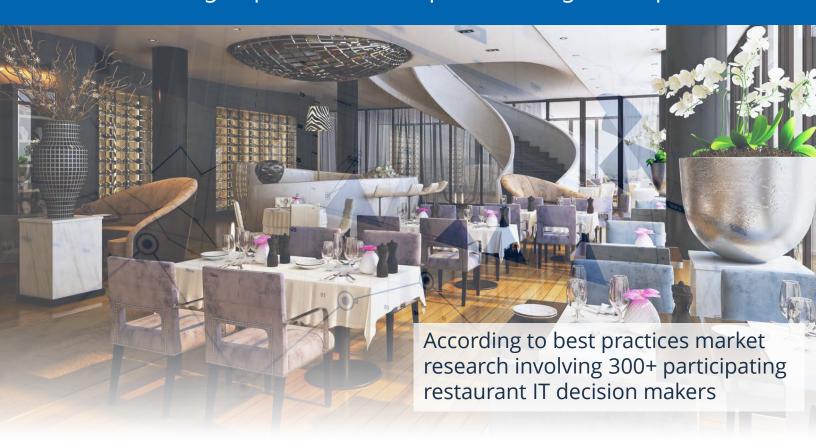


The 2023 Smart Decision Guide™ to

Restaurant Management and POS Systems

How leading restaurants are utilizing next-generation technologies to turbocharge operations and optimize the guest experience



Underwritten, in part, by:





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Introduction

At this year's National Restaurant Association Show, held in Chicago at the end of May, a prevailing sense of optimism among restaurant owners and operators regarding the future of the industry as it continues to move forward from the global pandemic was unmistakable. At the same time, the event, which brought together over 60,000 buyers, suppliers, manufacturers, and industry professionals from around the world, highlighted the challenges a vast number of restaurants face in today's economic environment.

A primary focus of the show was labor issues, which are all too familiar to most restaurant operators. The industry is currently grappling with major challenges such as high quit rates and recruitment difficulties, which have disrupted operations and resulted in financial losses. The churn rate remains double the national average, with over three-quarters of restaurant locations currently understaffed and struggling to hire suitable employees. With short-staffed kitchens and stretched servers covering large sections, maintaining service excellence becomes an even more daunting task.

In addition to labor challenges, disruptions in the supply chain and high levels of inflation have further compounded the difficulties. Rising ingredient costs have necessitated adjustments in prices and menu offerings. Many restaurant-goers have reduced their dining-out frequency due to these circumstances, exacerbating the challenges faced by restaurant operators.

In addition to labor challenges, disruptions in the supply chain and high levels of inflation have further compounded the difficulties.



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Introduction

Yet, amidst these challenges, there is plenty of good news, as The National Restaurant Association Show made clear, much of which relates to the evolution and adoption of advanced restaurant technologies, from self-service kiosks to food preparation and delivery robots. The landscape of restaurant management and point of sale (POS) systems, in particular, has witnessed remarkable advancements in terms of platform capabilities, now offering a wide range of integrated features and functionalities that not only address many of the industry's current challenges but also equip operators with the tools they need to navigate future uncertainties.

A next-generation system empowers restaurants to streamline their operations, enhance the quality of the customer experience, and boost profitability. In fact, according to market research conducted by Starfleet Research for this Smart Decision Guide, 86 percent of full-service restaurants, and 73 percent of quick service and fast casual restaurants, achieved "significant" or "dramatic" improvement in revenue performance after deploying a next-generation restaurant management and POS system.

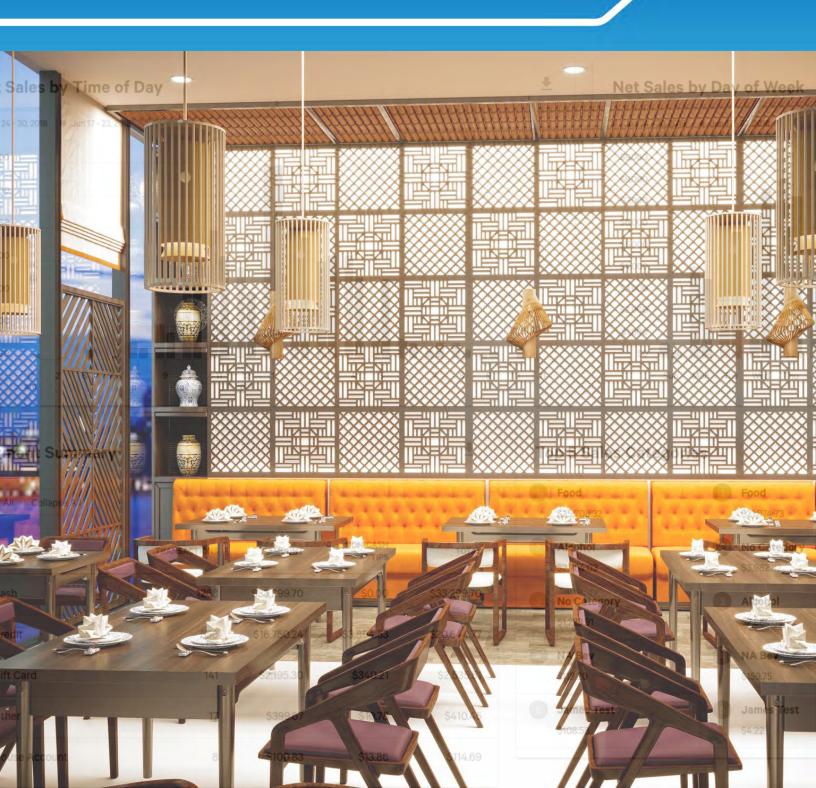
The best of these systems go beyond operational efficiency and revenue performance improvement; they also enable restaurant operators to adapt to changing consumer expectations, such as contactless interactions and personalized experiences. This Smart Decision Guide provides a roadmap for success in purchasing and utilizing a next-generation restaurant management and POS. It offers insights for evaluating technology solutions, practical guidance for selecting the right system, and valuable pointers for maximizing the value of the investment, based on best practices market research. By embracing the power of next-generation technology, restaurant owners and operators are positioned to overcome present hurdles and future-proof their businesses, paving the way for increased growth, efficiency, and profitability.

A nextgeneration
system
empowers
restaurants to
streamline
their
operations,
enhance the
quality of the
customer
experience,
and boost
profitability.



Chapter 1

Topic Overview and Key Concepts



While we can all rejoice in the fact that the global pandemic is quickly fading into a distant memory and no longer affects restaurant operations, the industry is still navigating through challenging times marked by widespread staff shortages and economic instability. In response to these challenges and to meet evolving customer expectations, a growing number of restaurant owners and operators, even those who may have been reluctant in the past to abandon their legacy solutions or long-standing business practices, are coming to embrace modern-day restaurant technology.

This technology has proven to be key not only for survival but also for thriving in this new era of connectivity and contactless interactions. One of the biggest areas of transformation is the evolution of restaurant management and POS systems into comprehensive business operating systems. While the majority of the market still relies on legacy POS systems, often dating back more than a decade, there is a fast-growing shift towards a next-generation restaurant management and POS system, which can bring numerous advantages to restaurants. It can offer unprecedented levels of convenience and cost-effectiveness, enabling faster table turnover for servers through expedited bill presentation and payment processes, for example. Some systems even assist hosts in seating guests more efficiently by providing real-time table status information. In the back-of-house, it can enable better tracking, routing, and prioritization of orders, ultimately leading to improved order accuracy.

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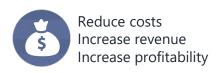
To be sure, the restaurant industry is experiencing a wave of technological advancements that are reshaping its landscape. Alongside restaurant management and POS systems, online ordering platforms and delivery apps have become increasingly popular as customers seek the convenience of ordering food online and having it delivered right to their doorstep. While third-party food delivery solutions remain important for some restaurants, many are now investing in developing their own integrated apps and online platforms to provide a seamless ordering experience.

Online table reservation systems enable diners to make reservations on the go, while digital kitchen display systems streamline back-of-house operations, improving order accuracy and efficiency. Automated inventory management software, integrated into a restaurant management and POS system, helps restaurants track stock levels more efficiently and minimize food wastage. Self-order kiosks and mobile apps with scannable QR codes have also transformed the dining experience, empowering customers with greater visibility and control over their restaurant-going experience. Food preparation and delivery robots are also gaining momentum, further revolutionizing the industry.

Restaurant operators should leverage any and all technologies that can enhance their chances of success. Managing operating costs, particularly those related to food and labor, has always been a critical factor for their profitability — and never more so than today, given the current challenges related to inflation and recruitment. Upgrading the capabilities of a restaurant management and POS platform tends to be a top priority because these capabilities play an instrumental role in optimizing staff scheduling, labor utilization, and cost reduction. Integrated data mining, analytical modeling, business intelligence, and performance reporting tools are also key for making well-informed business decisions and maximizing operational efficiency.

Restaurant operators should leverage any and all technologies that can enhance their chances of success.

Some of the benefits of a next-generation restaurant management and POS system are highlighted below. Many of these benefits arise from the seamless integration with various components such as online ordering and payment solutions, guest-facing apps, kiosks, display hardware, and other modules and tools related to inventory management, workforce management, accounting management, as well as external payment processors or payroll services. One big advantage is mobile enablement, which allows ordering and payment through smartphones and tablets. This feature became indispensable in a world that emphasizes touchless guest interactions and self-service transactions. A next-generation system is cloud-based, providing faster speed, enhanced scalability, and increased agility.





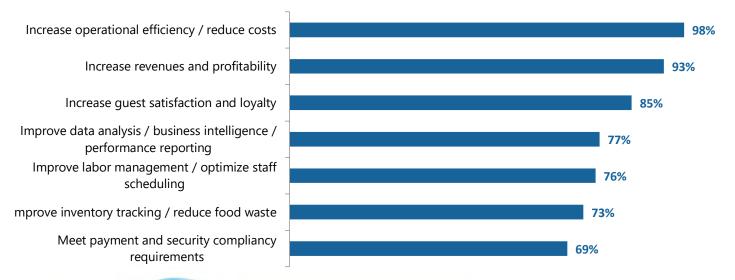
Reduce food order placement time
Reduce guest wait time
Reduce payment processing time
Increase table turn rates
Improve staff productivity



Ensure guest safety
through touchless
interactions
Improve guest satisfaction
and loyalty
Improve staff management
and inventory controls
Generate business insights
Meet payment compliancy
Reduce food waste

Research Data Point

What are the biggest benefits one can expect to gain with the right restaurant management and POS system?



Research findings are derived from the Q1 and Q2 2023 survey on Restaurant Management and POS Systems.



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Experienced restaurant operators are familiar with the technology-driven advancements that are reshaping their industry. The following descriptions serve as a reminder of a few key concepts to consider when evaluating the benefits of a next-generation restaurant management and POS system.

Personalization capabilities. Advanced platform capabilities integrated into a restaurant management and POS system offer restaurants the ability to engage with guests in highly relevant and personalized ways. By leveraging vast amounts of data from their restaurant management and POS systems, restaurants can deliver personalized experiences at scale to every guest, regardless of location, who has a history with the establishment. Staff members can utilize this data to seat guests according to their known table preferences and provide food recommendations based on their individual profiles, including any allergies or dietary restrictions they have previously disclosed. Personalization goes beyond simply assigning the same server from a previous positive dining experience who already knows the guest's preferences. Technology enables restaurants to deliver personalized experiences without any human interaction. For instance, Al-powered digital platforms can generate customized menus based on a guest's past orders, settings, and loyalty information. Additionally, a wide range of innovative solutions, such as Alpowered chatbots and facial recognition technologies, are emerging to bring personalization to life. These technologies can interact with guests not only within the restaurant setting but also in their homes or cars. Given that many consumers now rely on social media to research restaurants and compare options before making reservations or placing online orders, it is only a matter of time before virtual reality goggles or other devices allow them to immerse themselves in a restaurant's ambiance and decor. While technology cannot replace the expertise and relationships of a seasoned maitre d' or server, it can enhance the quality of the guest experience in novel and imaginative ways.

Advanced platform capabilities integrated into a restaurant management and POS system offer restaurants the ability to engage with guests in highly relevant and personalized ways.



Mobile ordering capabilities. Order placement through mobile apps and tablets has revolutionized the guest experience by eliminating common barriers and elevating satisfaction and loyalty. In the past, guests often endured frustrating wait times. With the convenience of mobile ordering, these delays are significantly reduced. The same holds true for on-premise dining, where taking orders tableside via a mobile device amplifies service speed and order accuracy. This brings forth a remarkable leap in efficiency for table-service restaurants by enabling orders to be sent directly from a tablet to the kitchen printer or display, eliminating the need for servers to travel long distances to a stationary terminal. Gone are the days when servers had to navigate through a labyrinth of obstacles to place a food or drink order. The traditional bottleneck formed by a queue of servers behind a terminal is a thing of the past. With tablets in hand, servers are liberated from the constant back-and-forth between guests and a distant terminal. They can effortlessly send orders to the kitchen from anywhere, saving precious time and streamlining operations. This technology fundamentally transforms how servers allocate their time. Suddenly, their focus shifts away from simply taking orders and entering information. By embracing mobile order placement, restaurants unlock a new level of efficiency, freeing up servers to deliver exceptional service. The adoption of this technology not only reduces wait times and improves order accuracy but also empowers servers to enhance the overall quality of service.

With tablets in hand, servers are liberated from the constant backand-forth between guests and a distant terminal.



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Mobile payment capabilities. While mobile wallets and tap-and-pay cards have been available for years, mobile payment capabilities took the stage front and center during the pandemic as it suddenly became important to minimize human contact, reduce the use of cash and plastic credit cards, and adopt contactless payment methods. Prior to the pandemic, the primary drivers for upgrading payment technology were EMV compliance and revenue growth. EMV compliance ensures better fraud detection and accommodates guest preferences for EMV payment options. Implementing POS mobility, on the other hand, has been shown to increase the average check size by 10 to 15 percent and also enable faster table turnovers which, at least for many restaurants during busier times of the day, tends to drive additional revenue and profitability. In response to the pandemic, many restaurant owners and operators not only upgraded their systems to accept EMV payment processing but also invested in hardware that can accommodate NFC payments for mobile. Most guests now prefer to use their own smartphones with the restaurant's POS system and pay their bills through e-wallet apps. The suboptimal guest experience associated with EMV payment processing, which takes more effort and results in longer wait times, has led to the increasing popularity of mobile payment processing. EMV transactions that require inserting a credit or debit card into the POS device can take upwards of 15 seconds to complete, while NFC payments typically only require a few seconds. To meet evolving customer preferences, restaurants equipped with next-generation POS systems can now accept both EMV and NFC payments, providing a seamless and efficient payment experience. By embracing mobile payment capabilities, restaurants not only enhance customer satisfaction but also improve operational efficiency and revenue generation.

Implementing POS mobility has been shown to increase the average check size by 10 to 15 percent and also enable faster table turnovers.

Technology and data integration capabilities. By embracing integration and data connectivity, restaurants can unlock numerous benefits, including streamlined operations, improved financial performance, enhanced guest experiences, and the ability to deliver personalized services and communications. The seamless integration of various technologies enables guests to place orders from their own mobile devices or through servers standing in front of them. It empowers restaurants to make menu changes across multiple platforms, including fixed POS, mobile POS, and guest-facing contactless menus, with ease. Moreover, integration allows different datadriven functions to work harmoniously. Consider the role of data integration in the context of inventory management. When an automated inventory management solution is integrated into a restaurant management and POS system, restaurants can virtually eliminate the risk of human error. It prevents miscalculations in over- or under-ordering of ingredients and helps reduce labor costs associated with manual inventory management. Integration with supplier databases provides real-time visibility into food costs, enabling smarter purchase decisions, informed vendor negotiations, and valuable insights into how fluctuating prices impact profitability. In hotel or resort settings, the restaurant POS system may need to integrate with the hotel property management system to ensure seamless operations. For large restaurants or chains with multiple locations, advanced solutions facilitate application integration across all sites. The POS system should also integrate with third-party CRM, marketing, and guest loyalty and rewards management solutions. This integration empowers restaurant operators to gain a deeper understanding of guest preferences, deliver personalized messages and offers, and provide tailored services such as seating arrangements and food and beverage options. Customizing communications based on purchases, frequency, preferences, and other factors relies on the ability to connect, interface, and seamlessly share data.

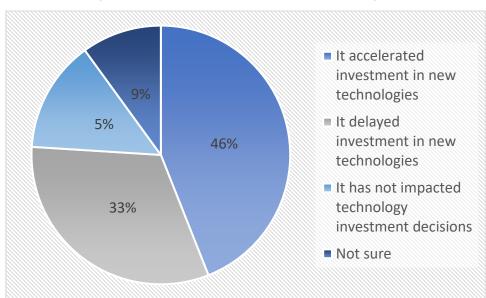
When an automated inventory management solution is integrated into a restaurant management and POS system, restaurants can virtually eliminate the risk of human error.



Workforce management capabilities. Restaurant operators have long relied on software programs for employee management tasks such as hiring, onboarding, training, and scheduling. However, with the evolution of next-generation restaurant management and POS systems, workforce management capabilities are now being integrated as a core component. This integration allows restaurant owners and operators to streamline employee management without the need for separate standalone programs or modules. In light of the current labor shortage challenges, the integration of workforce management capabilities is particularly important as restaurant operators look to minimize labor costs and optimize performance output. These advanced systems enable restaurant owners and operators to schedule employees for optimal cost effectiveness, manage payroll, and centrally orchestrate various employee management tasks. Additionally,

Research Data Point

"How did the COVID-19 pandemic influence the technology investment decisions that your restaurant has made over the past year?



Research findings are derived from the Q1 and Q2 2023 survey on Restaurant Management and POS Systems.

The integration of workforce management capabilities is particularly important as restaurant operators look to minimize labor costs and optimize performance output.



employee-facing interfaces empower staff to access their work schedules, request time off, trade shifts, and set alerts, all conveniently from their smartphones. This level of control contributes to increased employee satisfaction. Advanced systems go beyond basic functions like tracking employee hours and submitting payroll. They incorporate financial management features designed to optimize labor utilization. By utilizing datadriven sales forecasting and labor planning tools, restaurant managers can plan for the expected volume of business on a daily and hourly basis, determining staffing needs and scheduling shifts accordingly. These features help achieve the optimal labor-to-cost ratio in relation to predicted sales, minimizing overhead costs and improving revenue and profitability. Recent studies have shown that these solutions typically reduce labor costs by 4 to 5 percent. Moreover, embracing technology for employee management offers additional benefits such as tracking staff attendance and monitoring performance. By harnessing the power of these integrated systems, restaurant owners and operators can effectively optimize employee scheduling while simultaneously enhancing operational efficiency and financial performance.

Restaurant
managers can
plan for the
expected
volume of
business on a
daily and
hourly basis,
determining
staffing needs
and scheduling
shifts
accordingly.



Inventory management capabilities. The global pandemic brought the critical importance of food inventory management into sharp focus. Restaurants that were able to keep their doors open during this period and maintain some level of business continuity had to become hyper-efficient in all aspects of their operations, as every dollar counted. Throughout the crisis, as they continued to struggle to recover from the unprecedented financial fallout, the pressure to minimize food waste had never been greater. Food waste is indeed the enemy of restaurant success. According to industry estimates, restaurants lose an average of one dollar (even more for high-end restaurants) on every meal order due to preventable food loss, mainly caused by poor inventory management. Fast food restaurants experience more than 10 percent food waste, while full-service restaurants fare slightly better, but still suffer from poor inventory management. By meticulously controlling both the quantity and flow of inventory, restaurants can significantly reduce the cost of food waste, often by double-digit percentage points. Nextgeneration inventory management tools enable restaurant owners and operators to compare variances between physical inventory and POS data at a granular level. The best tools available even allow restaurants to track how even the smallest adjustments to menus and recipes affect ingredient usage. Integrated into a restaurant management and POS system, these technologies make it possible to monitor inventory levels and ingredient depletion in real time, helping identify instances of preventable food waste due to spoilage, over-portioning, theft, or other reasons that can be readily mitigated or avoided with proper attention. Until recently, the idea of automatically managing inventory with a high degree of precision in a dynamic, fast-paced restaurant environment would have been considered a pipedream. However, with the rapid evolution of data-driven technologies in recent years, restaurants can now control food costs and optimize inventory levels in ways that were previously unimaginable.

By meticulously controlling both the quantity and flow of inventory, restaurants can significantly reduce the cost of food waste.

Performance reporting and data analysis capabilities. With nextgeneration restaurant management and POS systems, owners and operators have the ability to collect, integrate, and analyze data from multiple sources. These sources include POS transactions, loyalty programs, and guest-facing apps, providing a comprehensive understanding of guests at both an individual and aggregate level. This enables more effective interactions with guests and identifies opportunities for business improvement. Performance reporting and data analysis tools can assess staff performance, menu item profitability, and various other aspects of the business, generating actionable insights. Which servers are the most productive? Which are the least productive? Which types of guests are the most valuable? Which are the least valuable? Which dishes are the most popular? Which are the least popular? Which are the most profitable? Which are the least profitable? Automated menu analysis can reveal the popularity and profitability of dishes, guiding future selection of menu items and prices. It helps determine whether it makes economic sense to sell certain low-margin dishes with high demand or to remove less popular dishes that generate more profit from the menu. In the past, mining data for meaningful insights was often a burdensome and time-consuming task. However, next-generation restaurant management and POS systems come with built-in capabilities that facilitate the generation of actionable insights, often on an ad hoc basis. This empowers restaurant operators to make more informed decisions across all aspects of the business. Some systems can even predict financial outcomes based on dining-out trends and seasonal dish popularity. Managers can set alerts based on predefined triggers to notify them when inventory needs restocking or when high-cost or high-risk food items like liquor appear to be going unaccounted for, indicating the possibility of theft. In the end, data reporting

and analysis tools are key to staying ahead of the competition and driving

Nextgeneration systems come with built-in capabilities that facilitate the generation of actionable insights.



continuous performance improvement.

Accounting capabilities. An integrated restaurant accounting solution automates almost all accounting-related functions, significantly reducing the day-to-day workload of a restaurant's accounting department. It allows accountants to focus on strategic tasks that lower costs and increase revenue. Instead of spending excessive time tracking down spreadsheets and consolidating and reconciling numbers scattered across multiple technologies, data silos, and physical locations, accountants can engage in higher-value activities. These activities include negotiations with vendors that lead to substantial cost savings and increased profitability. With an advanced restaurant accounting system, all authorized users have access to the same set of numbers from a centralized data repository. This unified view of financial information drastically reduces errors, improves data integrity, and decreases the time required to complete basic accounting tasks. Research indicates that using generic accounting software takes nearly twice as long, on average, for a restaurant to close its books compared to an advanced restaurant accounting solution. Additionally, over 80 percent of restaurant businesses fail to maintain an updated financial budget for each location. Integrated accounting capabilities make it easy to budget for multiple restaurant locations simultaneously by automatically pulling data from food inventory, staffing, and other cost centers. While an integrated accounting solution may not be the most glamorous component of restaurant technology, its ability to streamline financial aspects such as inventory, accounts payable, and menu engineering, as well as optimize various backoffice operations, can have a significant impact on driving positive financial outcomes. Having such a powerful capability in place was particularly beneficial for restaurant owners and operators during the pandemic. They faced enormous pressure to identify, track, and scrutinize every dollar spent and quickly cut operating costs wherever possible. Unfortunately, given the current economic environment, that pressure continues for many restaurant operators.

Integrated accounting capabilities make it easy to budget for multiple restaurant locations simultaneously by automatically pulling data from food inventory, staffing, and other cost centers.



Chapter 2

Buying Considerations and Evaluation Checklist



During the onset of the global pandemic, restaurants equipped with a flexible and mobile-enabled technology infrastructure were generally positioned much better than those with a legacy system to adapt their business models to minimize operating costs and prioritize pickup and delivery. By and large, these restaurants were able to optimize their operations and cater to the changing needs of their customers. However, upgrading to a next-generation restaurant management and POS system is not only imperative during times of crisis that necessitate operational adjustments in the hope of simply staying afloat. It also offers a multitude of advantages even in periods of smoother operation.

The distinguishing features of a next-generation restaurant management and POS system go beyond agility, mobility, and customizability. They also include user-friendly interfaces and a wide range of fully integrated platform capabilities. With these advanced capabilities, restaurants can streamline operations across various areas, such as menu management, mobile ordering and payment processing, invoice handling, inventory and workforce management. Additionally, these systems enable more accurate budgeting, forecasting, performance reporting, and data-driven business intelligence. By providing comprehensive tools, these next-generation solutions effectively support restaurant operations and facilitate informed decision-making. Some advanced systems offer additional value-add capabilities, such as digital gift card management. These features became particularly valuable for

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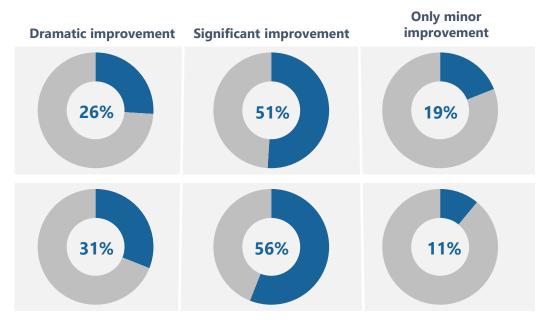


restaurants struggling to sustain their businesses during challenging times. By leveraging digital gift card management, restaurants could generate additional revenue streams and maintain customer engagement and loyalty.

When it comes to selecting a system that best fits the needs of the restaurant, the buying considerations are likely to vary, depending on multiple factors. With new software releases boasting an ever-growing plethora of valuable features and functionality, combined with mobile-enabled interfaces that allow for anywhere, anytime access, most of the leading restaurant management and POS systems are impressive by any measure. However, it is important to note that different systems have distinct platform capabilities and competitive strengths. In many cases, they are designed for different restaurant categories and environments, emphasizing the need for careful evaluation and consideration before making a decision.

Research Data Point

"To what extent has upgrading your restaurant management and POS system (within the past 3 years) enabled your business to improve overall performance and financial results?"



Quick service and fast casual restaurants

77% of respondents cite "significant" or "dramatic" improvement

Only 4% cite no improvement

Full-service restaurants

87% of respondents cite "significant" or "dramatic" improvement

Only 1% cite no improvement

Research findings are derived from the Q1 and Q2 2023 survey on Restaurant Management and POS Systems.



So, how can restaurant owners and operators determine which restaurant management and POS system best fits their needs and is most likely to deliver the desired benefits with minimum hassle and expense? There are several factors to consider, and some carry more weight than others. The following are just a few of the considerations that decision makers should keep in mind.

Operational efficiencies. The extent to which a next-generation restaurant management and POS system can improve operational efficiencies is of paramount importance. Will the new solution streamline day-to-day processes? Will it reduce the time spent on redundant and time-consuming tasks? Will it help cut costs in areas such as food waste and idle staff? Reducing overhead and increasing margins, even by a few percentage points, can make a significant difference for a restaurant's success, especially when operating with limited resources and capacity. With POS mobility, servers can verify or correct orders more easily, adding modifiers, extras, and special requests before placing them. They also have immediate access to accurate dish information, including ingredients, without needing to check with the kitchen. The entire process is streamlined, eliminating the added latency of entering orders into the system. Food orders reach the kitchen almost immediately after being placed. In certain categories like drive-thru windows in fast-food chains, where performance metrics are tied to the number of cars served per hour, mobile payment processing is seen as the key to improved operational efficiency. Today, restaurants are seeking ways to optimize their labor operations. This involves creating staff schedules based on sales forecasts, trimming labor during slow times, and providing managers with more control and accountability. Integrated workforce management tools that leverage the power of AI enable intelligent automation, increasing workforce efficiency and productivity while optimizing labor processes and costs.

With POS mobility, servers can verify or correct orders more easily, adding modifiers, extras, and special requests before placing them.

Advanced features. While tablets have become nearly ubiquitous in certain restaurant categories, technology capabilities with less obvious benefits have also gained importance as buying considerations. Features that automate routine tasks, such as enabling check-splitting by item or number of guests, or offering preset tip percentage options, are now increasingly seen as necessary. Most systems now include built-in distribution and server payout calculators, simplifying the process of splitting tips at the end of the day. Most systems can easily send electronic receipts to guests via email or text message, making it convenient for restaurants to invite guests to join their loyalty and rewards programs. Some solutions offer interactive reservations tools that allow guests to not only reserve a date and time, but also select their preferred table, server, or section. Advanced systems include inventory control features, including dynamic menu monitoring that automatically tracks the availability of menu items and ingredients, as well as integrated labor management and scheduling tools.

Customization. Given that each restaurant has unique wants, needs, and preferences, restaurant management and POS systems should provide for some degree of customization. This customization can involve reconfiguring and reformatting the appearance of certain screens to align with the restaurant's branding or other specific features. It can also involve integrating with third-party software modules or hardware components, such as existing kiosks or kitchen video displays, that are already in use. Also important is the ability to create nonstandard reports tailored to the specific requirements of the restaurant.

Given that each restaurant has unique wants, needs, and preferences, restaurant management and POS systems should provide for some degree of customization.



Performance reporting and analysis. Restaurant operators require the ability to comprehensively analyze various aspects of their business, ranging from menu item profitability and table seating configuration to server productivity. They need the flexibility to perform ad hoc queries using relevant data sets to obtain the insights they need, whether it's forecasting revenue, optimizing channels for reservations, or effectively managing labor and inventory costs. By systematically mining and analyzing their mountains of data related to guests, inventory, menus, employees, suppliers, and other facets of the business, restaurant operators can generate actionable insights to drive smart decision-making. Advanced systems integrate analytical modeling and advanced performance reporting tools as core components to provide valuable insights and enhance operational efficiency. These systems also offer trigger notification features that can alert owners and operators to specific events or metrics that require attention, such as voids exceeding a certain threshold. It is crucial for restaurant operators to track not only basic financial metrics but also key performance indicators like average table turn rates, occupancy rates, and guest spending that directly impact revenue. Access to financial accounting information and reports, such as the general ledger, accounts payable/receivable statements, bank reconciliations, budgets, and forecasts, should be readily available within the system. Users should have the capability to drill down into standardized templates or create customized dashboards based on their specific business needs and data parameters. Ad hoc queries across various areas, such as accounting, inventory, banking, sales, labor analytics, food costs, and recipes, should be possible to identify potential problem areas and opportunities for improvement. Seamless integration with the POS system allows for importing sales mix data and applying economic approaches to recipe engineering for informed menu updates. Integration with payroll processing providers streamlines labor data management. By incorporating these functionalities, restaurant operators can harness the power of data to optimize operations, improve financial performance, and make data-driven decisions that contribute to their overall success.

Advanced systems integrate analytical modeling and advanced performance reporting tools as core components to provide valuable insights and enhance operational efficiency.



Ease of use. Restaurant management and POS system interfaces, whether on mobile devices or terminal screens, should prioritize high intuitiveness. The layout of the screens should follow a logical and easily understandable format, whether it pertains to placing orders, processing payments, or performing back-office functions such as accounting, staff scheduling, inventory tracking, and menu management. Some systems offer graphical layouts that allow for efficient tracking of table statuses, while others provide quick-feature icons that streamline order placement by categorizing the menu into sections, styles, types of dishes, and beverages, among others. It is essential for both staff and guests to have interfaces that are user-friendly and intuitive. This becomes particularly crucial with the increasing prevalence of self-service ordering and payment processing.

Setup, support and training. When purchasing a new restaurant management and POS system, it is important to establish a long-term relationship with a reliable technology solution provider. To ensure a smooth transition and ongoing operational support, buyers should prioritize companies that offer a high level of customer assistance. Most reputable technology solution providers will assist with the setup process, including any necessary customization, and help optimize the system based on the restaurant's physical floor plan. Some providers even offer services such as network speed testing and data backup processes. In addition to reliable support, buyers should consider the availability of comprehensive training programs to ensure employees can effectively utilize the new system. It is important that employees receive guidance on features, settings, and troubleshooting potential issues. Some solution providers offer digital learning programs that facilitate quick and effective onboarding of new employees. Online training eliminates the need to hire external experts or allocate excessive time for employee training.

Most reputable technology solution providers will assist with the setup process, including any necessary customization.



Chapter 2: Evaluation Checklist

This Evaluation Checklist offers a framework for conducting an apples-to-apples comparison of restaurant management and POS systems using the buying considerations outlined previously. Other key considerations can be added based on individual buyer priorities. Relative weightings can be assigned on a scale of 1 ("This buying consideration has no bearing on our purchase decision") to 10 ("This buying consideration is a very important factor in our purchase decision").

Buying Consideration	Weighting	Vendor 1	Vendor 2	Vendor 3
1. Ordering capabilities				
2. Payment and security capabilities				
3. Terminal mobility (tablets, stationary, both)				
4. Performance reporting and analytics				
5. Type of hosting (cloud, on-premise, hybrid)				
6. Technology / data integration capabilities				
7. Multi-location management capabilities				
8. Customizability / user experience				
9. Setup, training and support				
10. Usability / reputation / client satisfaction				
11. Costs and expected ROI				
12. Overall features and functionality				
a. Marketing, guest loyalty management				
b. Inventory management				
c. Employee / labor management				
d. Cash drawer management				
e. Table, seating management				
f. Integrated accounting capabilities				
f. Other				
Overall Rankings	N/A			



Chapter 3

Must-Ask Questions



When it comes to making technology investments, restaurant operators are driven by two primary objectives, and these objectives are even more critical in the post-pandemic era. The first objective is to streamline operations and optimize efficiency. In today's highly competitive market, restaurants need to find ways to increase staff productivity, reduce waste, and improve overall process efficiency to drive cost savings and remain profitable. By leveraging the latest advancements in restaurant technology, such as advanced inventory management systems, automated order processing, and integrated workforce management tools, restaurants can achieve significant improvements in operational efficiency and resource utilization.

However, in addition to streamlining operations, enhancing the guest experience has become an equally crucial goal for restaurant operators. Customers now have higher expectations when it comes to dining experiences, and providing exceptional service and personalized interactions

Research Data Point

Percentages of restaurant operators who view each of the following success factors as "important" or "very important."











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is key to increasing guest satisfaction and loyalty. In the era of social media and online reviews, positive guest experiences can lead to valuable word-of-mouth recommendations and positive reviews on platforms like Yelp and other popular ratings sites. These positive reviews not only attract new customers but also contribute to the overall growth and success of the restaurant.

To achieve these objectives, restaurant operators should thoroughly evaluate potential solution providers and ensure that their offerings align with these goals. They should seek out technology solutions that not only streamline operations but also prioritize guest-centric features and capabilities. These may include customer relationship management (CRM) tools, personalized marketing features, seamless online reservation systems, and integrated feedback management platforms. By selecting the right technology partner and keeping these objectives in mind, restaurants can position themselves for success in a competitive market and deliver exceptional experiences that drive revenue growth and increased customer loyalty.

Just as the buying considerations related to the purchase of a next-generation restaurant management and POS system vary to some degree depending on the needs of the restaurant, the 'must-ask questions' concerning specific features and functionality are also bound to depend on the restaurant's unique situation and priorities. The following are just a few of the questions that prospective buyers may wish to explore with solution providers during the research and evaluation process.

Is the solution flexible in terms of key areas of functionality? Restaurant operators with specific software configuration and customization needs should ensure that any solution providers they are considering can meet these requirements. For instance, in terms of staff scheduling, some managers may

Restaurant owners and operators should seek out technology solutions that not only streamline operations but also prioritize guest-centric features and capabilities.



prefer the option to modify or create their own scheduling templates, if available with a particular solution. Another example could be the need for a specific method of inputting menu modifiers. While most systems offer a wide range of standard dashboards and reports for operational and financial areas like sales, revenue, labor, and inventory control, which should satisfy most dayto-day performance management and analysis needs, it's important to note that not all POS data queries and reporting requirements can be anticipated in advance or addressed with pre-built dashboards. Prospective buyers should inquire about the extent to which customized reporting is possible and understand the process of filtering and sorting data based on specific parameters. They should also verify the solution provider's claims by speaking with existing customers and to confirm the system's flexibility in key areas of functionality, including custom report generation. Finally, they should inquire whether the system can accommodate the addition of new features and modules as the restaurant's needs evolve, such as integrating with third-party applications such as a best-of-breed loyalty and rewards program.

Prospective buyers should inquire about the extent to which customized reporting is possible.

What can be expected in terms of upgrades and updates? Restaurant operators should inquire about the solution provider's upgrade process and frequency of updates. A system that regularly updates its features and functionalities ensures that the restaurant stays up-to-date with industry trends and can adapt to changing customer expectations.



Does the solution allow for scalability? Restaurant owners with future expansion plans need to ensure that any system under consideration can accommodate the growth and changing needs of the restaurant over time. Scalability refers to the system's ability to adapt and expand as the restaurant grows. It is important to inquire about such aspects as system capacity (i.e., can the system handle increasing transaction volumes and a growing customer base without compromising performance or speed?) and whether the system can efficiently manage and consolidate operations across different restaurant locations, providing centralized control and reporting.

What type of customer support is offered? Restaurant operators should have clear expectations when it comes to customer support and problem resolution as well as the training that may be needed to get servers and other staff up to speed on the new solution. Does the solution provider (or a certified subcontractor) offer an online or, better yet, in-person training program? Is it equipped to offer online troubleshooting and diagnostic processes and tools should technical issues arise? Are local, in-person service and support services on hand should there be an issue that can't be handled remotely? Knowing that problems will get resolved fully, and in a timely manner, is critical for a restaurant that needs to run with minimal interruption and in which an issue with meal ordering, or even a 30-second lag in payment processing, may be enough to erode the guest experience. More serious technology malfunctions or outages can, of course, have a very negative affect on revenue performance. Decision makers need to understand what to expect should they ever get into a situation that requires immediate attention.

Cloud solutions are generally built to scale as the volume of business increases, so the costs are almost always in coordination with the size of the restaurant's current operations and needs.

What is the total cost of ownership? Are there any "hidden expenses?"

Next-generation restaurant management and POS systems, on the whole, are typically more affordable and require less upfront investment compared to their predecessors. Several factors contribute to this increased affordability,



such as simplified installation processes and reduced hardware costs compared to a decade ago. This is particularly true for mobile POS or tablet-only restaurant operations. With the growing number of cloud-based systems, POS data is stored entirely in the cloud, eliminating the need for on-premise servers. Additionally, most cloud-based POS systems follow a subscription-based "pay as you go" model, which means no long-term contracts and no upfront capital investment for the software. These cloud solutions are designed to scale as the business grows, ensuring that costs align with the restaurant's current needs. This aspect is especially important for smaller operations with limited budgets. It is crucial to confirm which software features, modules, and future upgrades, as well as any included hardware components, are part of the base recurring price quoted. This helps avoid any unexpected surprises in the future and ensures transparency in the pricing structure.

What return on investment (ROI) can be expected? The return on investment (ROI) of a restaurant management and POS system can be measured in terms of cost reduction, which is primarily driven by increased staff productivity and improved resource utilization. It can also be measured in terms of revenue growth, which is influenced by enhanced guest satisfaction and, in some cases, faster table turnover times that allow for serving a larger number of guests. Additional benefits include improved financial performance through advanced inventory and labor management tools and better performance reporting capabilities. When assessing ROI, consider the extent to which the new system can improve organizational and process efficiency across day-to-day functions related to guests, employees, and inventory. Will it enhance sales, revenue, and profitability by increasing table turnover rates and serving more guests simultaneously? Another crucial aspect of ROI is the reduction of losses, including food waste and losses associated with data entry

When assessing ROI, consider the extent to which the new system can improve organizational and process efficiency across day-today functions related to guests, employees, and inventory.



errors and technology integration costs with third-party hardware and software. Another key factor in making the business case for this investment is the system's potential to enhance the overall quality of the guest experience, leading to increased customer loyalty and positive reviews. As any restaurant operator can attest, there is a direct correlation between favorable guest reviews and positive financial outcomes.

What is the solution provider's track record of success? As with the purchase of any business technology solution, reputation and customer satisfaction play pivotal roles in the decision-making process. No one wants to invest in and implement a restaurant management and POS system that fails to meet expectations, whether it be due to issues with stability, reliability, or unfulfilled promises. Gathering insights from existing customers of solution providers becomes an essential aspect of the purchasing decision. Ideally, it is beneficial to seek feedback from restaurants that share similarities in terms of size, type, category, and technology infrastructure. Solution providers or consultants may be willing to provide customer references upon request. Some customers, especially those in non-competitive markets, might be open to sharing their experiences and even revealing the positive outcomes achieved through the solution, such as cost savings or improved guest satisfaction metrics like Yelp ratings. Testimonials and success stories from clients can also serve as valuable sources of information.

No one wants to invest in and implement a restaurant management and POS system that fails to meet expectations, whether it be due to issues with stability, reliability, or unfulfilled promises.



Does the solution ensure data security and compliance? Ensuring data security and compliance with industry standards is of utmost importance for any restaurant management and POS system. While prospective buyers might think that all systems on the market provide the same robust measures to protect sensitive customer information and maintain compliance with relevant regulations, that would be a false assumption. For starters, the system should ensure data security and compliance using strong encryption protocols to safeguard data both in transit and at rest. Encryption ensures that sensitive information, such as payment card details, is securely transmitted and stored. It should operate on a secure network infrastructure, implementing measures like firewalls, intrusion detection systems, and regular network monitoring to detect and prevent unauthorized access and data breaches. The system should have robust access controls to ensure that only authorized personnel can access sensitive data. It should also have secure data storage practices, ensuring that customer data is stored in encrypted and protected databases. Additionally, the system should adhere to industry best practices regarding data retention policies, deleting or anonymizing customer data when it is no longer necessary. Finally, the system should comply with industry-specific regulations, such as the Payment Card Industry Data Security Standard (PCI DSS) for handling payment card data. Compliance with these standards ensures that the system meets the necessary security requirements and undergoes regular audits and assessments. It is important for restaurant owners to thoroughly evaluate the security features and compliance measures implemented by the POS system they choose. Additionally, they should inquire about the solution provider's track record in data security and inquire about any certifications or audits they have undergone. By selecting a restaurant management and POS system that prioritizes data security and compliance, restaurant owners and operators can instill trust in their customers and mitigate the risk of data breaches or non-compliance with industry standards.

Not all systems on the market provide the same robust measures to protect sensitive customer information and maintain compliance with relevant regulations.

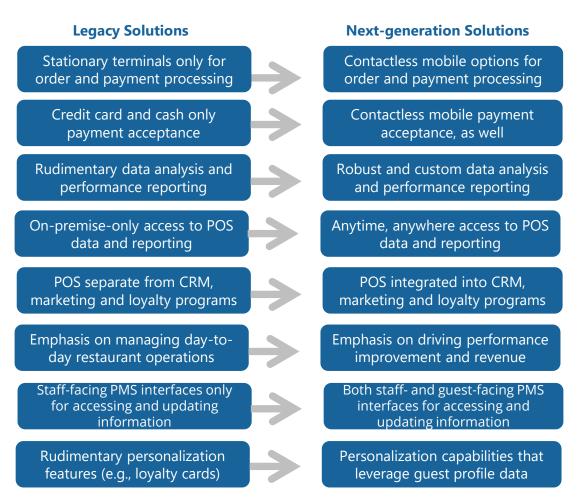
Chapter 4

Roadmap and Recommendations



Chapter 4: Roadmap

The rise of new digital capabilities and rapidly evolving consumer expectations has compelled restaurants to offer greater convenience and personalization. Next-generation restaurant management and POS systems, which provide increased speed, agility, and operational efficiency, are designed to deliver seamless digital experiences, enhanced customization, and comprehensive data-driven insights to optimize operations and enhance customer satisfaction. The following Roadmap Diagram illustrates the evolution of restaurant technology from legacy solutions to next-generation solutions.





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During the height of the pandemic, restaurants had to find innovative ways to continue serving customers while adhering to safety guidelines and restrictions. This led to the widespread adoption of technologies that facilitate contactless transactions, such as online ordering, curbside pickup, and delivery services. Other technologies that minimize human contact, such as automated ordering systems, touchless payment options, and self-service kiosks, also gained popularity. With the increased reliance on online ordering and delivery services, restaurants had access to vast amounts of customer data that can be leveraged to personalize experiences, optimize operations, and drive customer loyalty and increased profitability.

The need for restaurant owners and operators to rethink and redesign their businesses has resulted in new technology-enabled capabilities that remain even as have operations returned to normal. Among them are contactless transactions, cloud infrastructure, and data-driven decision-making.

The following are just a few recommendations for prospective buyers to keep in mind as they look to upgrade their existing platform capabilities:

"Know thyself." Every restaurant has unique requirements and priorities when it comes to features and functionality. For instance, a multi-location restaurant operation would likely seek a system that offers multi-restaurant management capabilities, including features such as single sign-on, enterprise-level configuration and reporting, as well as unified data analysis and performance reporting. These capabilities enable efficient management and consolidation of operations across various locations, offering centralized control and facilitating data analysis. Buyers should strive to gain a clear understanding of their own requirements and priorities from the outset and evaluate potential systems accordingly (see the Evaluation Checklist in Chapter 2).

The need for restaurant operators to rethink and redesign their businesses has resulted in new technologyenabled capabilities that remain even as have operations returned to normal.



Focus on leveraging POS mobility. With POS mobility, restaurants have the opportunity to transform their servers from being mere food-order-taking-anddelivery-automatons into fully-fledged brand ambassadors. POS mobility equips them with the necessary tools and capabilities to provide personalized, hightouch service and cultivate long-lasting relationships with guests. While tableside order placement and payment processing via tablets may not be suitable for all types of dining establishments, they can effectively address common barriers to guest satisfaction, such as lack of server attention and extended wait times at various points of interaction and transaction. This, in turn, leads to an increase in repeat visits and higher revenue for many restaurants. In fact, reports suggest that restaurants that have implemented POS mobility have experienced a notable 10 to 15 percent boost in average check size. Select a technology solution partner that offers multiple options for payment acceptance while ensuring the highest level of payment processing security. Examine the solution provider's transaction processing certifications and verify their track record of success in data protection. Most data breach incidents are reported and made publicly available, so it is important to prioritize a solution provider with a strong commitment to data security.

Focus on reducing food waste. While a certain amount of food waste is inevitable in the restaurant industry, the deployment of next-generation, data-driven technologies can significantly reduce this waste. Unfortunately, many restaurant owners and operators have yet to adopt these technologies. One example of such technology is inventory management systems that utilize POS data to automatically monitor food and drink stock levels, supplier purchase orders, and ingredient prices, ultimately increasing profit margins. Menu design and implementation solutions can also play a role in reducing food waste by helping restaurants lower their overall food inventory levels by up to 25 percent.

Select a technology solution partner that offers multiple options for payment acceptance while ensuring the highest level of payment processing security.



Additional technologies include smart scales that measure food waste across chains and smart temperature control storage units that extend the shelf life of refrigerated and frozen foods while reducing energy consumption. Another innovative solution employs Al-powered technology to train staff in recognizing discarded ingredients by taking photos of wasted food in the kitchen. In the past, making projections and placing supplier orders in the restaurant industry relied largely on seasonal variations, dish popularity, and intuition. Restaurant operators often over-ordered supplies as a precautionary measure. However, this approach, although seemingly safe, can lead to significant long-term losses. Therefore, embracing data-driven technologies and adopting more accurate inventory management practices is crucial to mitigating food waste and ensuring profitability in the long run.

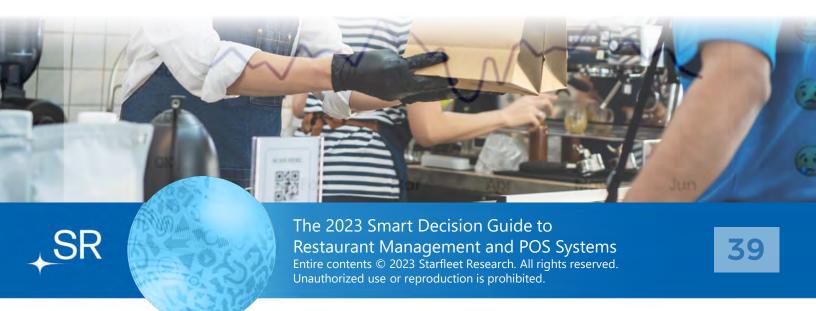
Focus on labor optimization. Restaurants should prioritize optimizing labor usage to control costs and improve their overall financial performance. Current economic challenges, such as rising labor costs and labor shortages, make it even more critical for restaurants to focus on labor optimization. Integrated scheduling solutions can streamline the process of creating employee schedules by considering factors like demand patterns, employee availability, and labor laws. This helps to ensure optimal staffing levels at any given time, avoiding both understaffing and overstaffing situations. Time and attendance tracking systems enable accurate recording of employee work hours, minimizing time theft and improving payroll accuracy. These solutions can also automate tasks such as calculating overtime and managing breaks, ensuring compliance with labor regulations and reducing administrative burdens. Real-time data and analytics enable managers to make informed decisions regarding labor allocation. By analyzing key performance indicators (KPIs) such as sales volume, customer traffic, and employee productivity, managers can identify trends and adjust their staffing levels accordingly.

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Think in terms of a digital transaction platform. Restaurant management and POS systems are key to ensuring agility and efficiency in restaurant operations. Today's consumers not only desire direct engagement with restaurant brands but also expect convenience and consistent experiences. The traditional approach of defining customer journeys and supporting business processes is no longer sufficient. The demand for off-premises dining and authentic experiences continues to grow. To address these challenges, the concept of a "digital transaction platform" emerges. It aims to provide consumers with flexibility in discovering and deciding where to eat next. By leveraging direct and indirect sales channels, restaurants can meet customers where they are in their search for a meal and/or dining experience. Curating the customer experience starts with the first impression and continues through advertisements, social media, and word of mouth. With the right data strategy, restaurants can deliver the desired experience at every touchpoint. Building customer loyalty requires personal and genuine connections, going beyond mere points and promotions. Advanced technology solutions in a restaurant's portfolio can enhance program design and engagement by offering rewards for non-revenue activities. By embracing cloud technology, creating a seamless digital experience, and adopting a strategic approach to customer engagement, restaurants can gain a competitive advantage.

By leveraging direct and indirect sales channels, restaurants can meet customers where they are in their search for a meal and/or dining experience.



Chapter 5

Roadmap and Recommendations



Chapter 5: Inside Voices



Restaurant owners and operators with first-hand experience with next-generation restaurant management and POS systems often have a lot to say about the topic. Following are a few perspectives that first appeared in *Restaurant Technology News*, a Starfleet Media publication and the hospitality industry's premier source of information and insights related to technology innovation.

Empowering our restaurants with advanced technologies is critical for operational excellence and better positions our teams for our ambitious growth plans.

Scott Boatright, Chief Restaurant Officer, Chipotle Mexican Grill

We are very excited about... elevating our guest experience even further [and] engaging customers with seamless in-store and online interfaces, making it easier than ever to reach our guests through multiple interconnected touchpoints.

Phil Crawford, Chief Technology Officer, CKE Restaurants Holdings

We needed to become more agile as we continue to add new full-service restaurants to our portfolio, roll out smaller stores with a simplified menu, and integrate our kitchens into hotel locations. To achieve our goals, we needed a true enterprise solution that could accommodate our needs....

We found [one] that offers real-time comprehensive business analytics that help us run our business better.

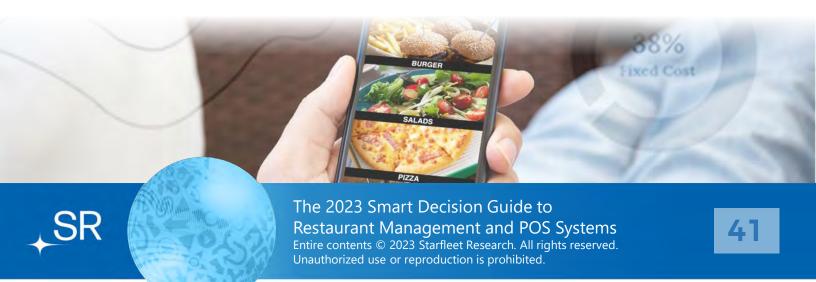
Regina Jerome, senior vice president of Information Technology, Uno Pizzeria & Grill

We're in the service industry so the first thing we're always thinking about is how we can leverage digital technology to enhance the guest experience.

Massimo Mallozzi, Vice President of Information Technology, Paris Baguette

Our staff, like our guests, are... techsavvy, and we wanted to make sure we could harness that in any move we made. We selected [a restaurant management and POS system that] is easy to use, is designed for restaurants that process high volume of transactions on a daily basis and has an extensive ecosystem of partner applications.

Tony DeSalvo, Chief Operating Officer, Fortney Hospitality Group



Chapter 5: Outside Voices

Following are a few additional perspectives from industry observers, including other market research firms, with insights into next-generation hospitality solutions.

The vast majority of operators, or 92%, are likely to increase spending on new technology in the next 12 months, with 39% saying they "definitely" will add new technology and 53% saying they "probably" or "possibly" will. As for where they're directing those investments, respondents repeatedly cited strong interest in digital tools that supported a few key areas: customer experience and loyalty, employee productivity and operational efficiencies.

2023 Restaurant Technology Outlook, *Nation's Restaurant News* Intelligence

Improving margins to meet modern industry challenges will likely necessitate some form of automation. This automation can include replacing front-of-house workers such as drive-thru attendants or baristas, but the biggest bang for restaurants' buck would come from automating back-of-house functions, including inventory tracking, ordering and payments.... This need for automated and unified restaurant functionalities has been recognized by providers worldwide, driving the restaurant management software market to explode in value.

Restaurant Digitization Tracker: "Leveraging Technology Is Crucial For Meeting Restaurant Industry Challenges," *PYMNTS*

While single-point solutions for things like online ordering, loyalty programs, and delivery were popular during the pandemic, we have reached a moment now with perhaps too many point solutions in the market. Tech stacks that require too many logins are now in fact creating a cognitive burden for employees, rather than the intended promise of efficiency and ease of use. As a result, operators are beginning to seek integrated systems and smaller tech stacks that can do more.

Brita Rosenheim, "EcoSystem: Nourishing the Bottom Line," *The Spoon*



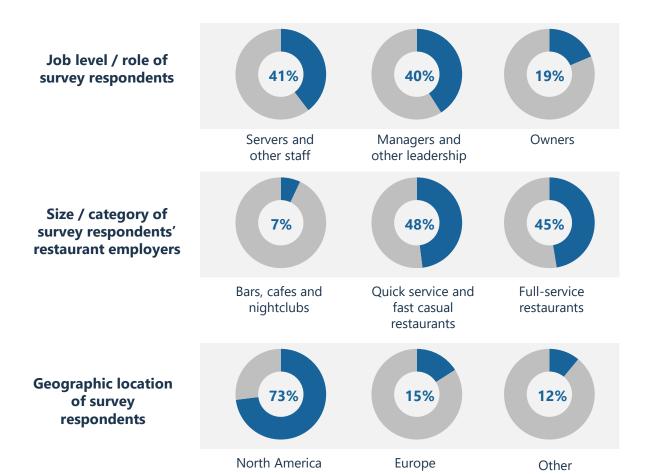
Chapter 5

Research Notes and Underwriters



Appendix: Research Notes

In Q1 and Q2 2023, Starfleet Research conducted an online survey, consisting of both multiple choice and open text questions, to capture the perspectives of industry practitioners with first-hand experience with restaurant management and POS systems. Some of the research findings are highlighted in this publication. Following is some basic information about the 322 qualified survey respondents who participated.







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Appendix: Underwriter

ORACLE

Food and Beverage

Oracle helps ambitious food and beverage providers transact in new ways, place their customers at the center of every business decision and deliver great guest experiences. With Oracle MICROS Simphony Cloud, an open and extensible digital transaction platform for unified restaurant commerce, thousands of operators around the world inform and automate their operations and deliver personalized staff and customer experiences.

www.oracle.com/food-beverage/

Contact:

Oracle Hospitality
7031 Columbia Gateway Drive 1
Columbia, MD 21046
Oraclehosp ww@oracle.com

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