THE RESTAURANT MANAGEMENT GUIDE

ZoomShift

Main Chapters

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1 Restaurant Management Best Practices, Tips & Tricks

10 Restaurant Management Tips To Improve Business

Restaurant Management Tips to Improve Your Business

It's no secret that the restaurant business took a dive in early 2020. According to a recent survey by the National Restaurant Association, restaurant sales were $94 billion below expected levels between March and May.

With so much uncertainty in the world, any restaurant owner is forgiven for feeling discouraged or downright defeated. That said, people haven't stopped eating out – they're just changing their habits. Try to accept what you can't control and focus your efforts on what you can.

Turning things around takes a mindset shift and a little creativity. Consider options that may have never crossed your mind before and adjust to this new normal by following our ten restaurant management tips to improve business this year:

1. Focus On Providing an Experience

Why do people dine at California Pizza Kitchen when they could just grab their signature frozen pizzas for cheaper and eat in the comfort of their own home?

Simple: the experience.

People enjoy dining out. They love getting dressed up, being waited on, eating fresh ingredients, and conversing over dinner. Wolfgang Puck recognized the opportunity to shake things up early in 2020 and told the Harvard Business Review that he's determined to give people a bigger and better experience.

"At my restaurant Chinois on Main in Santa Monica, I said let's not focus on selling customers one lobster for $65.00. Instead, let's bring them the adventure of having a meal with us.

For $39, they get a Chinese chicken soup with wontons in it, pot stickers with spicy sauce, vegetable spring rolls with dipping sauce, the Chinois chicken salad, the choice of half a lobster or a portion of short ribs with candied ginger sweet potato puree, and finally cookies."

Which would you choose?

2. Expand Outdoors

With the new normal of 2020, people feel more comfortable eating outside comfortably away from other diners. As such, more and more businesses are expanding their outdoor seating to accommodate more guests.

Many cities are even allowing restaurants to put tables on the sidewalk. Those are the kinds of creative solutions that will keep your restaurant flourishing in uncertain times.

Consider combining tips one and two to amp up your outdoor ambiance. The dining experience can easily be enhanced with festive umbrellas to shade diners over lunch, warm string lighting overhead for dinner, and maybe a local band for the late crowd.

3. Reduce Your Menu Offerings

Offering fewer options saves you money. It's a simple but often overlooked option that's perfectly viable, especially if your business is cash-strapped and kicking into survival mode. Trimming up your menu streamlines operations, reduces food waste, and makes it easier to train new hires.

Unsure of what to cut?

The easy choice is removing underperforming menu items. Check your food waste logs for a clear indicator of what can go. Survey your customers. Your staff likely has an opinion as well.

Think bigger and give the whole menu sections the axe if you want to really make a dent. If Sunday brunch crowds aren't worth the effort, then move your hours back up to lunch and store those menus away for sunnier times. Even the big guys, like McDonald's, are scrapping their all-day breakfast offering to save a little dough.

4. Leverage "Smart" Flyers

Generic flyers with all of your specials, events, and photos won't convert customers like they used to. They need to be targeted and simple to catch customers' attention. Focus on one message or promotion, and make it extra clear why it's special and how to take advantage of the offer.

If it's a coupon, make it worthwhile – at least 20% off, a BOGO deal, or free appetizers and desserts.

Make sure the coupon lasts at a minimum a month, so people feel like they have time to use it. Spread the word by attaching them to all delivery and to-go orders.

5. Drum Up Some Positive Press

The right review from local news agencies or food bloggers can flood your establishment with hungry customers. There's no reason to be shy – start reaching out to the foodies in your city to strike up a conversation. Get their opinion on your menu offerings while you're at it.

Google "best restaurants in [your city]" and comb through the results until you find food critics, bloggers, vlogs, and news outlets writing rave reviews about local restaurants. Chances are they'll write about you as well if you reach out the right way. Help A Reporter Out (HARO) is a great resource, as well.

6. Double Down On Creating Promoters

A whopping 82% of consumers read online reviews for local businesses, and 52% of 18 to 54-year-olds say they "always" read reviews.

Google Business Reviews are especially strong since they show potential customers that you're trustworthy and worth considering. It'll also give them easy directions right to your restaurant. Don't neglect sites like Facebook, TripAdvisor, and Yelp either. They may have smaller audiences, but every little bit adds up.

7. Make It Easy To Order Online

To-go and delivery orders are on the rise, and companies that make these options difficult will surely miss out. According to a 2019 survey conducted by the National Restaurant Association, off-premise dining – including delivery, curbside pick-up, and takeout – comprise up 60% of all restaurant traffic. That percentage likely skyrocketed in 2020.

So what can you do?

First up, offer quick pick-up options. Carve out a couple of parking spaces specifically for to-go. Put up signs and put your number on it so that people don't even have to leave their car.

Partner with third-party delivery services like GrubHub, Uber Eats, Postmates, DoorDash, and Seamless. Do whatever you can to make the transaction as quick and seamless as possible.

8. Step Up Your Social

Nearly 50% of diners are influenced by social media. That statistic is likely on the conservative side since it's hard to gauge how we're subconsciously influenced by digital advertising too.

If you're not regularly posting high-quality photos of your food and drinks on your social media account, then you're missing out. Look at #brunch on any social media platform as an example. On Instagram alone, it has 27 million posts.

If you're ready to step up your game, consider hiring a professional photographer to take food photos on a slow day. Or save some money by following DIY instructions on food photography.

9. Offer Local Ingredients & Local Brews

Whether it's local coffee, craft beer, or locally sourced tomatoes, you're going to boost your reputation within the community by supporting them. Reach out to local distributors to get your foot in the door and go to the source by reaching out to local entrepreneurs and artisans directly.

Advertise local ingredients whenever possible, and partner with local businesses on marketing efforts to share audiences. Tell the world how the local ingredients are eco-friendly, fresher, often healthier, and how they support the local economy.

10. Stay Current With the Latest Trends

Special diets and "have it your way" style restaurants are all the rage these days. For example, the plant-based food market is now worth $5 billion. A large number of restaurant owners are starting to introduce employee scheduling software for restaurants too.

If you want to tap into that segment of consumers, you need to school them on your "low-carb" or "vegan-friendly" menu offerings.

The future of restaurants may seem rocky, and the traditional model is definitely struggling to adjust. Still, creative entrepreneurs, restaurant managers, and chefs will overcome the challenges ahead like they always have.

5 Ways To Simplify Your Restaurant Operations Today

In the QSR industry, it's no surprise that restaurant managers and owner-operators carry a heavy workload. Overseeing employees, finances, etc. across several locations is time-consuming.

Every minute of the workday is crucial for a successful business and happy customers. The ultimate goal for these managers is to simplify the amount of work that they have. The most glaring answer is a digital solution, something that has become easily accessible and heavily populated in most industries.

In nearly every part of our daily routines, we have witnessed how technology can create efficiency and simplicity. In restaurants, front of the house technology has exploded while back of house operations has been slower to adopt.

By leaning into these resources, the restaurant industry can better maximize efficiency and streamline manual processes. Below, we've listed five quick-win technological solutions you can integrate into your restaurant operations today.

1. Digital Food Safety & Shift Management

With a digital system to track food safety, you'll notice a shift from disparate and messy food safety records to a seamless and automated operation.

Food safety software like Squadle captures and stores data in a structured format, making it easy to search and analyze. In automated reports, there is real-time, centralized management. This means that the software being used by employees at different locations can help corporate managers track performance by location.

It also allows them to receive alerts when something goes wrong while giving employees real-time feedback in the form of corrective actions. Squadle customers found that they save, on average, an hour each day by switching to a digital food safety solution.

Shift management will also help your restaurant financially; when using additional technology like remote temperature monitors, you will avoid costly equipment failures. This digital solution allows 24/7 automated monitoring, which will prevent thousands of dollars in spoiled inventory.

Replacing paper and pencil with an automated system reduces the need for two employees to complete tasks, saving time and money. Digital audits and tasks can be tracked, ensuring that staff is performing tasks in real-time, avoiding any pencil whipping. This makes logs easier to track and thus more reliable.

2. Online Ordering System

Implementing an online ordering system will help enhance the customer-restaurant relationship by providing an end to end Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system.

The system streamlines the entire ordering process, starting from when customers place their order to the final delivery.

A computerized system saves you from common human errors that lead to poor customer experience, as well as precise information about the cash flow of your restaurant.

On a day where there are a lot of orders, managers can look at an accurate monetary translation of each order through the online system without having to look into cash registers.

Not only is online ordering easier for the customers, but it allows managers to analyze consumer preferences and trends more efficiently, due to the ability to track previous orders. This way, managers can customize their menus, offerings, deals, and prices specifically to their loyal customers.
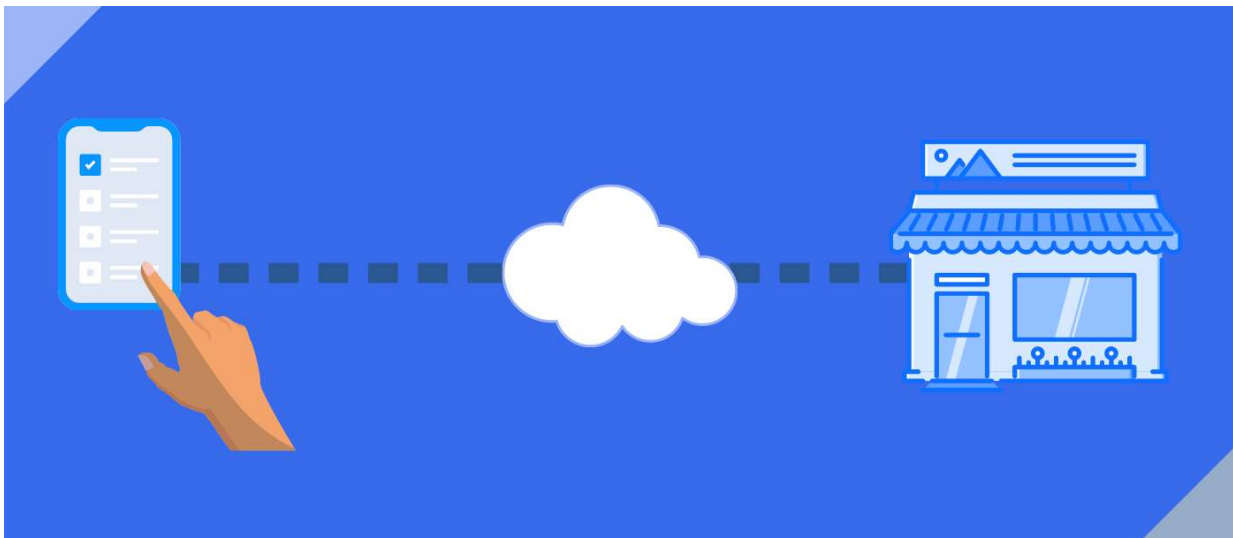
3. Inventory/Supplier Purchasing Apps

Inventory apps help restaurant owners achieve efficiency and productivity with their inventory management. It allows for easily trackable analytics and reports that can help you see what products are selling fast through multiple sales channels.

A supplier purchasing system minimizes costs and maximizes sales/profits. This makes it easier to manage sales across multiple channels, with everything right at your fingertips.

With an app, all your information is stored in one place and is readily accessible. Inventory management software provides more accuracy when it comes to logging and tracking.

Fewer errors equate to fewer resources spent fixing them, which means cutting down on costs. A digital solution would integrate your business by combining your users, employees, and tasks/notes.

Having your restaurant management, administration, sales, purchasing, and fulfillment channels in one place will make for more efficient communication and completing work. The automation of manual tasks allows for less time-consuming tasks.

4. Payroll Automation

With automated payroll, wage calculations are straightforward and quicker to complete. Manual payroll is far more time consuming considering it's a multi-step process, which includes writing out checks by hand and analyzing spreadsheets. A payroll app can perform all types of payments, from salary-based to hourly.

Timekeeping also becomes more accurate, whereas manual payroll calculates time clock data and hourly wages by hand. Plus, tax deduction calculations are simplified.

With technology, time clock data can be imported directly into the payroll software, which then calculates the total time worked. Because the calculations are done by the software and not by hand, there is less room for error.

Changes to the system can be done more efficiently, while manual changes usually involve employee paperwork, which can be lost, delayed, or require micromanaging. Automated payroll simplifies the process by allowing changes to be made directly in the system, where they're stored for easy access.
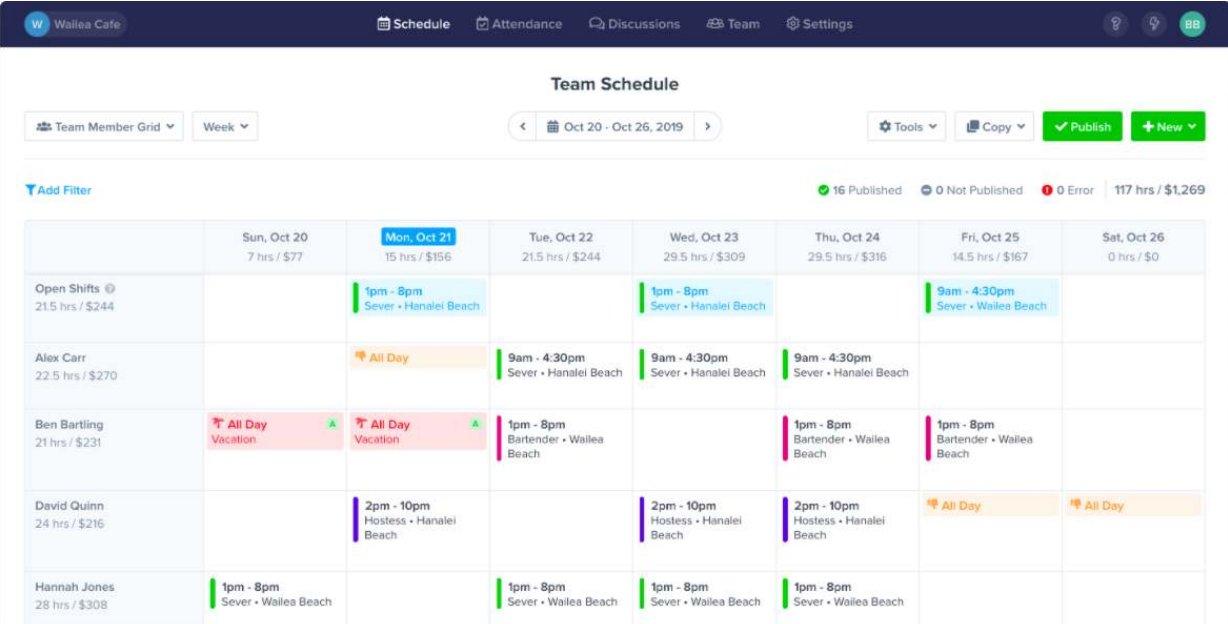
5. Employee Scheduling App/Automation

Using an employee scheduling app means that schedules are accessible 24/7, resulting in less confusion and fewer miscommunications.

With an app like ZoomShift, managers have less to worry about when it comes to mix-ups in scheduling and shifts. Employees can view their schedules and shifts from home, and receive notifications via the system directly.

That way, when a change is made to the schedule, employees will know instantly, without managers having to take the time to send manual communications.

Also, notifications mean that managers are not dependent on employees logging in to see updated schedules. There can be unlimited changes to the schedule without the risk of confusion.

Employee scheduling software platforms have the extra benefit of allowing you to generate as many new schedules as you like. Not only that, but you're able to re-use such work schedule templates, so operations can reduce time by recycling previous schedules.

An automated system provides a common contact platform and gives employees and managers an environment where everyone can communicate. This way, any confusion should be easy to trace back and solve. An automated system also allows employees to adjust and swap shifts easily.

This way, staff can negotiate who can fill a shift, and managers won't feel the pressure to solve it themselves. Not only does this take some burden off of the managers, but also contributes to employee satisfaction.

With the right technology, restaurant owners can find digital solutions to manage their time more efficiently. Focusing on at least one of the five categories discussed above is already a step in the right direction.

By utilizing the resources that technology offers, owner-operators can work towards a more productive and active workplace. Cutting downtime will result in reduced costs and overall, a more dynamic business.

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Restaurant Customer Service – 17 Tips To Impress Your Customers

New research shows that 87% of consumers read online reviews for local businesses. Restaurants, in particular, have the most-viewed reviews.

It's safe to say that your customer's experience is more important than ever. You can't afford to have an off night, hire the wrong staff, or skimp on the little details that enhance your restaurant's ambiance and experience.

Doing so could mean forgoing profits, losing a customer for life, or worse – creating a detractor.

A detractor is someone who's unhappy with your restaurant, and will actively write bad reviews and tell people to steer clear from your restaurant.

The opposite of a detractor is a promoter. A promoter is someone who loves your restaurant and tells everyone they know about it. They bring their friends to eat with them, they cater from your restaurant for their wedding, and they stay loyal through thick and thin.

If you want your restaurant to thrive, then you need promoters – lots of them.

Top Tips To Impress Your Customers

A happy customer is a loyal customer. Keeping a customer happy is no small feat, though. Here are 17 tips that every restaurant manager can share with their employees to create happier customers and boost restaurant customer service.

1. When you have an angry customer it is always important to listen first and foremost. Sometimes customers just need to vent. Make sure to let a customer finish speaking before responding.

2. Speak with a friendly tone no matter what the situation is. It can sometimes be hard to do this, especially when you know the customer is wrong, but this is one of the most important parts of having great restaurant customer service.

3. Deep breaths go a long way towards calming nerves in a stressful situation with a customer and can prevent anger.

4. When a customer tells you what they want, always repeat the information back to them. This insures accuracy and makes the customer feel like you are listening.

5. Try to never put an angry customer on hold. This can infuriate them further. If you must put them on hold make sure to apologize for having to do so and tell them how long they will be on hold for.

6. Always give your customers options. The more options, the happier the customer will be.

7. The University of Cardiff in Wales found that people who smiled felt happier. Since customers respond better to happy people, try smiling, even when you're down. Smiling can be the golden ticket to better restaurant customer service.

8. Warm up customers with a little small talk. Ask them how their day is going, point out that you like something about their outfit, complement them on their cute child, etc.

9. Got a Chatty Cathy on the line? The best tactic is to politely interrupt, then ask the customer a question about why they called. This will get them back on track.

11. Make sure that every customer is greeted as soon as they walk in.

12. Try to say 'yes' as much as possible.

13. Did something go wrong or take too long? Always apologize.

14. If your customer is mad, offering a free incentive is a good way to calm raw nerves.

15. Add something extra to the customer's bag or package, like a coupon, or thank you note, to make them feel you went the extra mile.

16. No matter if it is an email, letter or in-person dialog, always respond to customers promptly.

17. Talk to your customers through social media. They enjoy knowing your business isn't just some faceless corporation.

6 Best Practices For Great Restaurant Customer Service

1. Culture Is Everything, and it Takes Work

One week of training and a handbook isn't going to set your team up for long-term success. You have to put systems in place to ensure their success and enforce them at every turn. Without proper expectations, training, and guidelines, you might as well leave your patron's experience up to chance.

2. Invest in Technology

We're in the thick of the "have it your way" generation where people expect mobile apps, curbside delivery, contactless delivery, and text message wait line updates. Your customers want predictability and will happily pay for it, which is why a small investment in the right technology goes a long way.

3. Rehearse Problem Scenarios

No matter how hard you try, you'll always fall short of at least a few of your customers' expectations. Food will be late, overcooked, undercooked, or they'll have poor service. How your staff responds in moments like this can create a customer for life or a detractor for life. Make it a point to train all staff on how best to respond to each unique scenario.

4. Enhance the Waiting Experience

Customers hate waiting, so why not enhance the experience by providing a cozy place to relax and unwind while they wait. A comfortable waiting area might include a bar so they can get refreshments as they wait. Consider offering free food like popcorn, peanuts, or other inexpensive finger foods.

5. Actively Reward Your Team

When people go the extra mile, they should get recognition for it. Gift cards, free food, extra PTO, or even a shoutout in front of their peers go a long way. When people feel the incentive to enhance their customer's experience, great things happen.

6. Don't Skip the Table Touches

Having a manager or senior staff member walk the floor and ask questions is a wonderful way to enhance the customer experience. Especially, if they ask more direct questions like "was your steak cooked to the right temperature?" or "has your server been attentive?" Questions like that tend to elicit greater quality responses.

The 20 Best Restaurant Blogs to Follow

Opening, growing and marketing a restaurant requires a high level of risk, expertise and dedication. To increase a restaurateur's chance of succeeding, we have compiled a list of restaurant blogs that provide a wealth of valuable and relevant information and insights. Here are 20 of the best restaurant blogs at present:

1. Modern Restaurant Management

Modern Restaurant Management (MRM) is an online magazine covering all aspects of restaurant operations from marketing to design to technology. MRM features expert insights from industry thought leaders as well as news and research.

Must Read: What Now? COVID-19 Survival Guide for Restaurants

2. MarketMan

MarketMan helps restaurants keep costs under control and manage inventory efficiently by automating back of house operations. Our cloud-based platform plugs right into every major accounting and POS system and offers real-time inventory tracking, pricing, menus, supplier management, advanced reporting.

Must Read: How to Efficiently Manage Your Restaurant Kitchen Inventory Today

3. eZee

Founded in 2006, eZee is one of the very few hospitality technology providers in the world to develop and offer end-to-end hotel and restaurant solutions. Aiming to empower small to mid-sized independent hotels and hotel chains with simple and profitable businesses, eZee has a stronghold on R&D and is introducing innovations in its solutions jointly with its parent company, Yanolja — the travel tech unicorn of South Korea.

Must Read: No-cost Creative Restaurant Marketing Strategies for 2021

4. Restaurant Den

When the team at Restaurant Den isn't designing new websites or setting up online ordering systems for restaurants, they're helping restaurant owners by teaching them how to get the most out of their website, social media and online marketing channels through their blog. If you're interested in taking your restaurant's online presence to the next level, this blog will help you learn how to do just that.

Must Read: 50 Amazing Restaurant Website Design Examples

5. Foodable Network

Foodable is the leading premium video, podcast, and virtual event network, focusing on restaurant and hospitality professionals. With the most extensive video, podcast, and virtual event library in foodservice, the mission to educate and inform the industry is a crucial driver for the Foodable team. This mission is now more critical than ever as the restaurant industry begins its recovery, and premium content is rising to the top of the industry in consumption and engagement.

Must Watch: "Trickle Down Liquidation" & The Fed | Danielle DiMartino Booth

6. Squadle

Squadle is a technology company committed to delivering flexible, user-friendly applications that enable multi-unit operators, convenience stores, and retailers to simplify complex operations and streamline food safety.

By combining its proprietary digital checklists, patented sensor automation, and machine vision technology with its customer-first approach, Squadle delivers intuitive, out-of-the-box ready products. Squadle's customers operate tens of thousands of locations worldwide and include the largest and most respected brands in their industries.

Must Read: The Ultimate Guide to Digital Food Safety

7. 2nd Kitchen

The 2ndKitchen blog is all about the future of the restaurant industry and how to run day-to-day operations of your restaurant. What sets the 2ndKitchen blog apart is its focus on virtual restaurants, and how to grow online orders through virtual brands and having your food menu served in other businesses.

Must Read: An Ultimate Guide to Ghost Kitchens in 2021

8. ChowNow

The COVID-19 pandemic has made delivery a critical part of business operations, but it can be difficult to get delivery right. In this blog from ChowNow, they break down the 7 things you need to ensure delivery is successful at your restaurant.

Must Read:

7 Essentials for a Successful Restaurant Delivery Business

9. ZoomShift

Learn how to manage restaurants better and more efficiently by following the ZoomShift blog. While there is a clear focus on the restaurant industry, the blog is a great resource for any managers out there. From restaurant employee scheduling and restaurant marketing tips, to restaurant management tips and cost cutting ideas are just some of the topics that is covered on the blog. Another awesome resource they have worth checking out is the small business glossary. Unsure of some business terms and sayings? Then the small business glossary is there to help.

Must Read: Split Shifts: The Ultimate Guide for Restaurant Scheduling

10. BentoBox

BentoBox is a website, eCommerce and marketing platform for restaurants. Over 6,000 restaurants worldwide rely on BentoBox to drive high-margin revenue and connect with guests through their websites, including those of José Andrés's ThinkFoodGroup and Danny Meyer's Union Square Hospitality Group. BentoBox provides restaurants with powerful tools such as direct online ordering and the ability to sell gift cards, merchandise, catering, tickets and more directly through their website.

Must Read: How Restaurants Can Adapt Outdoor Dining as Cold Weather Looms

11. The Restaurant Manifesto

The Restaurant Manifesto is a great resource for people who love to dine out. Find tips on how to engage better with staff, humorous essays about restaurant life and commentary on the state of the industry. Industry insiders will give you the scoop on how to make the most of your dining experiences.

Must Read: Being a Paying Customer Isn't Good Enough Anymore

12. FastCasual

FastCasual has been the fast growing segment of the restaurant industry. FastCasual offers the convenience of self-service without the complete service of full dining, serving higher quality food than traditional quick service. FastCasual combines the best practices of quick service and casual dining combined.

Must Read: 2020 Fast Casual Top 100 Movers & Shakers

13. Perfect Daily Grind

Perfect Daily Grind is the world's leading voice for coffee. The publication is a must-read resource for anyone with an interest in the broader coffee sector, publishing content on everything from brewing and roasting to production and coffee trade. It provides real-life editorial content using insight from those who have direct experience at every stage of the supply chain.

Must Read: Everything You Need to Know to Brew Great Pour Over Coffee

14. GastroGays

GastroGays is a food and food-led travel blog by writers Russell Alford and Patrick Hanlon. Through a mix of engaging features, travel guides, unique recipes, round-ups and interviews the pair explore via their taste buds and share their food approach through popular dishes that are accessible and eye-catching. The pair also produce and present a food podcast called Chew The Fat, available wherever you usually stream your pods.

Must Read: Traditional Irish Batch Bread Loaf Recipe

15. The Restaurant Times

The Restaurant Times is a one-stop destination for everything related to the F&B industry. It is an online publication covering a wide array of topics that serves as the ultimate guide for solving all your restaurant's requirements.

Must Read: How To Start A Restaurant Business In India – A Step By Step Guide

16. BackBar

Backbar is a bar inventory software platform focused on streamlining beverage management and improving cash flow for small and independent restaurant operators. Backbar provides a free service as well as paid plans and is available as an app on any mobile device. Learn more at getbackbar.com.

Must Read: How to Calculate and Lower Liquor Costs is one of their most visited blog posts and features insights on how bar operators can manage their costs along with a video on liquor cost formulas.

17. Restaurant Technology Guys

With over 115,000 podcast downloads, the Restaurant Technology Guys have established themselves as a leader in the field of restaurant technology information. Drawing from over 75 years of combined restaurant technology experience, the podcast and blog provide a wealth of information to an audience of tech savvy restaurant entrepreneurs, CEOs, operators and managers.

Must Read: Top Five Solutions from Restaurant Technology Guys

18. Restaurant Rockstars

Restaurant Rockstars helps restaurants on a global level build their "Dream Team" staff then train them to Serve & Sell, to understand their critical finances to Maximize Profit and provide best practices through the weekly Restaurant Rockstars Podcast.

Must Read: The Showbiz Approach To Hospitality

19. Tenzo

Tenzo is an analytics and sales forecasting platform for restaurants, bars and cafes. It integrates with your POS system, labour planner, and inventory management platform to bring all your restaurant data together in one app and send actionable insights to the right person at the right time.

Must Read: Sales forecasting for restaurants: how Tenzo is shaping the future

20. FSR Magazine

FSR is the magazine for tablesetters, including chefs, owners, executives, and industry leaders.

Must Read: The FSR 50

2 Starting a Restaurant

1. **The Ultimate Checklist to Opening a New Restaurant**

2. **Restaurant Startup Cost: How Much Does It Cost To Start A Restaurant?**

3. **How to Write a Restaurant Business Plan**

4. **How to Write a Restaurant Mission Statement**

5. **How to Design A Restaurant Floor Plan: 5 Ideas For Your New Location**

6. **Restaurant Design Ideas: How to Improve the Customer Experience**

7. **Restaurant Licenses: 12 Permits You Need To Open a Restaurant**

8. **The Essential Guide To Restaurant Food Suppliers**

9. **Effective Restaurant Menu Design Ideas**

10. **Unique Restaurants Decoration Ideas**

11. **15 Impressive Restaurant Grand Opening Ideas**
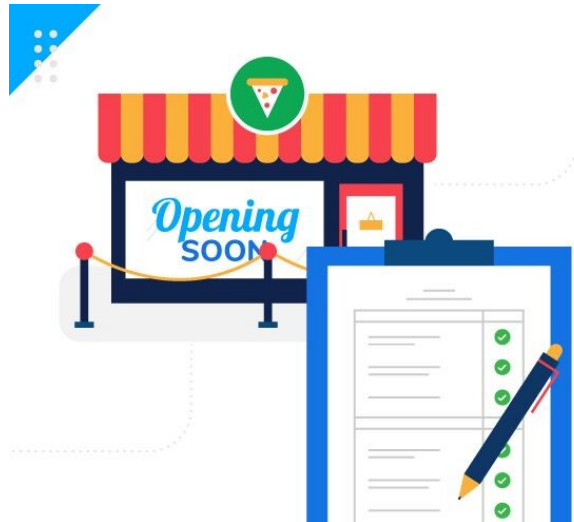
The Ultimate Checklist to Opening a New Restaurant

According to the National Restaurant Association, restaurant industry sales in the U.S. are set to hit $1.2 trillion by 2030. That's nearly the entire GDP of Switzerland and Argentina – combined.

The fuel for that growth starts and ends with budding entrepreneurs who open tens of thousands of restaurants every year.

But what does opening a restaurant actually look like?

First and foremost, you're going to need to secure the capital to open a restaurant. That could be your own savings, a loan, or taking on a partner. But then what?

Here's your ultimate checklist for opening a new restaurant.

Why Open a Restaurant?

Opening a restaurant is risky, but what about the good reasons for opening one?

Here's a short list:

- Being your own boss means you have greater control of your destiny and have unlimited growth opportunities.
- You get to choose your own team, which means you never have to work with people you don't enjoy spending time with.
- Opening a restaurant impacts the community. It gives people a place to socialize, make connections, and create memories.
- You get to make creative choices like what goes on your menu, restaurant decor, and how you enhance the customer experience.

Opening a restaurant can be extremely rewarding and a great way to pass your passion for food to others.

The Ultimate Checklist for Opening a New Restaurant

The checklist you follow when starting a restaurant relies on a variety of factors. The city, state, and country will likely have specific rules and regulations to follow. Local competition will dictate some of your choices as well. Even accessibility (or lack of) to fresh ingredients can play a role.

Leavening some of that aside, here are a few things to consider when opening a new restaurant:

1. Cultivate Your Vision

Before you do anything else, you'll want to get a grip on what makes your restaurant unique. Sure, you could probably get by opening a decent pizza joint or burger spot just like everyone else, but it won't be as fun as adding your own flare.

In practice, that means deciding on a theme. Will you serve Tex-Mex? Asian cuisine? Perhaps, vegan dishes? Picking a theme makes picking a name a great next step. Ideally, it's something original and easy to remember. With a name and a theme, it'll be easier to create a logo and signage.

Next, you'll want to create a mission and vision statement to determine what makes you stand apart from the competition. Finally, you'll want to iron out what employees you'll need, where you'll get food supplies, and what dishes you'll serve. The more detail in this step the better.

2. Make It Legal and Real

Now that the fun stuff is out of the way, you need to make sure that everything's legal. Without the proper restaurant licenses and permits, your restaurant won't last long. Some can take months to secure, so it's good to get a head start on them.

Some licenses and permits to look into include a liquor license, business license, health permit, and food handling licenses. You should also get ready to meet OSHA requirements and ensure all health, safety, and cleanliness standards are maintained.

Once you've got some momentum on the license and permit front, it's time to secure a location and, if necessary, work with an engineer, architect, or project manager that can help transform your new space. You'll need to order furniture like tables, chairs, barstools, umbrellas, etc. You'll also need cookware and appliances, and you can't forget to order signs, menus, and uniforms.

3. Lead With Automation

Running a restaurant requires constant attention to a lot of details – inventory management, food prep, and on, and on. Since the restaurant is new, you're not stuck to any archaic processes or manual work. In fact, you can automate a lot from the beginning.

One must-have item includes a point of sale (POS) system. A POS system will not only keep track of all transactions but can keep up with inventory tracking as well. No more keeping physical lists and doing constant audits. Your team can focus their efforts elsewhere.

Staffing a restaurant and keeping up with employee scheduling is another time-consuming process ripe for automation. Software like ZoomShift streamlines the scheduling process so you can easily track your employee's shifts and run payroll in a fraction of the time.

4. Start Interviewing Early

People are your greatest resource in any business but especially in a restaurant. Often you only get one chance at a first impression which makes hiring the right people paramount to a successful restaurant opening. Ideally, you'd start hiring a few months out but no later than 30 days, so you're fully staffed come opening day.

The main qualities to look for in a candidate are punctuality, reliability, and curiosity. If they show up on time, ask questions, and can be relied upon in most situations, you've found a winner.

Finding someone who's a self-starter and will finish their work and immediately find more to do is worth a premium price. Finding such people boils down to asking the right interview questions.

5. Plan a Memorable Grand Opening

Everyone's heard the statistics that say most restaurants fail in their first year. Instead of letting that dissuade you, focus on making sure you don't become part of the statistic. To do so, it's imperative that you get the word out about your new restaurant.

Host a grand opening that will help your restaurant explode onto the scene. Invite influential people and make it a big party. Give away prizes, free food, or free drinks. Make it an event people will remember for years to come and give them a reason to come back and bring their friends next time.

Opening a restaurant may seem overwhelming, but if you tackle things one at a time and bring enthusiasm to every task, you'll find it much more enjoyable.

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Restaurant Startup Cost: How Much Does It Cost To Start A Restaurant?

Opening your own restaurant is an exciting time.

If you've been thinking about starting a restaurant, it's probably been a dream of yours for a long while.

Starting a new restaurant is no small feat. Between getting all the paperwork in order, deciding how you'll design the place, and figuring out all the recipes for your dishes, there's a lot involved.

And that's before you even get to the money aspect – of course, starting up a restaurant costs quite a bit of money. For many, this is the biggest obstacle to realizing their culinary dreams.

But it doesn't have to be this way. By understanding how much you'll need to get your restaurant started, you can work out a plan to raise the money and get your business off the ground.

What Are Restaurant Startup Costs?

Restaurant start up costs are all of the expenses associated with getting your restaurant up and running. That includes purchases like tables and chairs, kitchen equipment, cash registers, and the property your restaurant will be housed in.

In total, the median cost to open a restaurant is $375,500, which comes out to $3,586 per seat or $113 per square foot. However, restaurants can be opened for much less or much more. The amount that you'll need to pay depends largely on the size of your ambitions – if you want to open a huge, high-end, luxury restaurant in the heart of Manhattan, you could easily end up with starting costs totaling millions of dollars.

Different Parts of the Restaurant That Require Funding

To get a better idea of what specifically you'll need to get funding for, here's a list of typical startup costs:

1. Property

You can't get a restaurant started if you don't have a property to start it in. Luckily, you typically won't need to buy a building outright. Instead, you can either lease the property or mortgage it.

However, in both cases, you'll still need to provide either a lease security or a downpayment, so you'll still need to be able to come up with some cash up front.

2. Equipment

Every restaurant needs equipment. Between stoves, ovens, sinks, blenders, cutting boards, and beyond, stocking a restaurant full of cooking tools can quickly add up to a hefty bill.

And don't forget about equipment for the rest of your restaurant – you'll still need a cash register!

3. Inventory

If you want to serve food, you'll need ingredients. While inventory costs will remain a constant throughout the life of your restaurant, you'll need to stock up before your grand opening as well.

4. Furnishings

Assuming you're opening a sit-down restaurant, you're going to need to invest in some furnishings. At the very least, you'll likely want some stools or other seating that guests can use as they wait for their order.

Alongside the furniture, you'll also need to buy forks, knives, plates, and other eating utensils.

5. Technology

These days, it's important to make sure that your restaurant is tech-enabled. Patrons have come to expect easy online ordering, online reservations, and more, so you'll want to invest in technology that can handle all that.

6. Decor

A restaurant experience isn't just about the food, it's about the ambience: the mood lighting, the pictures on the wall, and the jukebox in the corner of the room that adds a cool 1950's vibe. If you want your restaurant to be successful, you'll have to buy some decor to create an unforgettable experience for your guests.

7. Marketing

Who is going to come to your restaurant if you never get the word out? Spending some money on marketing is necessary if you want your grand opening to have a crowd that's more than just your friends and family.

8. Licenses and Permits

Even though it may not be glamorous, you're going to have to file quite a bit of paperwork to get your restaurant up and running. And with that paperwork comes a bunch of fees.

While this will likely be one of your lowest startup costs, it's still something you'll need to consider in your budget. Check your local government guidelines to find out exactly which restaurant licenses and permits you need.

9. Legal Fees

Whether it's for applying for permits or for getting your business structure set up, many restaurant owners will want to enlist the help of an experienced attorney to make sure they're starting their business off on the right foot.

10. Accessibility Features

It's important that your restaurant can be enjoyed by everyone. Make sure that your restaurant has necessary accessibility features, like ramps for wheelchairs.

How to Raise Funds for Restaurant Startup Costs

In most cases, a budding restaurateur won't have enough money to cover all these costs just lying around in cash somewhere. However, there are several ways that you can go about raising money to cover them.

Here are some popular ways that people raise the funds required to kick off their restaurant dreams.

1. Apply for a Loan

Getting a bank loan is one of the most common ways that budding entrepreneurs come up with the funds for their culinary endeavors. There are quite a few options out there, ranging from business loans from private banks to federally insured SBA loans.

Unfortunately, getting a loan that covers your startup costs can sometimes be rather difficult, especially if you have no prior business experience. However, it's a good option that's worth looking into.

2. Find an Investor

One of the best ways to get your restaurant started is to find an investor that will provide some or all of the money you need to turn your ideas into realities. If you do find one, you will likely have to offer something in return, like a certain amount of equity.

This is one of the most difficult ways to raise funds for the simple fact that there aren't *that* many investors around. That said, it's always worth giving it a shot.

3. Use Crowdfunding

Crowdfunding platforms, like Kickstarter, have changed business funding forever. To crowdfund your business, you'll need to get the word out and raise donations, typically by using an established platform.

Usually, you'll also have to provide some sort of incentive to donors, like a free t-shirt, a free meal, or something similar.

4. Borrow Money From Family and Friends

If you happen to know enough well-off people in your social circle, be they family, friends, or coworkers, you can always see if they'd be willing to contribute to your startup funds. Sometimes, this can cover the full bill, but in others, it will just cover a portion.

Restaurant Startup Costs Checklist

As you go about making your startup plans, make sure you keep the following costs in mind:

- Property
- Equipment
- Marketing
- Inventory
- Technology (reservation system, etc)
- Decorations
- Furnishings (tables, chairs, etc.)
- Lease security/downpayment
- Licenses/permits
- Legal fees
- Accessibility features

Key Takeaways

Starting a restaurant costs money, and getting the required funds is often one of the biggest obstacles to turning your culinary dreams into reality.

However, there are lots of ways that you can get the funds, so don't let the difficulty discourage you from pursuing your passion.

It may be a challenge, but it's not an impossibility, and if you really want to get into the restaurant business, there's almost always a way to make it happen.

How to Write a Restaurant Business Plan
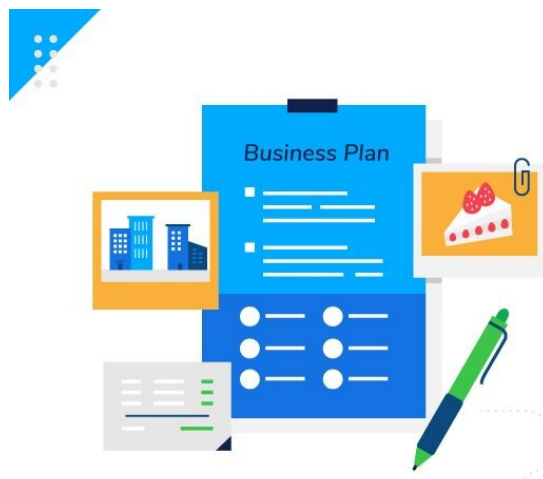
Opening a restaurant is a dream for many culinary enthusiasts. But there's a world of difference between daydreaming about being a chef and actually taking the practical steps required to get your restaurant business up and running.

If you want to start getting serious about your ambitions, the first thing you'll need to do is put together a restaurant business plan. This will outline how you plan to operate your business and ultimately turn a profit through your efforts.

Additionally, having a business plan is a key part of securing investors, which are often needed to drum up financing for startup costs. Your business plan will help investors decide whether your new venture is something worth putting their money into.

Here, we're going to cover the steps you need to take to write up a restaurant business plan, as well as what you need to include.

1. Branded Cover

The first part of your business plan is your branded cover page. In some ways, this is both the easiest and hardest piece to get right.

On the one hand, the branded cover is completely formulaic: you need only include basic information like your logo, your business name, the title of the document, and your address.

However, you also want to ensure that within these strict boundaries, you're able to make your business stand out with an appealing logo and catchy name. Branding is a big part of running a business, so you'll want to make sure you have a clear direction for your brand, and that it's clearly visible from the cover page.

2. Executive Summary

As the name implies, the executive summary serves as an overview of everything that will be covered in the rest of the business plan.

The goal of your executive summary should be to get the reader to want to look further through the report. If the summary of your plan doesn't make sense from a business perspective or isn't intriguing for whatever reason, your reader will have no desire to dig further into the details.

Your executive summary should include overviews of:

- Your mission statement
- The general idea for your business
- The market opportunity you're looking at
- How you plan to take advantage of that opportunity
- Your business model
- The target market
- Expected costs
- Expected ROI

Other elements can also be covered in the executive summary, but these are particularly important.

3. Description of Your Business

The business description section of your plan is a place to let your reader get to know you. It should start off by introducing the name of your business and continue to provide vital information about your restaurant, like its location and the general restaurant concept.

It's also a good idea to include information about the people who will be running the restaurant. For example, who will the main chef be? What makes them qualified to be the head chef of a restaurant?

Anyone you have on board at the time of your business plan should be accounted for. Investors will want to see that you have a team of experienced people who understand how to make a restaurant profitable.

3. Sample Menu

Restaurants are all about food, so it wouldn't make sense to draft up a business plan without making it clear what exactly your products will be. Namely, you need to provide a sample menu to your potential investors so that they can get a better idea of what you'll be selling.

Keep in mind that your sample menu is a *sample* – you're not setting anything in stone, and it's normal to adjust the items on your menu over time. The point of this part of your plan is just to give investors an idea of what kinds of food you'll be serving, and ideally, a few of the mainstays you're sure will end up on the final menu.

4. Market Analysis

Businesses can only be as successful as the markets they enter into. Even some of the greatest ideas of all time have fallen flat because the market just wasn't ready to accept them.

Your market analysis should show investors that your market *is* ready to believe in your business, or better yet, the market *needs* your business. Essentially, you need to convince investors that you will be able to make a profit with your business.

The market analysis will typically comprise three parts: industry, competitor, and marketing analysis.

The industry analysis will explain what customer demographics you want to target. The competitor analysis should cover what competition already exists, and the marketing analysis should describe the marketing strategies you'll use to bring your business to the public.

Marketing is a big part of this. For instance, think about the different channels you will be using like email marketing for your restaurant, SEO, local advertising, social media, etc. Possibly listing on online review sites or including a loyalty marketing program. Generate foot traffic, deliveries and reservations on less busy days.

5. Business Operations Summary

The business operations summary in your restaurant's business plan should cover everything that you'll need to implement to make your establishment function. This can include processes, like cooking and ingredient sourcing, as well as equipment, like dishwashers and ovens.

Employees and other labor should be included as well.
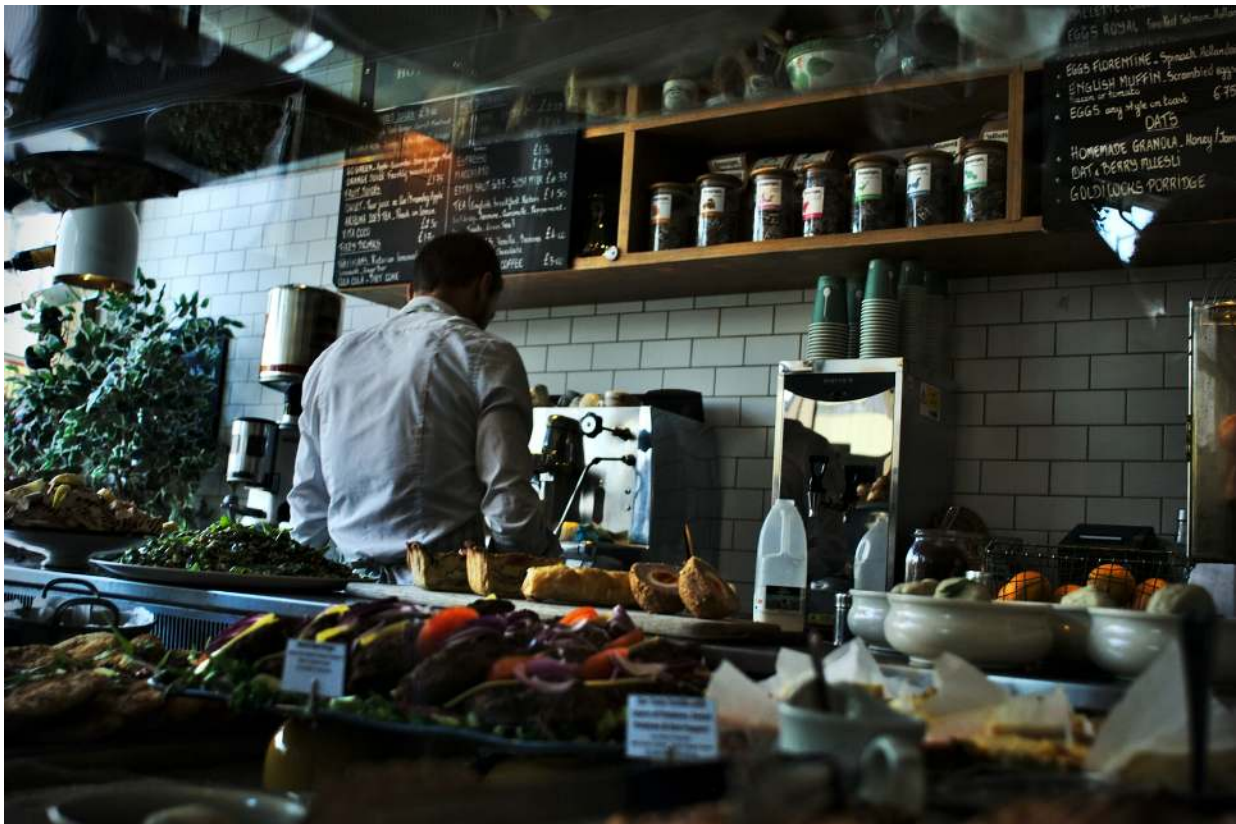
6. Management and Ownership

This section should give a detailed look into the experience of the proposed management and ownership. While this should be covered to some extent in the business description section, you can use this part to go further in depth and really sell your experience to your investors.

7. Financial Analysis

The financial analysis section of your business plan is the place where you need to crunch your numbers. In many ways, this is the most important section of the whole thing: it's going to show investors that you've done your due diligence and truly understand how to make things work from a financial perspective, not just a culinary one.

Restaurant financial analyses may include figures like how many guests you plan to seat, the cost of food and equipment, how much you expect an average check to come to, and your projected revenue for your first year.

The Bottom Line

Writing out a clear and concise business plan is essential to getting your restaurant business off the ground. Not only does it set up a clear map you can follow to get things started, but it serves as a brochure for potential investors to evaluate.

If you use this guide as a starting point, you will be able to flesh out the most important sections of your business plan. From there, you'll just need to fill in the details.

How to Write a Restaurant Mission Statement

Most iconic brands these days have a mission statement, and the restaurant industry is no exception.

You'll often see them in one sentence fragments, like Chipotle with their goal of providing "food with integrity." These days, restaurants are expanding on these quips and showcasing a mission statement alongside their values.

Chipotle has an entire webpage dedicated to them.

This begs several questions:

- What exactly is a mission statement?
- Are they feel-good statements? Or do they actually mean something?
- And where does one begin when it comes to writing one?

Let's explore these questions and more together:

What Is a Restaurant Mission Statement?

The Oxford definition of a mission statement is a "formal summary of the aims and values of a company, organization, or individual."

Put plainly, a mission statement gives your restaurant a purpose.

It showcases not what you do but why you do it. In fact, mission statements originated in the non-profit sector of the world as a means of guiding their actions. For-profits adopted the approach to foster a brand image and give their employees and fans a sense of identity and greater purpose.

A lot of people misunderstand the difference between mission and vision statements and end up using them interchangeably by mistake. While mission statements describe why you do what you do, a vision statement describes the restaurant's goals.

Restaurants should ideally have both a mission and vision statement because they will help guide all business decisions.

Steps To Writing a Restaurant Mission Statement

Before sitting down to write your mission statement, it's important to point out that there's technically no right or wrong way to do it. It's essentially a sentence or paragraph that gives insiders and outsiders a greater understanding of why you exist and how you make a difference in the world.

That being said, here are some tips to get your gears turning:

Step 1: What do we do?

Don't get too deep or fancy here. Keeping it basic frees you from industry jargon or unnecessary fluff.

Step 2: Who do we serve?

Whatever you do, don't say "everyone." Your target audience should be more specific than that.

Think about your restaurant patrons. Who are they? Why do they eat at your restaurant over others? What's unique about them or unifies them?

Step 3: How do we serve them?

Here's where it begins getting deeper. You know what you do and who you serve, but *how* you do it is what separates you from other restaurants. If you sell pizza, your list of competitors is endless. Yet, it's likely that you have your own spin on things, which is why people choose you over the competition.

Think about the experience you provide, the way you make people feel, and how someone would rationalize picking you over the other options.

Step 4: What are our goals?

Are you purely motivated by profit, or are there greater goals you hope to achieve? Perhaps you want to provide free meals to 10,000 people a year and can only do that by expanding your restaurant. Or maybe you want to be the first all-organic restaurant in your town. No matter the reason, write it down and don't hold back.

Step 5: What do we believe in?

Now, it's time to add a human touch to the restaurant and share your passion. Start by jotting down some values that you and your team find important. Think about what the competition does that you don't agree with and explain why you're different.

Restaurant Mission Statement Examples

By now, you should have the ammunition needed for a mission statement that resonates with your team and your customers.

To help spark your creative juices, here are some notable examples that may inspire you:

The globally iconic McDonalds has the highest sales in America, and they have a fitting mission statement:

"Our mission is to make delicious feel-good moments easy for everyone. This is how we uniquely feed and foster communities. We serve delicious food, people feel good about eating, with convenient locations and hours and affordable prices, and by working hard to offer the speed, choice, and personalization our customers expect. At our best, we don't just serve food, we serve moments of feel-good, all with the lighthearted, unpretentious, welcoming, dependable personality consumers know and love."

Originally named the St. Louis Bread Company, Panera Bread is the healthy fast food option in America with its soups, salads, and quinoa bowls.

"We believe that good food brings out the best in all of us —food that not only tastes good, but leaves you feeling good too. At Panera, we invite you to experience freshly prepared, wholesome meals in a warm and welcoming environment, served by people who care. To us, this is what good eating is all about and why we love what we do. Our approach to good food is guided by our values: We believe in 'food as it should be;' we are transparent; we deliver freshness; and we serve food that we feel good about serving our own families."

The Tex Mex titan **Chili's** is a staple of American cuisine and understandably rakes in impressive sales in the casual dining space.

"Our mission is to deliver Fresh Tex and Fresh Mex flavors like no place else. Our passion is making people feel special. We want you to leave Chili's feeling better than when you came in. We started chillin' and grillin' in 1975… we've had some practice.

Quality Dining is an organization built on a family-centered foundation, so it shouldn't surprise you to learn our Chiliheads (team members) are like family and we'll treat you that way too. You're experience matters to us. And the good time you'll have at our Chili's restaurants? That's on the house."

The hardest part of writing a mission statement for your restaurant is sitting down to write. If you've followed along until now, then you're halfway there. Don't feel like you have to start from scratch.
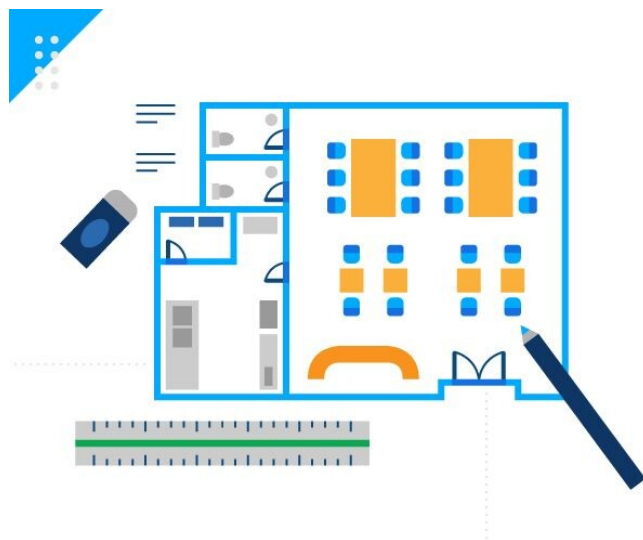
How to Design A Restaurant Floor Plan

Whenever you start a new project, whether it's a business, a product design, a book, or something entirely different, you almost always need a plan.

A restaurant is no different. When you open up a restaurant, you need to have several plans in place. The most obvious is your business plan, which details how you'll make money, what type of food you'll serve, etc.

But you also need a floor plan: a plan that lays out your restaurant's layout.

A restaurant floor plan is essential and cannot be overlooked. In this guide, we'll teach you a little about what a restaurant floor plan is and provide you with five examples you can use to get inspired.

What Is a Restaurant Floor Plan?

A restaurant floor plan is a document that depicts the layout of a restaurant. If you've ever seen a floor plan for a house, you have the basic idea already.

You can think of a restaurant floor plan kind of like the blueprints for your restaurant. However, these aren't blueprints that tell you how to build the structure of your establishment.

Rather, it's simply a plan that tells you where everything will go, and where all the important features of your restaurant are.

A restaurant floor plan should include information about where tables and chairs are located, where the kitchen is, where the cash register is, etc. But it should also note the locations of important utilities, like electrical outlets, sinks, etc. Additionally, it should depict the locations of windows, doors, and other important features of your restaurant.

Why Do Restaurants Need a Floor Plan?

Restaurants need a floor plan so that everyone on board can get an overview of how the restaurant works and is laid out. However, it's particularly important for owners and management as it can instruct them on how to improve efficiency and how to make renovations. It's also a practically essential document to have on hand when repairs are needed.

Overall, restaurant floor plans help staff get oriented with the layout of the restaurant, which helps them better serve customers. It also can bring awareness to specific issues, like a lack of electrical outlets on one side of the building, which may be difficult to notice without looking at a floor plan.

What Should a Restaurant Floor Plan Include?

Although every restaurant is going to be different, there are a few items that should be included on every restaurant's floor plan:

- Kitchen
- Kitchen elements
- Tables and chairs
- Entrance
- Waiting area
- Bar area

- Restrooms
- Outdoor seating (especially important during covid)
- Payment/POS system placement
- Windows
- Doors
- Emergency exits
- Staff area/backroom

How to Create a Restaurant Floor Plan

You can create a restaurant floor plan on your own, but they are often drawn up by professionals. One of the main reasons for this is that you'll typically need to use professional software to make your plan, which can be difficult to use if you don't have some degree of architectural expertise. It's possible to draw the floor plan by hand, but it's also likely to be less accurate.

Some of the most popular software offerings for restaurant floor plan design are SmartDraw, ConceptDraw, and CadPro. The first two products include a bunch of features that are unrelated to architectural design, such as a flowchart maker, whereas CadPro offers deeper CAD functionality, including mechanical design.

When making your floor plan, it's important that you make a plan for *all* the areas of your restaurant. That means that you can't just create a plan for the dining room and forget about the kitchen, restrooms, staff area, outdoor seating area, etc. Also be sure to include entrances and exits — especially emergency exits!

Restaurant Floor Plan Best Practices

When you draft up your floor plan, it's usually a good idea to keep a few general guidelines in mind.

Many restaurateurs suggest leaving a 40/60 split between the kitchen and the dining area. As you design the restaurant, make sure that you keep in mind how delivery drivers will approach the kitchen, if you plan on offering delivery — you don't want drivers to be too disruptive to your other guests.

Additionally, you'll want to make sure that the floor plan won't hinder staff interactions. For example, servers should be able to easily see all the tables that they're waiting on, chefs should be able to see servers arriving, and bussers should have sufficient room to service tables.

5 Restaurant Floor Plan Examples

Let's take a break from the theoretical discussion and look at some concrete examples.

Example 1
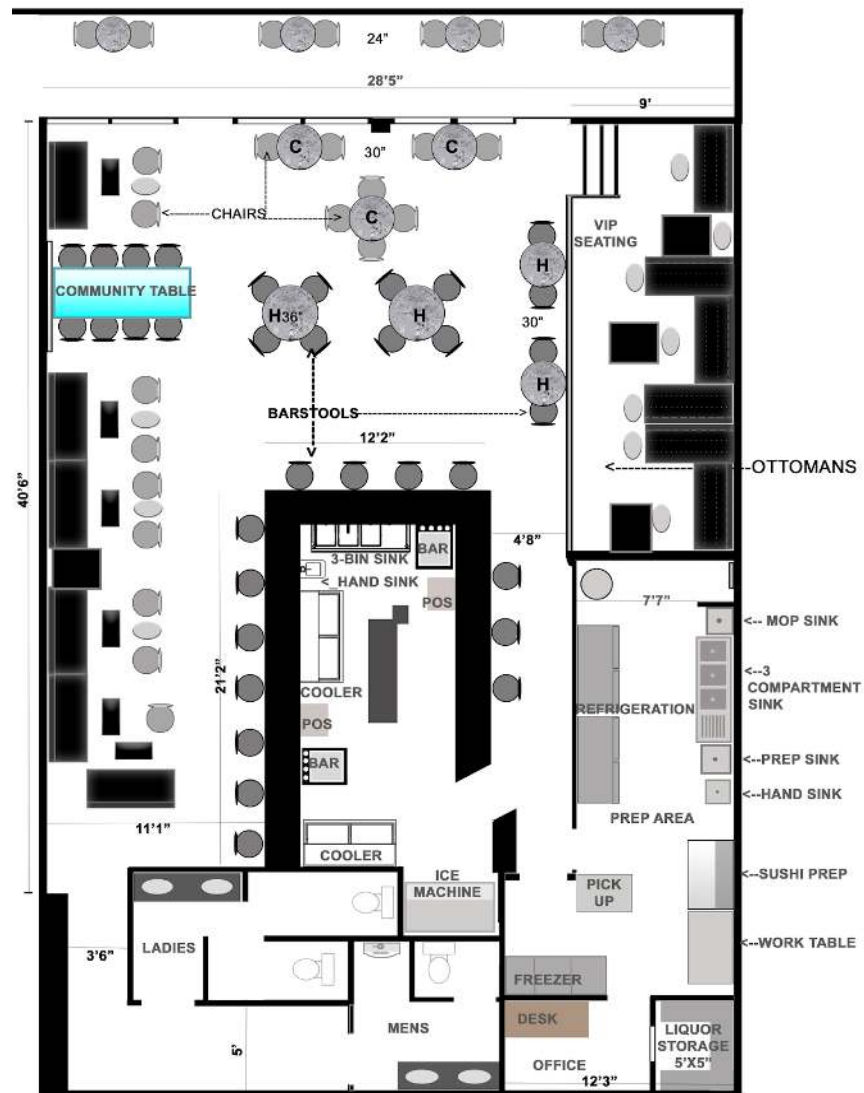
This floor plan does a good job of keeping all parts of the restaurant easily accessible to all staff members. Regular seating is close to the bar and restrooms, while VIP has its own lounge area separate from everyone else. The kitchen and prep area is near to the bar and servers have easy access to it.

Bathrooms are also conveniently located, and there is room for an office as well.

Example 2

PLAN B
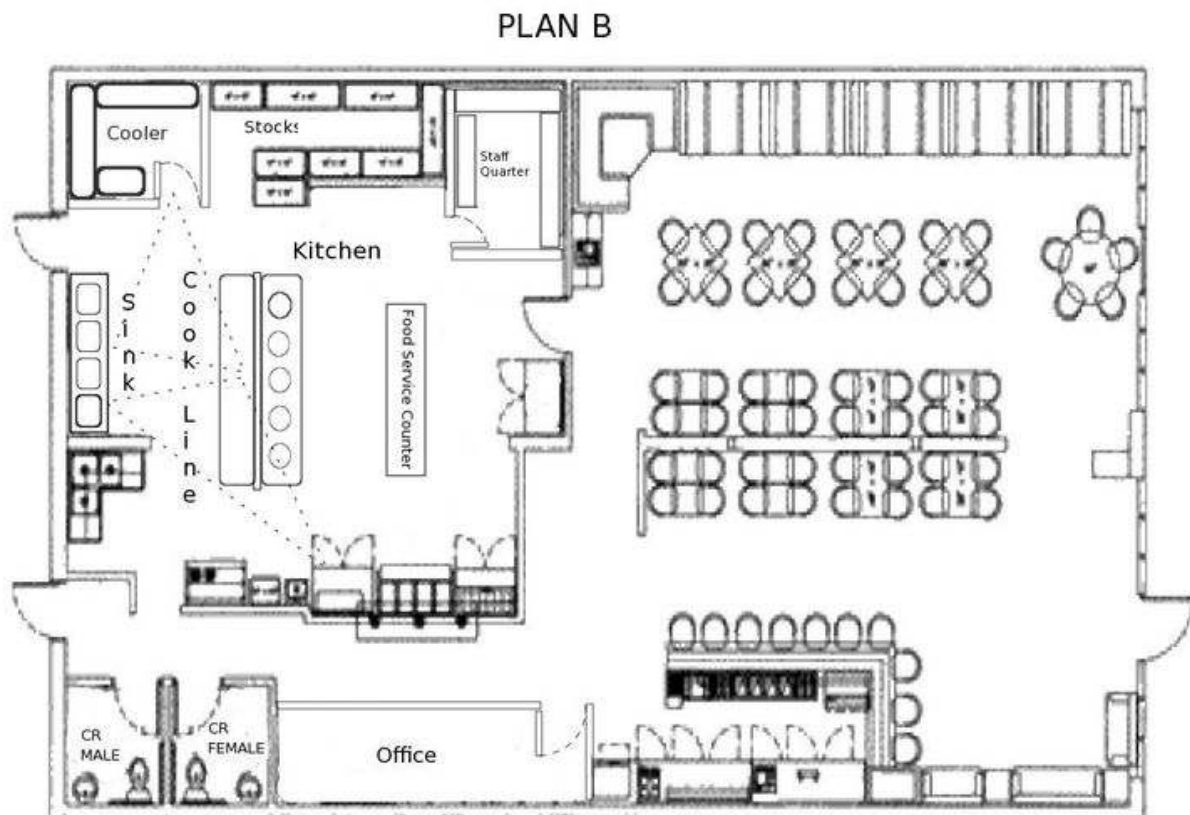
Source
This floor plan is exemplary because it provides a well-laid-out back area with convenient access between the kitchen, office, and staff areas. That means that cooks can easily check in with management, look at their schedules, or take a lunch break without entering the dining room and disturbing the guests.

One issue with this plan, however, is that it does not provide much social distancing, which can be problematic for Covid. The tables are all placed quite close together.

Example 3

Source

This floor plan is especially well-suited for 2020 and 2021, when social distancing is a major concern for restaurants. Not only is the restaurant spacious, but it has plenty of outdoor seating, which is great during Covid.

The kitchen divides the dining room in half, which can make for a few issues with servers, and there is only one bathroom. Still, it's a good design that works well for the current times.
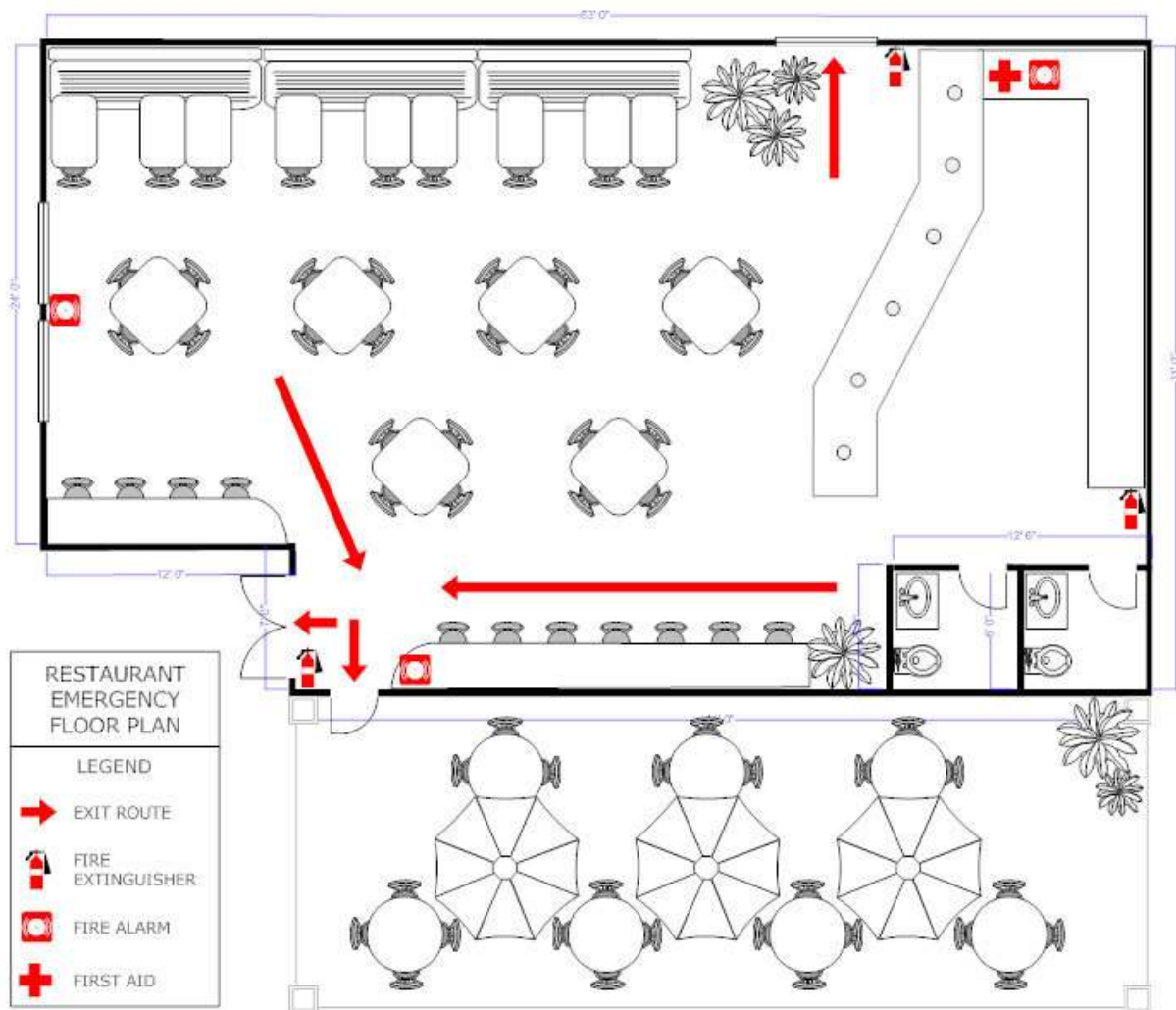
Example 4

This is another restaurant that is well-prepared to make it through Covid thanks to its plentiful outdoor dining seating.

Inside, there is very easy access from the kitchen to diners, which should make life easier for servers.

Example 5

This plan is specifically designed to show paths of egress for an emergency situation. While not all floor plans need to depict this, it can be a good idea to have at least one floor plan that you can use to see whether your guests will be able to leave quickly and easily in an emergency situation.

A restaurant floor plan should depict the layout of your restaurant along with any important features and equipment contained within it. Whether you design your floor plan yourself or hire a professional, a restaurant floor plan is essential for any restaurant.
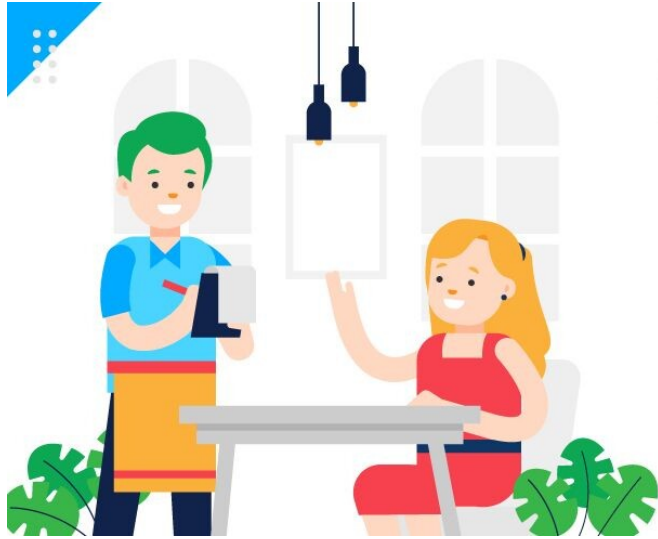
Restaurant Design Ideas: How to Improve the Customer Experience

When thinking about opening up a restaurant, it's easy to become hyper focused on the food. But while the meals may be the main selling point, there's more to your restaurant business than nice flavors.

Indeed, success in the dining business requires good taste – and that includes your taste in design, too.

At the end of the day, restaurant-goers are paying for an experience and great customer service, and that includes both food, ambience, and more practical things, like convenience. People go to restaurants because they want a fun place to make new memories with loved ones. Or, they want to be in and out as quickly as possible so they can relax with their meal after work.

Whatever the specifics may be, it's important that your restaurant creates the best experience possible for your patrons.

Here are a few tips on how you can make your restaurant the best it can be.

7 Restaurant Design Ideas

1. Spacious Dining Rooms

After a year and a half of social distancing thanks to Covid-19, it's likely that social norms will change to some degree forever. Currently, people are much more apprehensive about being close to others than they were before, and it's unclear when or if that feeling will go away.

To account for this, it's a good idea to make sure you make your dining room as spacious as possible. Use up as much space as you can to make sure that tables are sufficiently separated. If need be, consider changing the layout of the restaurant so that there is more room for distancing.

2. Rooftop Dining

Rooftop dining is a great way to both add some flair to your restaurant and keep your patrons socially distanced at the same time. Allowing customers to dine on the roof is especially welcome in cities, where the rooftop can provide beautiful cityscapes and views.

Plus, since it's outside, it provides extra ventilation and reduces the risk of Covid transmission even further. Of course, this solution is impossible to implement for many restaurants as the buildings' structures simply don't permit it. But if you have the option, it's definitely worth pursuing.

3. Dining Pods

Dining pods are a unique innovation that was born of Covid. Dining pods are small, outdoor enclosures with enough room for a table and chairs that allow diners to separate themselves from other patrons.

Essentially, dining pods bring the indoors, outdoors.

Although they don't provide much Covid protection for the people inside the pod, they provide a good amount of separation from other diners beyond the table.

Dining pods are particularly useful for winter and inclement weather. It's easy to add some space heaters to warm them up during the cold weather, and pods also provide a way for diners to eat outside during the rain. This allows for a dining experience that's similar safety-wise to outdoor dining but at all times of the year.

4. Walkup Pickup Windows

Pickup and takeout has become more popular than ever thanks to social distancing. Now that dining inside is considered a risky behavior, many people want to be in-and-out as quickly as possible.

To facilitate this, walkup pickup windows can be a great addition to your restaurant. These are windows that open up to the outside and through which food can be handed to customers, similar to a food truck.

Walkup pickup windows make it so that customers don't even have to step foot inside of your restaurant, which can not only make them feel safer, but it may attract new customers who wouldn't make a pickup order otherwise.

5. Interior Textures That Are Easy to Sanitize

Sanitation has become a major part of business and culture since 2020, so it's important to give your customers the feeling that your restaurant is impeccably clean.

Ever notice how medical facilities often use flat, smooth, textureless furniture? There's a reason for that. Flat surfaces are easier to disinfect as there aren't as many little grooves and crevices that germs can get stuck in.

Of course, you don't need to design your restaurant like a hospital, but it can be a good idea to opt for some smoother textures that are easier to disinfect.

6. Self-Ordering Kiosks

Self-ordering kiosks have been a trend since before Covid but have gotten a boost because they allow for less interaction with staff.

However, self-ordering kiosks can be a great inclusion not only because of COVID, but because many people simply don't want to have any interactions with waitstaff for any number of reasons ranging from social anxiety to being in a hurry.

Plus, self-ordering kiosks can make your restaurant more efficient and potentially lower the amount of staff you need to hire.

7. Express Kitchens

Express kitchens are kitchens that are visible from within the dining room – think of burger joints that let you see what the cooks are doing, or even hibachi grills.

These can be a great way to make pickup easier as well as to provide diners with something to look at while they eat – it's essentially a mini-cooking show for your patrons. Plus, there's something satisfying about being able to see your food being cooked as you wait for it.

Key Takeaways

Most of this year's restaurant design trends are related to Covid in one way or another. But many of them will likely be in demand even after the pandemic has come and gone.

Self-ordering kiosks, express kitchens, walkup pickup windows, and rooftop dining are unlikely to go out of style any time soon, and can add a bit of flair to your restaurant.

Overall, the best way to design your restaurant is to put yourself in your patrons shoes. Ask yourself what you'd like to have in a restaurant, and go from there.
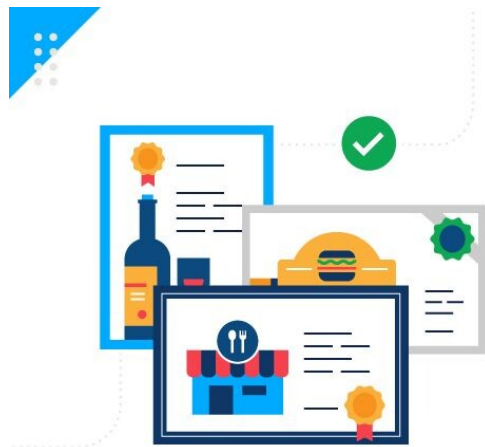
Restaurant Licenses: 12 Permits You Need To Open a Restaurant

For many, opening a restaurant is a dream come true. Between the visions of happy customers enjoying a scrumptious feast, satisfied customers making lasting memories with their families, and mouthwatering scents wafting through the air, it can be quite disappointing when the daydreams are interrupted by...paperwork and obtaining the right restaurant licenses.

For all the excitement and fulfillment that becoming a restaurateur can bring you, it also brings with it the joys of bureaucracy and pencil pushing.

If you want to open your own restaurant, there's no way around it: you're going to need to get a bunch of licenses and permits.

Making sense of all the documentation you need to get your restaurant up and running can be a bit overwhelming, so we've put together this guide to help you figure out what restaurant licenses you'll need to get started with.

Licenses and Permits You Need to Open a Restaurant

1. Business License

All United States businesses need to obtain a business license if they want to legally operate within the country.

However, business licenses are distributed state by state, not by the federal government. As a result, regulations and requirements vary by jurisdiction.

To get a business license, you'll need to look up your state's requirements. Typically, there is a small processing fee.

2. Employer Identification Number (EIN)

An employer identification number (EIN) is essentially a social security number for businesses. All US businesses are required to have one so that they can comply with tax law.

The EIN is conferred by the IRS, and it operates on the federal level. To get your EIN, you can apply through the IRS website.

3. Certificate of Occupancy (CO)

A certificate of occupancy (CO) is a legal document that verifies that a structure meets all local building codes and is fit for use and occupancy. Unlike the other two permits we've covered so far, this one operates neither on the state nor federal level, but at the local level.

Getting a certificate of occupancy requires a building inspection. You'll need to apply to your local government for this permit.

4. Food Service License

A food service license allows you to serve food made on-site. This license is granted on a state level, so the exact name may vary depending on your jurisdiction.

Receiving this license requires filling out some paperwork with your state and passing a health inspection. There is also usually a fee associated with the application.

5. Sign Permit

Depending on your local laws, you may also need a sign permit. This permit can be required for any type of sign, even a permanent one that simply states your restaurant's name. This permit is issued on the local level, so you'll need to consult your local government to see whether a sign permit is necessary for your restaurant.

6. Music License

This isn't technically one singular license, but if you want to play any copyrighted music in your restaurant, you'll need to ensure that you are paying the proper licensing fees. Otherwise, you will be violating copyright law.

The two most popular ways to do this are to pay PROs, like ASCAP and BMI, directly or two signup for a monthly subscription service that allocates the fees for you.

7. Seller's/Resale Permit

A resale permit helps you avoid being double taxed on items that you plan to sell and collect tax on. For example, you can use a resale permit to buy food inventory tax-free since you are planning to collect tax on it when you sell it as a meal.

This permit is also often referred to as a resale permit.

To apply for a resale permit, contact your local government.

8. Building Health Permit

A building health permit is a document that states that your building complies with all applicable sanitation and health laws. In many cases, this is only needed when the building is a new construction.

Whether you need this permit will depend on what state and city you are in, so check your local laws and regulations.

9. Employee Health/Food Handler's Permit

Employee health permits are issued on a per-employee basis, not on a per-restaurant basis. That means that you'll need a separate permit for every employee you hire. It is sometimes referred to as a food handler's permit.

Once each employee passes a state-approved restaurant food safety course, they can receive this permit. There is typically a small processing charge.

10. Liquor License

If you want to sell alcoholic beverages at your restaurant, you will need to obtain a liquor license. This license is administered at the state level, and there are typically several different kinds you can choose from depending on various features of your business (whether you're a bar or restaurant, if you plan to allow BYOB, etc.)

To get a liquor license, contact your state government to determine what specific license you'll need.

11. Valet Parking Permit

A valet parking permit is required in some cities if you want your restaurant to include valet service. For many restaurants, this won't be necessary, but it can be a nice touch for higher-end establishments.

To apply for a valet parking permit, look into your local government's regulations.

12. Dumpster Placement Permit

A dumpster permit is typically required only if you want to place a dumpster on the side of a road or on a piece of public property. If you want to place a dumpster in your parking lot or behind your restaurant, a permit is usually not necessary. However, you should always check with your local government to make sure.

The Bottom Line

As exciting as opening a restaurant can be, not every step of the process is a thrill ride. Make sure you take the time to carefully apply for all the appropriate restaurant licenses.

Look through all the legal requirements for opening a business in your area, so that you don't end up on the wrong side of the law.

The Essential Guide To Restaurant Food Suppliers

In the past, when you went to a restaurant, there was pretty much only one thing most people cared about: the food that made its way onto their plates.

But in recent years, there's another element that's entered the picture: the ingredients. Specifically, where the restaurant sourced them from.

With the farm-to-table movement in full swing, restaurant-goers are more interested than ever in what goes on behind the scenes, and that means that as a restaurant owner, you need to have a deep understanding of restaurant food suppliers so that you can make the best decisions for your business.

In this article, we're going to cover the basics of restaurant food suppliers so that you can get an idea of how they work and how to go about finding one for your restaurant.

How Restaurant Food Suppliers Work

A restaurant food supplier can be anything from a small, family-run farm to a major enterprise that serves thousands of restaurants across the country.

Because of this huge variety of suppliers, no two suppliers work the same. For example, one restaurant may source its vegetables from the local farmers market, in which case they would make purchases similar to the way they'd make purchases at a grocery store.

A restaurant that's sourcing its food from an enterprise supplier, on the other hand, may have orders delivered on a regular basis.

In many cases, a restaurant will have more than one supplier. For example, they may get vegetables from the farmer's market and bread from a local baker.

For the most part, however, restaurant food suppliers offer wholesale prices, so restaurants can keep their prime costs low and make a profit.

Types of Restaurant Food Suppliers

Now that we have a basic idea of how restaurant food suppliers work, let's take a look at some of the different options available.

1. Large National Wholesalers and Distributors (Full-Line Suppliers)

This category of food supplier provides bulk deliveries to restaurants on a regular schedule and can provide everything from produce to paper and pantry products.

In the United States, the most popular ones are referred to as the "Big Three", meaning Performance Foodservice, Sysco and US Foods.

The benefit of working with a full-line supplier is that you have more consistency, but it's also easier to get overlooked if you're a smaller restaurant.

 Plus, there often aren't that many specialty products.

2. Local Suppliers and Farmers

For produce and perishables, many restaurants prefer to use local producers, like farmers. In today's market, advertising that you use local suppliers can be a big boon to business as it shows that you support the local economy and care about where your ingredients come from.

Local suppliers and farmers can provide deliveries with short notice. Since they are smaller operations, it's often easier to have a more personal relationship with them.

3. Specialty Suppliers

Whether it's specially produced pastries or rare Italian truffles you're after, there are some items that you simply won't be able to find with a larger supplier – or perhaps even on the same continent!

Speciality suppliers can provide you with artisanal items that aren't covered by the other suppliers' product lines.

Your speciality supplier could end up being right down the road from you or across the ocean.

How to Find Your Ideal Supplier(s)

When you run a restaurant, you're likely going to need more than one supplier. Here are some ways that you can find the right ones for your business.

1. Decide What You're Looking For

The first step is to make sure you have clear expectations. It will be impossible to evaluate suppliers if you have no idea what you want in the first place.

You can start by making a list of all the things you value most in a supplier. For example, maybe you want a local supplier that is able to do quick deliveries.

2. Scope Out Delivery Times and Schedules

Supplying ingredients doesn't mean much if your supplier can't get them to you in time.

Before you decide on a supplier, make sure you understand what their delivery schedules and procedures are so that you can see whether it will fit your needs.

3. Check Certifications

In many cases, suppliers may need licenses or certifications to operate legally.

Make sure to check that any supplier you're considering has the proper licensing requirements before moving forward with it.

4. Look Into Its Reputation

Reviews and references are vital in any business transaction. Before settling on a supplier, make sure you thoroughly look through its reviews.

You can also ask the supplier for references that you can contact. Plus, if you know anyone else in the restaurant business, you can ask them if they have any experience with the supplier you're considering.

5. Try Out Their Products For Yourself

The final test is the taste test. If you're not personally happy with the supplier's products, the relationship won't work out.

Keep in mind that food is an art, so sometimes a supplier can have great products, but they're simply not a great fit for the type of food you want to make. In the end, you'll have to trust yourself and your instincts.

## How to Maintain a Positive Relationship With Your Vendors

Working with a supplier is something of a two way street: your vendors should make their best efforts to be good suppliers, and you should make your best effort to be a great customer. You can do this by:

- Being communicative
- Paying on time
- Referring colleagues
- Giving lead time for deliveries
- Always staying kind and polite

ZoomShift's Top Pick

1. Performance Foodservice
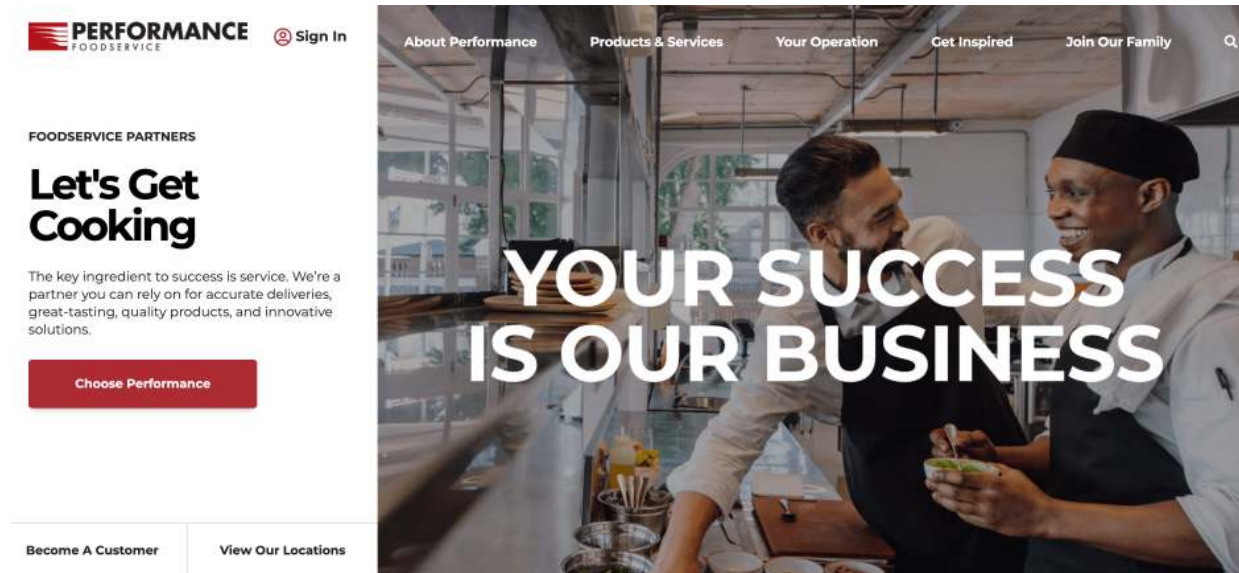
A leading food distributor and supplier, Performance Foodservice provides quality products, innovative technology, and custom solutions to culinary partners. Foodservice plays a vital role in its communities, and they are proud to be part of that process.

They are your one-stop-shop for not only exceptional food, but provide non-food products, kitchen equipment and restaurant supply to streamline your business. As a customer not only do you gain access to their premium products, you get a host of business resources to take your establishment further.

Key Takeaways

There are lots of different suppliers out there that can service restaurants of all kinds. At the end of the day, the search for the right supplier will come down to your own individual tastes and goals.

Be clear with yourself about what you're looking for, make sure you're dealing with a reputable business, strive to be a great customer, and you'll likely have a great relationship with your supplier.

Effective Restaurant Menu Design Ideas

When you sit down at a restaurant, there are a few things you're likely to notice: the carefully picked out decor, the smells of food wafting through the air, and of course, the menu set down on your table, offering up a wide array of meal options.

As a restaurant owner, your menu is more than just a selection of food items, it's a statement about who you are as a business. To convey that skillfully, you'll need to ensure that your menu's design broadcasts your personality while still remaining easy to navigate and choose from.

Staring at a blank piece of paper and trying to make a design can be intimidating, so we've compiled 7 effective restaurant menu design ideas to get your creative juices flowing and get your design started.

1. Divide the Menu Into Sections

The most important part of a good menu design is readability. If even repeat customers need to ask the waiters for help finding their favorite items on the menu, then you know that your menu design needs work.

To make things easy to read and navigate, try breaking your menu up into logical sections. For example, begin your menu with a starters section, and then divide your entree section into whatever your main categories are, such as sandwiches, pastas, and salads. Then, end your menu with the dessert section, or put that on a separate menu entirely.

Remember to pay attention to common conventions. Although beverages are usually the first thing you order, most people will expect to see them listed at the end or bottom of the menu. If you serve alcoholic drinks, you may want to include them in a separate drink menu.

2. Use Boxes and Borders to Split the Menu Up

To help organize your menu even further, you can use boxes and borders to divide the menu up into more distinct sections.

Employing these visual devices can help prevent your customers from getting lost as they browse through the menu – they'll never question whether an ambiguously named item is in the soup section or the entree section if it has a clearly defined border around it.

These borders can also give you an opportunity to show off a bit of your personality. The border design you choose can tell your customers a lot about what to expect when they come dine at your establishment.

3. Don't Overdo It With Photos

Including a few photos of your food can sometimes help your customers get a better idea of what they may want to order. But if you go too far and try to include pictures of every item on your menu, it can end up looking like a cheap scrapbook of cooking projects, not a professional menu.

In fact, most high-end restaurants don't include any photos of menu items at all as they can come off as tacky. You should therefore give a lot of thought as to whether you really need to include photos, and what type of vibe you want to give off to your customers.

If you're running a family-friendly restaurant, pictures can work great. But if you're going for haute cuisine, you're better off sticking with a minimalist design sans photos.

4. De-Emphasize Currency Signs and Prices

As a restauranteur, you have two goals: provide great food and experiences, and make money while doing so.

To achieve goal number two, you want to ensure that your guests don't pay too much attention to prices on your menu – you want them to make their selection with their taste buds, not with their wallets. The last thing you want is for someone to be tempted by an expensive dish that you have a huge markup on, only to see the price and then go with the side salad instead.

To this end, many restaurants forego the use of currency signs in an effort to soften the impact of the prices listed alongside each menu item.

Although it may seem arbitrary, seeing "35.00" is less likely to make someone clutch their coin purse than seeing "$35.00."

Essentially, you don't want money to be on the mind when people peruse through your offerings. While you need to include prices for most items – barring any items that are based on the current market price – you should do your best to de-emphasize them.

5. Use Illustrations to Add Some Flavor to Design

Your restaurant is all about flavor, so make sure you add some to your menu as well. Although some restaurants are better served by a decidedly minimalist design that's completely free of illustrations, many restaurants will do well adding some tasteful illustrations and designs.

Like all of these tips, you'll have to use your discretion to determine whether this is the right direction for your menu.

Consider your branding and customer base before adding illustrations into the mix.

6. Make Descriptions Small

It's important to add descriptions to your menu, but they should be brief and communicative, not lengthy blurbs that go on about the depth of flavors in your carrot soup.

Ideally, your item names should communicate everything your customer needs to know about their food when making a decision.

 Your descriptions should be a short addendum to help your customer gain a bit more insight, such as any slides that may be included with the meal or any unique ingredients that are used.

So that your menu is not displayed in the pdf file, you can use the Boxmode template and build a restaurant website with a menu, with the design. It will be more convenient for customers to use the site and choose the necessary functions.

7. Don't Give Patrons Too Many Choices

Although having a lot of menu items to choose from may seem like a good thing, overloading your customers with options can actually have a negative effect: it can give people analysis paralysis.

Many businesses find that when they limit their offerings to a few high-quality items, customers have an easier time making a decision. As a result, their experience with the business is better overall.

The Bottom Line

Designing an effective menu requires a balance of functionality and form. Your menu should be visually appealing while remaining easily navigable.

With these tips in hand, you should have some foundational concepts that you can use to start designing your menu with confidence.

Unique Restaurants Decoration Ideas

It's hard to imagine a single aspect of life that this year's pandemic hasn't changed, but there's no denying that the service sector is one of the industries that's been the most profoundly affected. COVID-19 has changed the way in which restaurants operate, how people socialize over meals, and how diners order, receive, and pay for food.

As a result, proprietors have had to redesign their dining spaces, taking into account practical concerns like social distancing and deep cleaning, as well as some of the more subliminal messaging in color palettes, textures, and decor.

This year, we'll see some of these restaurants decoration ideas penetrating the restaurant industry, and who knows — they may be around for a while.

1. Drive-Through Nostalgia

As most restaurants have been forced to either close or significantly limit the number of indoor diners, proprietors are looking for other ways to deliver a tasty dining experience without requiring diners to leave their cars.

One example of this is the revival of the 1950s-style drive-through, which both mitigates the spread of the virus and simultaneously offers an authentic "eat out" experience.

The concept is pretty simple: offer your diners a parking spot in your car lot, ask them to order directly from their cars via a call-in or online ordering system, and deliver food directly to their car with minimal or no human contact.

Businesses are completing the theme by matching the menu to the drive-through: burgers, fries, milkshakes, with waiting staff dressed in typical 1950s diner outfits.

In Burbeck California, Bob's Big Boy was quick to run with this idea and introduced its "Car Hop" service as an alternative to its take out menu. Diners are asked to order their food from their car and waiters deliver their meals right to their car windows.

People love nostalgic experiences, and especially while social distancing concerns remain, these types of drive-throughs are a sensible way to keep restaurants alive and kicking.

2. Private Dining Pods

Under tightening COVID-19 restrictions, restaurant owners have been forced to apply social distancing measures to their dining spaces.

For example, the current CDC guidelines dictate that diners should be spaced at least 6 feet apart when seated.

As a way around this problem, restaurant owners have changed the design and layout of their spaces, opting for booths, pods, or private dining in order to keep diners separate.

Chicago's City Winery, for example, launched its "River Domes" in response to the pandemic early in 2020. These transparent igloo-like pods keep diners enclosed in their dining bubbles where they stay safe, warm, and dry, while enjoying a meal and drink over a fantastic view.

(Source)

3. Functional Furniture

We've seen how the retro-style dining experience has re-entered the design consciousness as we head to 2021, but there are other retro touches that are also popping up in dining interiors.

Designers are predicting a new form of architectural modernism that harks back to the early 20th Century. In response to pandemics such as flu, typhoid, and cholera, surfaces were produced using anti-microbial, easy-to-clean materials.

Similarly, it's likely that we will see fewer intricately-carved wooden tables, decorative ornaments, and ornate furnishings going into 2021. Instead, we'll see clean lines and modern materials. Chairs and tables that are chic yet easy to clean, minimal table clutter, and soft furnishings.

4. Surreal and Special Experiences

Because restaurateurs have had to reduce the flow of diners, designers are increasingly asked to create high-impact decor and unique design impressions. After all, if diners are expected to dine in a half-empty restaurant (sometimes at a premium), then the decor needs to do some heavy lifting to provide a lasting experience.

Bold ceilings are entering the design discourse – just take a look at Shizuku Cafe's ceiling installations below:

(Source)

Strong escapist interiors like The Ivy in London are also a trend that we're likely to see more of this year.

(Source)

As a quirky response to the potential buzz-kill of empty tables, some restaurants began to prop up anything from stuffed animals to full-blown dummy designers at the empty seats.

The Inn at Little Washington in Virginia, for example, installed mannequins at empty tables. Working with a local theater company, the in-house chef creates the experience of a bustling restaurant even when covers are at an all-time low.

It's hard to imagine a more memorable dining experience than dining alongside dolls which, by the way, are also being served by the waiters.

(Source)

5. Open Kitchens

Hygiene transparency is a prime consideration for restaurant diners everywhere as we move into 2021.

Not only are dining rooms focused on easy-to-clean areas, but people want to be able to see their food being prepared in real time. Open kitchens where diners can see their food being cooked not only responds to the appetite for transparency, but also adds a sense of drama to the dining experience.

London's Silo restaurant uses open kitchens as a focal point to their dining offering, along with sleek minimalist colors and textures.

(Source)

In Summary

The year 2020 will go down in the history books for many reasons, but the way it has affected the way we socialize is one of the most fundamental adjustments we've all had to make.

In response to this, restaurant designers predict a shift not only in the functionality of dining spaces, but also in how this translates to design aesthetics.

From functional minimalism to pod dining, escapist interiors and transparent kitchens, diners should expect to see some unique design trends featured in some of their favorite eating spaces in 2021.

15 Impressive Restaurant Grand Opening Ideas

After months of hard work and meticulous planning, your restaurant is finally ready to open its doors. Your menu is perfect, the staff is highly trained, and all systems are operational. Now, you're faced with the ever-important task of creating a buzz around your grand opening to ensure that customers begin pouring in from day one.

In order to help you brainstorm, we've put together ten unique grand opening ideas that are sure to attract a crowd on your big day.

1. Invite Influencers

Who doesn't want Jack Johnson singing "Banana Pancakes" at the grand opening of their hip new breakfast spot? Thanks to the internet, influencers like Jack are a few keystrokes away. Musicians, athletes, actors, celebrities – you name it.

Even if you're on a tighter budget, you can still make a splash with local politicians, radio station personalities, and local sports teams. If you partner with local food critics or vloggers that have large followings, you can get your message out to their audience with a single Instagram post, YouTube video, or blog post.

Once you've secured your influencer's attendance, find a way to squeeze everything you can out of it. Get yourself a red carpet and invite the press to come and take photos. Put up a branded backdrop with your logo on it so people can take pictures with the influencer(s). Ask them to sign autographs for your customers. Every little thing can generate a bigger buzz.

2. Throw an Epic Party

Bottomless mimosas and hanging some streamers aren't a bad idea. However, if you want to create a memorable grand opening, you've got to think outside the box. Be creative here and think about what your customers would really take time out of their day to come do or see.

If you're an edgy restaurant with unique items all over the walls and are going after a younger crowd, then consider sweetening the pot with some live entertainment. If your parking lot is big enough, invite a small carnival to set up for the weekend. Nothing draws an impromptu crowd like flashing lights, fun rides, and the promise of great food and games.

3. Support a Worthy Cause

Few things ignite people's passion like supporting a cause they care about. When done tastefully, you can create customers for life with a charity fundraiser.

You can go two directions here:

Create your own charity event like a 5K walk or run to support cancer research, green planet initiatives, or a food drive to help the homeless. Let your imagination run wild and make it something you and your staff really connect with.

Partner with an already established charity that is special to your team and your customers. Chances are that if you care, someone else already has an operation you can align yourself with, and you both can reap the benefits.

Create a special event with the charity, or sponsor an existing event and align the dates with your grand opening.

Just because it's a one-time grand opening event doesn't mean you can't think long-term. If your event is a hit, you could make it an annual occurrence.

4. Give Away Something Big

This one seems like a no-brainer option, but plenty of businesses get it wrong. Prizes can sometimes be underwhelming – giving away an iPhone that everyone already has isn't going to be enticing enough to draw a crowd.

Make sure any prize you're giving away is big and exciting, like a new convertible or an all-expenses-paid trip to Italy (especially if you're an Italian restaurant). If this idea seems far-fetched or over budget, consider partnering with another local business so you can share the cost and publicity. They're likely also looking for creative ways to get in front of customers and would happily partner up.

5. Honor an Individual or Group of People

Similar to supporting a worthy cause, honoring a specific person or group of people is a quick and memorable way for opening your restaurant.

Here are a couple of ideas to get you started:

"First Responders Eat Free" – invite them to bring out their big trucks to make it a spectacle
"Veterans Eat Free" – invite a distinguished veteran and pair up this idea with a local politician who can honor them in some way

Honoring a group of people on day one can also have long-term benefits. Give them an ongoing discount or put their picture on the wall, and you'll boost the chance that they'll keep coming back week after week.

6. Give Away Free Food or Vouchers

Everyone's gotta eat, so free food is always a hit. Chick-fil-A has an incredibly successful tradition of offering free food for a year to the first 100 customers on the opening day of each new restaurant.

You don't have to go quite that far with your offer, but even a month's worth of free food is sure to get people talking. You can also consider providing a "comeback perk" like a coupon good for next month, so people don't just come for the opening but keep coming back.

7. Provide an Experience
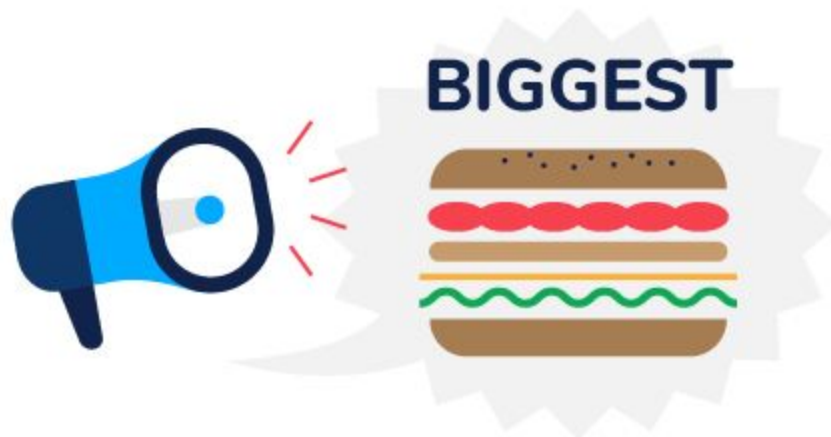
The right experience will get people excited to attend your grand opening. For example, advertise that you'll be trying to break a Guinness world record. It may sound intimidating, but companies do it all the time. Alternatively, you could plan a parade or another type of publicity stunt – the Tour de France started as a publicity stunt to promote a new French newspaper.

Another possibility is to host an upscale event like an art show where you invite local artists to show off their art. Or have them paint a mural on the side of your building live in front of your customers.

8. Launch on a Holiday

If there's one thing consistent about holidays, it's that people go to restaurants. Set your launch up for success by timing it right:

Valentine's Day: Advertise romantic dinners with a free housemade dessert and candles to take home.
Halloween: Throw a costume party and organize give away prizes.
Thanksgiving: For each meal your customers buy, provide a free meal for someone in need.
Christmas: Offer something of value like free pictures with Santa around the holidays.

9. Host an Irresistible Challenge

Food challenges are always popular, especially when there's something in it for the customer. Consider starting an ongoing challenge at your restaurant, and whoever completes it gets their meal free, a t-shirt, and their picture on the wall.

For your grand opening, be sure to make it a bit more of a spectacle that will attract a crowd. Include several contenders and offer a great prize and a dish on the menu named after the winner.

10. Create a Unique Game

Creating a fun game is a great way to get your customers engaged with your business and, if done right, can hold their interest past opening day. Let Skip's Kitchen inspire you with their card game. Everyone orders their food, and when they go to pay, the cashier fans out a deck of cards in front of them so they can pick one.

Most cards serve as table markers so the server knows where to bring their food, but if they pick a joker, their meal is free.

It's become a big draw for customers and keeps people waiting in line for their chance to win. This may not necessarily work for your restaurant, but the free meals may be worth it for the word-of-mouth marketing and the repeat clientele.

11. Provide Live Entertainment

Influencers are great, but they can also be expensive. Sometimes a KISS tribute band or an up and coming local artist will get people just as jazzed up about your grand opening. Some string lights over the patio and the right blend of music, food, and drinks can create the perfect atmosphere for your first impression.

12. Ignite the Right Atmosphere

Like moths to a light, people are drawn to fire. Sometimes torches around the patio, a lit fireplace, or some personal fire pits outside to eat or drink around can draw a crowd. If outdoor seating and entertaining aren't possible, consider putting adding some restaurant decorations such as candles at all the tables to replicate a similar vibe of warmth and coziness.

13. Leak the "Secret Menu"

People adore exclusivity, and nothing makes people feel more special than ordering off-menu. Come up with a handful of dishes or dish variations that you can "let slip" to some select food bloggers, charity organization members, or local politicians. They then get the pleasure of spreading more value to their followers by sharing them.

14. Offer Meals on the House

Nothing draws a crowd like free food. Consider offering a free meal or side to everyone on your big night. It's an expensive tactic, but there's no faster way to get people hooked on your restaurant's menu than giving them a free sampling of the best you have to offer. To lower the cost, make the free meal outside of peak hours like 8-10 PM, and you'll likely offset your meal losses with drink purchases.

15. Order Up Some Nostalgia

Combine some of the ideas above to pay tribute to a glorious decade. If you do find a local KISS cover band, you could make your grand opening an 80's celebration and offer free food to anyone born in the 1980s or anyone wearing 80's signature clothing.

4 Restaurant Opening Best Practices

Restaurant grand opening events are essential to generating some much-needed early buzz about your establishment. Beyond the big ideas above, there are a few best practices to keep in mind to stack the deck in your favor on opening day.

1. Throw up a Banner to Assure People You're Officially Open

People drove by your restaurant for months while it was under construction, so it's important to make it clear to anyone in the area that you're open and ready for business.

2. Invite Anyone & Everyone

A grand opening event isn't just a public spectacle, it's a personal one. Invite your family and your extended family. Invite your staff to do the same. Have everyone personally invite their neighbors, too. While you're at it, send an invite to all your vendors that helped build your restaurant and supply it — the more, the merrier.

3. Go All Out on Social Media

Make an account on all the relevant networks and start building a following. Run some local ads to generate buzz about the opening and consider some smaller giveaways like "guaranteed table on opening day" or "we'll name a drink after our raffle winner."

4. Ask People to Endorse You

You're going to spend a lot of time, effort, and money on opening day, so try to squeeze every bit out of it that you can. Encourage people to leave reviews of the food and their overall experience. Offer up some more of those "comeback perks" like coupons or vouchers in exchange for reviews to encourage people to not only leave glowing reviews but also to come back and dine with you again.

If you really want to make a lasting impression on your first day, it's important to plan it months in advance. Keep in mind that it's not all about getting people to your restaurant – you also have to ensure everyone has a great time once they're there. That means not only quality food and customer service, but excitement factor or unique experience that gets them to come back. And hopefully, bring their friends too.

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3 Employee Management

Restaurant Job Hiring: 7 Positions You Need To Fill

What makes a successful restaurant?

Great food and drinks are vital – if your deliverable isn't up to par, then nothing else really matters. Location is important too. If you're off the beaten path or hard to find, then you're going to have a tough time keeping regulars.

How about service?

We can't forget about the people who make the restaurant's experience come to life. Everyone – from the people bussing tables to those cooking the food – has a vital role in providing a stellar dining experience.

If people make the restaurant a success, then you're going to need to know which roles are essential to keeping customers happy.

Here are 7 restaurant positions you need to fill:

1. Hosts

Unless you're a fast-food restaurant with open seating, you're going to want someone there to greet all your guests. The first impression may very well be your last impression, so it's imperative that you hire the right people for this role.

They should look presentable and be organized. Ideally, they should also be extroverted and enthusiastic, so they set the tone for an upbeat and exciting dining experience.

Enthusiasm takes you far in a host or hostess role, but it isn't everything. Since they're checking in guests and manning the phone, they need to be organized as well. One missed reservation or unanswered phone call costs the business money. And every minute diners are waiting for a table, they grow impatient. The ability to multitask helps tremendously here.

2. Waitstaff

If the host sets the first impression, then the waitstaff is the face of the restaurant. Few people remember a good experience from their host or hostess, but they'll definitely remember a good experience with the waitstaff.

Once again, enthusiasm matters here. You want smiling faces and an inviting tone at all times.

Often, this comes with experience and confidence, but it's also something to look for in the interview, because it's hard to teach enthusiasm and confidence. You either have it, or you don't.

Knowledge of the menu is important, as is the ability to multitask and retain information. One missed detail or overlooked opportunity to check-in, and you'll leave diners with a sour taste in their mouth.

3. Bartenders

Alcohol often has the highest profit margin of any product and is crucial to the success of the restaurant. If your bar is backed up or, worse, non-existent, then you need to prioritize it. When looking for an ideal candidate, you want someone with extensive knowledge of mixology, and who can train other bartenders and waitstaff to help when the bar is backed up.

The ability to juggle multiple drink orders efficiently and graceful is essential. Without juggling skills, you might as well buy a vending machine. You'll also want someone outgoing, since people tell their bartenders everything and will continue to come back if they like the service. One final note on bartenders is to hire someone trustworthy. Bartenders handle a lot of cash and expensive alcohol, so a few extra steps in the interview can make all the difference.
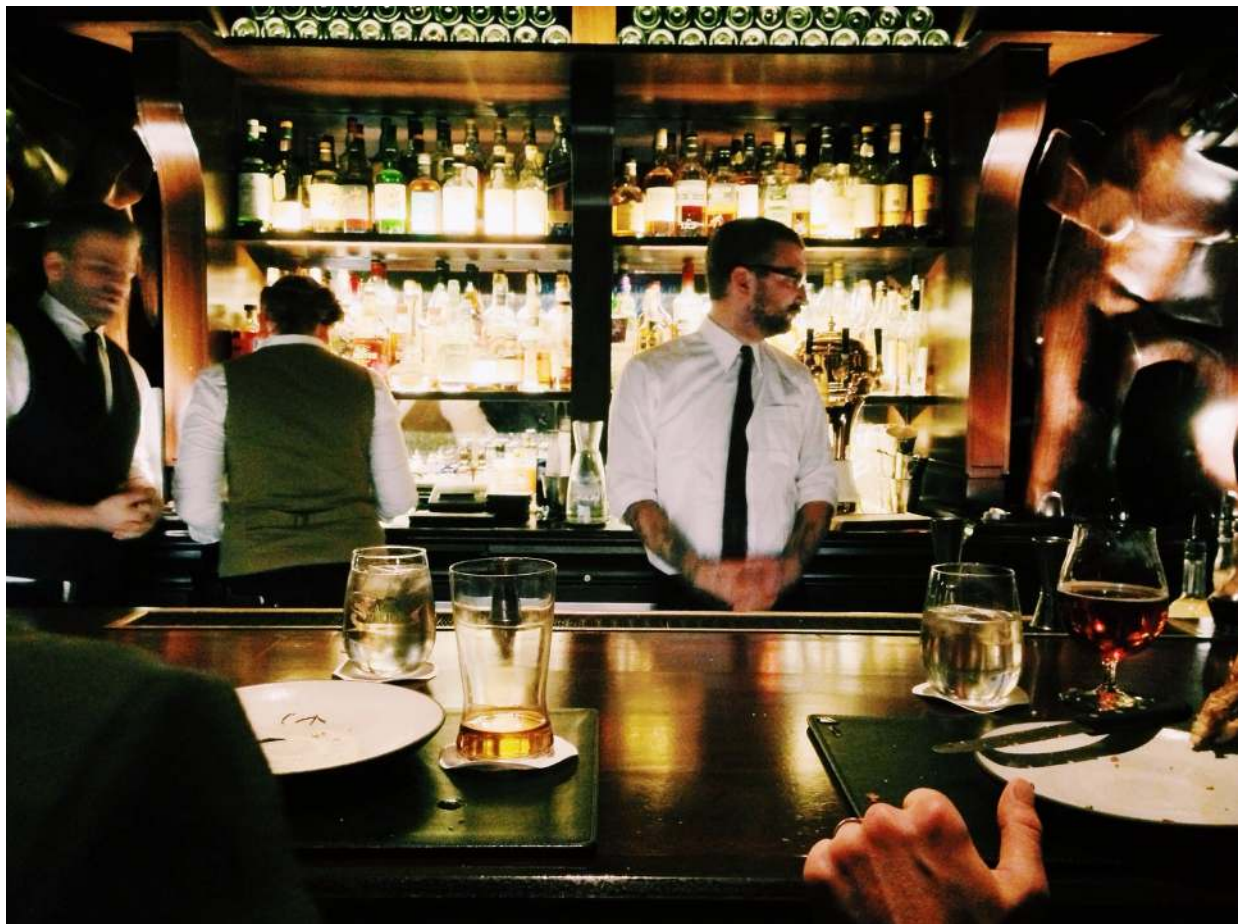
4. Cooks

People want a consistent experience from their favorite restaurants. When they return or bring friends, they want to walk away full, satisfied, and ready to return soon. The cooks make that magic happen. If the cook isn't invested or cuts corners, then the entire restaurant suffers.

When hiring a cook, it's important to find someone who not only loves what they do but works well under pressure. If they can't handle the Saturday night dinner rush, then they're a liability in the kitchen that'll just slow you down or detract from your guest's experience.

Some other good qualities to look for in a cook are cleanliness and attention to detail. If they keep their workplace clean and prioritize *mise en place,* or "everything in its place," then your kitchen efficiency and food quality will rise as well.

5. Delivery Crew

You need a delivery crew to maximize your bottom line. Catering to the guests you can fit in the restaurant is one thing, but opening up to the masses sitting at home or in hotels takes your revenue to another level.

Takeout is a staple of any budding restaurant, but consider hiring delivery drivers or opening up to delivery companies who can extend your reach. If your takeout or delivery service is slow, you can always use them as food runners to deliver food to tables.

6. Management Team

Ensuring that the restaurant is fully staffed and fully stocked is a full-time responsibility and one that ownership shouldn't take lightly. Somebody has to keep the machine well-oiled and operating at maximum capacity.

The restaurant management team needs to have a working knowledge of each role's duties and responsibilities and be able to step in momentarily to clear a bottleneck. A good manager will not only retain good employees but enhance the diners' experience.

7. Chef

If you operate a corporate restaurant, then someone far, far away is making the menu for you. If that's not the case, then appointing a lead cook or a chef is imperative to your restaurant's success.

Someone who knows how to set a menu and pair drinks can vastly improve the dining experience. Ideally, you want someone who understands your dining crowd and what they keep coming back for, but who is also willing to take risks and try to dazzle people. The chef will also inspire the rest of the kitchen staff to do their best and learn new skills, which has a compound effect on your restaurant's success.

Now that you're aware of the essential positions required to boost a restaurant's credibility and profitability, it's time to streamline the scheduling process.

RESTAURANT SCHEDULING SOFTWARE

Staff scheduling software designed for restaurants.

ZoomShift helps you save hours scheduling, reduce labor costs, and have confidence that your team will show up on time.

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35 Best Restaurant Interview Questions

Interviewing is not most people's idea of a fun time, but it's a necessary step in the job search and hiring process.

An interview allows you to verify and expand upon a candidate's written application – it's impossible to get to know someone just by reading a few pages of qualifications.

When meeting with potential new hires – especially in an industry as demanding as foodservice – it's important to go beyond basic questions about experience and really try to get a feel for the candidate, what motivates them, and whether they would fit in with your team.

Here are 35 great questions to add to your interview list:

1. What are you excited about right now?

A healthy work-life balance is important, especially for those in the food and beverage industry. Find out their passion and start building a personal connection.

2. If you didn't have to sleep 8 hours a night, what would you fill that time with?

Again, try to get them to open up about what goes on outside of work. What are their hobbies, what might they be putting off, what are their dreams? The answers may surprise you.

3. What would you do in the event of a zombie apocalypse?

Ask something to remove the tension. It doesn't have to be this exact question, but be sure to have fun with your interview.

4. What draws you to foodservice?

Find out their why.

5. What interests you about this position at this restaurant?

Now that you know their why, figure out why here.

6. Have you dined at our establishment before?

If they have and have good things to say, it shows commitment and genuine interest. If they lie and it's apparent they're shaky about their answer, it can tell you something about them as well.

7. When was a time you went out of your way to really delight a guest?

The restaurant business is all about creating positive experiences.

8. What do you hope to learn working here?

See if it's all about a paycheck or if they have greater ambitions.

9. What's your greatest strength?

No need to be humble or modest here. Find out what sets them apart from others.

10. What does hospitality mean to you?

Get a feel for how they like to be treated and see how close their definition aligns with the actual definition and your own vision of hospitality.

11. Tell me about the best boss you ever had.

The values they share about their best boss are important to them and help you find out if they're a culture fit.

12. Why are you leaving your current job?

Are they ambitious and loyal? Or are they bouncing around for an extra 50 cents an hour?

13. If hired, how long do you plan on staying here?

A direct question that will help determine their intentions.

14. Do you have any food allergies?

Easy question, but one you don't want to forget to ask.

15. What hours are you available to work?

Another basic question, but dig deeper here and ask if there's any reason those hours would change.

16. How do you feel about tip sharing?

If applicable of course. It's better to be upfront about these things than create animosity later.

17. Do you have any mnemonic tools or tricks for remembering orders?

Get a good feel for their skills and experience upfront.

18. Do you prefer working in a team or alone?

Nothing wrong with wanting to work alone, but the answer could uncover whether they're a team player or not.

19. How do you handle people who aren't pulling their weight?

Every workplace has that person. See if they're creative in their solutions or take a leader's approach. This could signify leadership material early on.

20. Tell me about the most difficult customer you ever had.

Find out how they handled it.

21. Are there people you'd refuse to serve?

Prejudice is still a problem in the 21st century and a simple question like this can reveal a lot.

22. How would you handle a customer trying to use an expired coupon?

Every restaurant's policy is different, but it's a great indicator of how they react under pressure.

23. What's the most common reason you'd be late for a shift?

Even dependable and punctual employees are late from time to time. It's good to call this out early and see how they handle it.

24. Tell me about a time you made a mistake on the job and how you went about fixing it.

Everyone makes mistakes – especially in restaurants. See if they're capable of recognizing flaws and if they work proactively to resolve them.

25. What questions do you have for us?

Always end a little early so they can ask you questions. How prepared they come and the quality of their questions can tell you a lot in a short amount of time.

26. What are your career goals?

A few candidates may say that they cherish the opportunity to delight customers or that they want to own their own restaurant, but chances are they have other pursuits or are going to school on the side. Knowing a person's ambitions makes it easier to motivate them.

27. How would you define being a "team player" in the restaurant industry?

A kitchen or restaurant is only as good as its weakest link, so it's imperative that you get a feel for why they're here and how well they interact with others.

28. How would you resolve a conflict involving another coworker?

Restaurants employ all types of people, which can naturally lead to disagreements, feuds, and even fighting from time to time. Help them formulate a plan upfront so you're both on the same page as to how it ideally should get handled.

29. Would you consider yourself a patient person? If so, please explain.

The vast majority of candidates will answer yes. The explanation part is where you'll reveal some interesting tidbits regarding their definition of patience.

30. When you're dining out, is there anything servers do or don't do that gets on your nerves?

The quality of their answer will reveal their industry experience and give you a sense of their pet peeves. Chances are if they're annoyed by something, then they'll often do the exact opposite.

31. How would you describe the difference between good customer service and excellent customer service?

Delighting people to encourage repeat visits is huge in the restaurant industry. What does "going the extra mile" mean to them?

32. Would you rather miss a deadline to ensure the details are correct or miss a detail to ensure you meet a deadline?

A successful restaurant balances accuracy and speed, so the answer here will tell you a lot about their problem-solving skills and priorities.

33. Tell me about a time you knowingly broke the rules at a previous job.

Every restaurant has rules in place for a reason. However, it's important to bend such rules from time to time if it enhances the customer's experience.

34. Are you more likely to cover up a mistake or point it out?

Integrity is the single most important quality in a candidate. Any wavering on this question might reveal they're not a good fit.

35. How do you feel about coming in early, staying late, or picking up an extra shift here and there when we get busy?

Flexibility is everything for a busy restaurant, and knowing upfront how eager they are to work and be a team player will help you make the best hiring decision.

Your investigation doesn't have to end when the interview's over. If you get a good vibe and want to be absolutely certain they have potential, then hire them for the weekend. Pay them to spend 20 hours on the job with your crew. Let them figure out if it's a fit for them and get feedback from your staff while you're at it. That way you can validate your hiring decision and won't be wasting anyone's time in the long run.

Restaurant Interview Best Practices

1. Come to the table with specific examples of your accomplishments. Over your career, it's crucial to reflect and notate all of your wins. That way, when you go up for an interview, you can easily rattle off specific customer examples, awards, and other accomplishments that may help you stand out as an ideal candidate.

2. Dress for the job you want, not the one you have. It's rare to overdress for an interview. When in doubt, go dressier than you think. It's especially important if you don't have the skills or experience to bank on. Just because you're a dishwasher now doesn't mean you can't jump ahead because you dressed nicely, communicated effectively, and showed enthusiasm and an eagerness to learn.

3. Bring a physical copy of your resume and cover letter. Even if you filled it out online, it's good to have a paper copy they can review as the interview goes on. It shows you're prepared, and it puts a face with your resume, which may come in handy if they're interviewing dozens of candidates.

4. Bring something to take notes onand use it. Hiring managers are often giving out a lot of details about the role, the restaurant, and advice on how to be successful. Show you're listening by repeating what they say and jotting it down. It shows enthusiasm for the role and that you value their time and advice.

5. Rehearse a few great interview questions of your own. There's a good chance they'll ask if you have any questions, and often the caliber of your questions can help you stand out. Come up with 4-5 questions beforehand, just in case they answer some of yours during the interview. Think outside the box and try to challenge them a bit. Dig deeper than, "can we wear jeans?" Ask about the bigger picture of the restaurant or what the hiring manager's goals are this year.

6. Follow up with every manager you met. Following up is the single most important thing you can do to stand out. Often people will nail the big stuff, and the hiring manager needs little things to decide between candidates. Follow up via email, express gratitude for the opportunity, show enthusiasm about the prospect of working there, and let them know you're available for any follow-up interviews or questions they may have.

The New Employee Onboarding Checklist

Onboarding new employees brings many challenges, especially after 2020. We have created the ultimate new employee onboarding checklist to keep you in check.

New Hire Checklist

Interviews are over, you've made an offer, and they've accepted it. Now it's time to get all the behind the scenes details sorted out before they start.

1. Complete all new hire forms for the human resources department:

- W-4: Employee's Withholding Certificate to withhold the correct federal income tax
- W-9: Request for Taxpayer Identification Number & Certification (contractors only)
- 1-9: Employee Eligibility Verification to verify authorization to work in the United States
- State Tax Withholding forms (if applicable)
- Direct Deposit forms so they can receive their paycheck via ACH deposit
- Non-disclosure and non-compete agreements
- Alcohol and/or drug test consent agreements
- Security and confidentiality agreements

- Job analysis forms such as goals, responsibilities, and performance evaluation criteria
- Emergency contact designation and contact details
- Medical history and food allergies
  -

2. Call the employee to confirm first day details, such as:

-
  - Workplace location, start date, and start time
  - Attire including specifics like tattoo/jewelry policy and shoes
  - Equipment needs specific to their job like tools, kitchen gear, safety gear, etc.
  - What to expect their first day such as facility tours, introductions, and training

3. Set up employee computer, software, and account access:

-
  - Ensure they have the proper login credentials to email accounts and relevant software
  - Create an onboarding or training program for learning work-related software
  - Review company IT rules and procedures
  - Add them to all relevant email groups, so they don't miss updates
  - Add them to your scheduling software and explain how they can access their schedule

4. Order new hire materials and set up an onboarding packet:

-
  - Name tags, uniform, headgear, footwear, and any safety items
  - Key cards, physical key copies, passcodes, and alarm codes (if applicable)
  - Provide them with a new hire welcome kit, a welcome letter along with contact names, phone lists, and company vision

5. Make a socialization plan:

-
  - Introduce them to their new team and all leaders
  - Schedule a welcome lunch or dinner
  - Schedule regular reviews and 1-on-1 time

First Year Onboarding Checklist

Being the new person is rarely a comfortable experience. You're full of ambition and enthusiasm, but you don't want to step on toes. You want to ask questions, but you don't want to be a bother.

You want to share your opinions, but you're not sure if you've earned the right yet. Needless to say, it's an emotional rollercoaster for the first year or so.

As a leader, there's a lot you can do to make the onboarding experience pleasant and relatively seamless. Proper onboarding can assimilate new hires to your workplace more quickly and likely make them a productive member of the team sooner.

Ideally, employee onboarding will last a year with critical milestones placed along the way to ensure they're set up for success.

Here's a one-year onboarding checklist you can use or modify as necessary:

Day One:

The first day on the job is all about setting expectations, introducing objectives, and making them feel comfortable in their new work environment.

- **Schedule team introductions**
  Arrange social lunches, coffee dates, or virtual sync ups

- **Schedule a workplace tour**
  Show them the restrooms, break areas, kitchen, storage rooms, offices, and anything else relevant to their day-to-day duties

- **Setup their workspace**
  Whether they're waiting tables or working a desk, it's important that they know where they can leave personal belongings and access work materials

- **Security orientation**
  Provide access to access badges, keys, security codes, computer access, phone setup, and any relevant HIPAA or compliance training

- **Culture and code of conduct review**
  Go over the employee handbook, discuss ethics, and any other housekeeping tasks

- **Review job description and responsibilities**
  - What can they start doing today, and what should they work up to
  - What performance metrics are you tracking
  - Discuss how their job fits into the bigger picture for the company
  - Go over policies for time off, sick time, holidays, vacation, etc.

- **Begin new hire training**

Week One:

They're getting comfortable, but as time goes on, they have more questions, and it's up to you to make sure they get answers.

- - Ask other employees to check in on them to ensure they feel supported
  - Schedule out regular evaluations and set goals for the first week, month, 90-days, etc
  - Ensure all their systems functioning properly
  - Schedule weekly or bi-weekly one-on-ones so you can provide feedback and answer any questions they have

Month One:

The basics are down, and it's less about the day-to-day and more about sustaining what's working well and working on their weaknesses.

- - Review month one performance and provide coaching
  - Ensure payroll and PTO accrual is functioning properly
  - Check-in on employee training to ensure adequate progress
  - Set month two goals to challenge them

3-Month Check-in:

Training is over, and it's time to dig into what's working and what's not. If they need supplemental training, then the time is now.

- - Review all their metrics from the last ninety days and measure it against the goals you've set for them
  - Set new goals for the next three months and switch to more of a quarterly check-in
  - Get feedback on how you're doing as a manager supporting them
  - Find out who's been helpful on the team and see if there are any suggestions they have for improving new hire onboarding
  - Invite them to fill out a Glassdoor review to help attract more great talent like them

6-Month Check-In:

You set goals at 3-months so it's time to see what they've achieved, what they're still working on, and where they may have fallen short.

- o Review the goals set last quarter and provide coaching where necessary
  - o Assign additional duties if they're ready for it
  - o Consider having them train any new hires
  - o Set new goals for the next quarter
  - o Schedule their next quarterly check-in

9-Month Check-In:

Similar to their six-month check-in, you'll want to review their goals and set new ones. Assess any coaching opportunities and lay the foundation for their annual review.

- o Review the goals set last quarter and provide coaching where necessary
  - o Set new goals for the next quarter
  - o Prepare them for their annual review

Annual Review:

Look back at the previous year, congratulate them on their first anniversary, and find ways to challenge them as they enter into their second year.

- o Review their quarterly goals and look back at their performance for the whole year
  - o Assess their strengths and discuss any future opportunities you see for them
  - o Discuss additional compensation or potential promotion opportunities

Employee Onboarding Frequently-Asked-Questions (FAQs)

How can I create a custom employee onboarding checklist for my restaurant or business?
Take the checklist we've provided above and copy it into a word document. Remove anything that's not relevant to your restaurant or business and make adjustments where necessary to make it even more applicable to the way you do business. Save a copy of that in case your onboarding process evolves, and make a copy of it each time a new hire starts.

Are there legal considerations my hiring and onboarding checklist should include?

Each state will have its own set of laws and regulations you'll have to adhere to, so we highly advise consulting an attorney and an accountant to see if there are any forms you're missing or training items you should be going over.

What happens if someone's a quick learner and doesn't need as much training?

There's a good chance you'll hire people with various levels of experience and education, so think of the employee onboarding checklist as a guideline instead of a strict document that can't flex. You'll have to check off forms and procedures, but the training plan can and should be customized to the individual's needs.
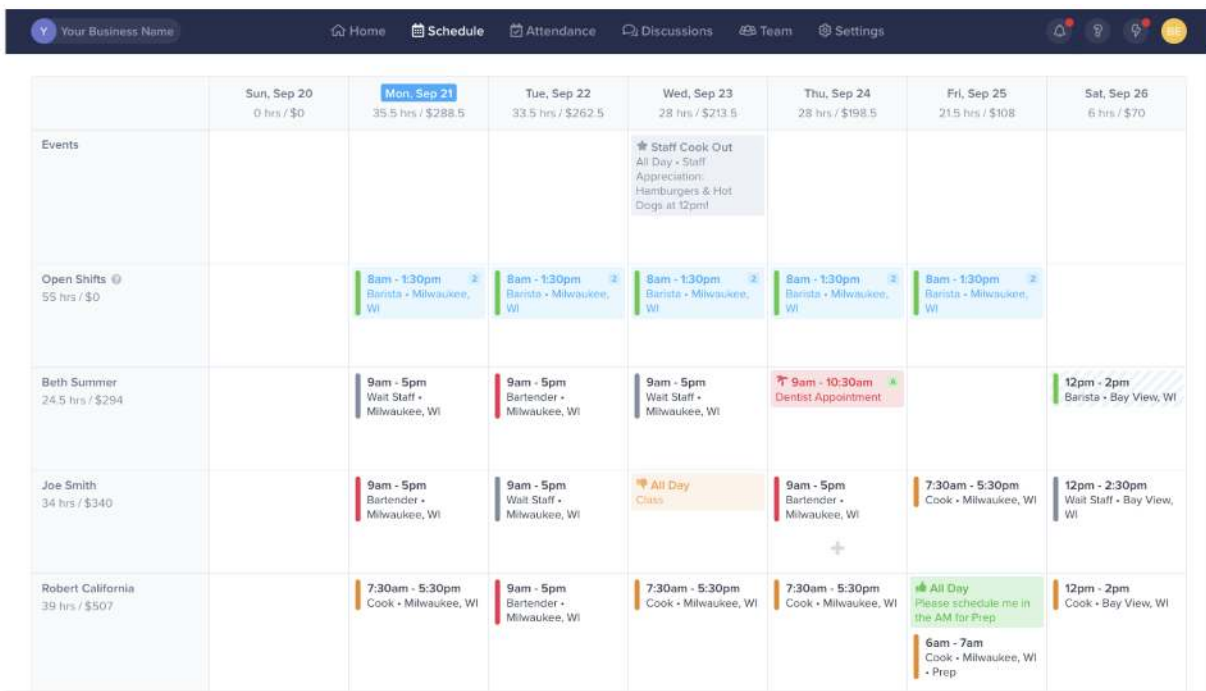
What should I do if I'm hiring multiple employees at once?

Onboarding multiple employees will likely save time and resources since you can batch a lot of onboarding tasks and new hire training sessions together. It's still important that you make sure each individual's needs are met throughout the process. The best way to do that is regular check-ins with their frontline manager.

What software can make onboarding new hires easier?

HR software is helpful for document storage, and employee scheduling software like ZoomShift makes scheduling new employees a breeze. You can show them how to download the application on their phone, see their schedule, see their time off balances, and how they can request time off. The entire onboarding process via ZoomShift will take you minutes, not hours.

RESTAURANT SCHEDULING SOFTWARE

Staff scheduling software designed for restaurants.

ZoomShift helps you save hours scheduling, reduce labor costs, and have confidence that your team will show up on time.

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The Role & Responsibilities of HR in a Restaurant
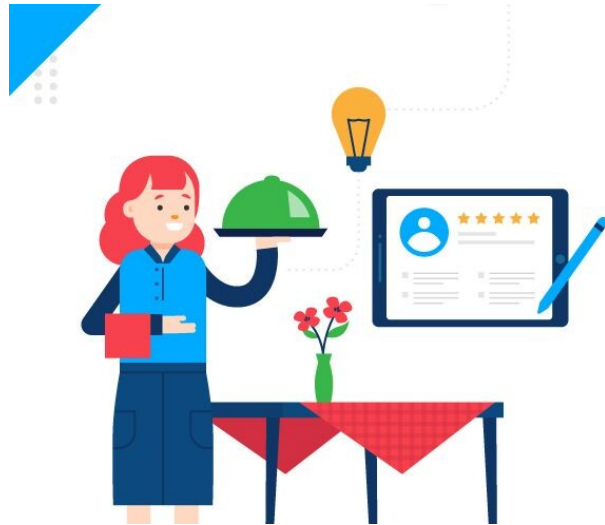
A thriving restaurant has complex needs that require a robust human resources department that props up the hard work everyone's doing, prevents mishaps, and mitigates risk. Some common responsibilities for human resources in the restaurant industry include:

- Processing restaurant payroll and administering benefits
- Ensuring local, state, and federal regulation compliance
- Creating and communicating HR policies
- Interviewing and hiring employees
- Building a strong restaurant culture
- Leadership training
- Resolving employee conflicts

Naturally, these responsibilities will vary widely depending on the size and complexity of the restaurant in question.

Larger chain restaurants often have a full-fledged human resources department with separate positions for each responsibility cited above. Smaller restaurant chains may only have one person doing everything.

Privately held restaurants may designate managers or the owner to handle HR responsibilities. Some may even outsource their payroll processing and HR functions.

Restaurant HR Best Practices

Beyond the daily responsibilities, there are some best practices that apply across restaurants of all shapes and sizes:

1. Create a Culture of Transparency

Employees want to feel safe, secure, and informed at all times. HR plays a big role in making that happen. They do that by creating and maintaining an environment of trust and transparency. Doing so facilitates open communication and feedback that improves the restaurant's ability to serve its customers.

If employees feel like all major decisions are made behind closed doors or like their input doesn't matter, then a growing sense of distrust forms. It creates an "us" vs. "them" mentality where it feels like leadership is out of touch with its employees. Holding one-on-ones with restaurant management, sending out anonymous surveys seeking feedback, and having company meetings can help a lot with cultivating a culture of transparency.

2. Hire Slow, Fire Fast

Selecting the right people for your restaurant is a crucial component to your overall success. One bad apple can lose you customers for life and even generate bad reviews, which may never go away. There are two things you can do to pick the right employees and close the revolving door for good: hire slow and fire fast.

Hiring slow starts with your HR leaders. They need the flexibility to hire thoughtfully and not feel rushed by crushing demands. Hiring slow means proper vetting, cross-interviews, and possibly working interviews. On the other hand, firing fast means feeling empowered to cut people who aren't pulling their weight, aren't a culture fit, or whose negativity is dragging the team down.

3. Provide Ongoing Training That Builds Confidence

Restaurant patrons want a repeatable dining experience that they will enjoy over and over again. Ideally, one that they can tell their friends about as well.

The best way to provide that is through ongoing training to ensure that the restaurant's values are instilled in everyone, from those washing dishes all the way through to upper management.

The team needs to know what makes your restaurant special and why you do even the smallest tasks. Tie it all back to the big picture and overall restaurant's strategy.

Beyond that, your staff needs constant training and reinforcement. Bring in outside trainers, have veteran employees teach mini classes on what they do well, and make it fun.

4. Offer Reliability With Benefits & Payroll

People work for compensation and benefits. Sure, there may be a few die-hard culinary enthusiasts amongst your ranks, but if the pay stopped, they'd likely leave.

HR plays a significant role in ensuring employees are paid fairly, on time, and with transparency. Invest in a scheduling system like ZoomShift that provides a complete view of every facet of your operation, from scheduling and time-off to payroll reporting.

5. Maintain Compliance & Create a Safe Work Environment

Running a successful restaurant is hard work. People are both your greatest asset and your greatest liability. Racism, sexism, ageism, and every other "ism" out there opens your workplace up to conflict.

Sexual harassment, bullying, and more can quickly take a winning team to one full of conflict and uncertainty.

It's HR's job to keep a constant pulse on employee satisfaction and well-being. Surveying employees regularly helps. Facilitating one-on-ones and ongoing workplace training helps as well. It's not enough to do it once, either.

Maintaining compliance requires a consistent message across all levels of the organization throughout the year.

HR Software - ZoomShift's Top Picks

1. Bamboo HR
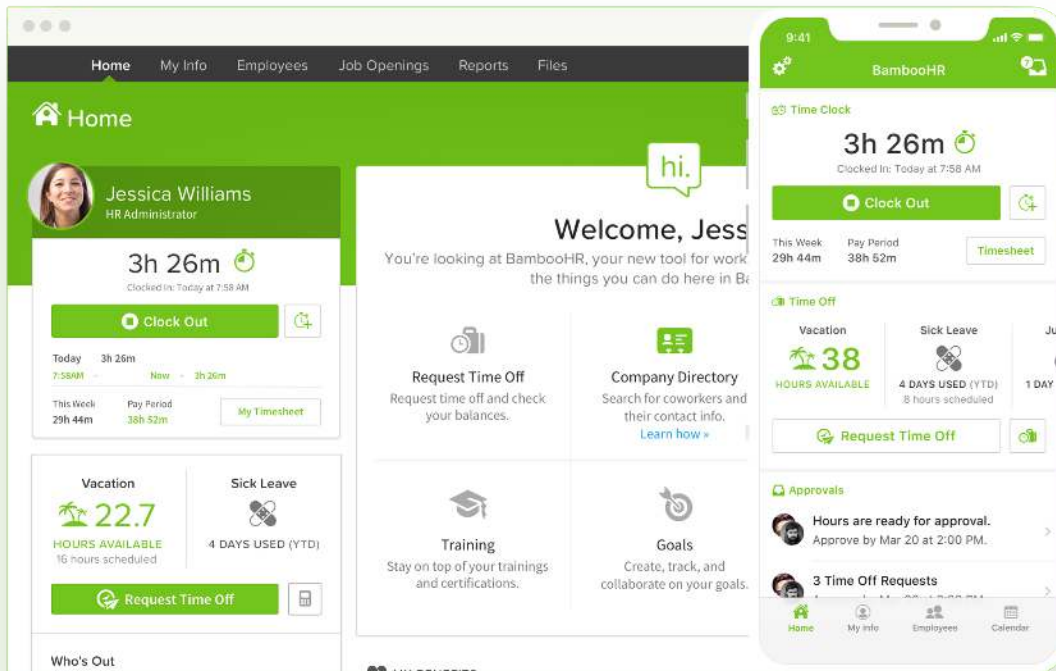
Bamboo HR is an HR software solution that's designed from the ground up to meet the needs of small and medium-sized businesses. The software's feature set is divided into five categories:

- Compensation
- Culture
- People Data and Analytics
- Hiring
- Onboarding

Across each of these fields, Bamboo HR provides everything you need to track and fulfill employee compensation, hire new employees, streamline their onboarding procedure, and make sure all your employee's data are in order.

All data stored with Bamboo HR exists in a single, secure database, which sidesteps the need for various spreadsheets that can easily get mixed up and confusing.

For hiring, Bamboo HR provides a mobile app that allows interviewers and recruiters to easily share notes and important information among themselves, while the onboarding side of the software includes useful features like e-signatures, team introductions, and offboarding tools as well.

To figure out how much it will cost you, you'll need to contact Bamboo HR directly for a quote.

2. Restaurant HR Group

Here at Restaurant HR Group, we support fast food, quick-service, fast casual, full-service, and fine dining restaurants of all sizes nationwide with their human resource outsourcing, payroll outsourcing , and benefits administration and compliance. We handle all of the HR workload, and essentially do the administrative "heavy lifting", so the operators can focus on running great restaurants.

We are your full HR outsourcing solution (but work hard to feel like part of the internal team) – from handling all payroll processing, to eliminating the benefits administrative burden, to communicating and creating HR policies and systems, to ensuring state and federal regulations are compliant, to online employee relations support, to HR, restaurant culture, and leadership training (and everything in between!).

Restaurant HR Group is an HR outsourcing solution that specifically caters to the restaurant industry. The company is based in Schaumburg, Illinois, and comprises 12 team members.

The company divides its services into four categories:

- **Human resources administration**
- **Payroll administration**
- **Benefits administration**
- **Employee relations and training**

For example, Restaurant HR Group can help you stay compliant with local laws and regulations, run criminal background checks on new hires, craft employee handbooks, handle COBRA administration, and much more.

Of course, one of the biggest benefits to using Restaurant HR Group is that the team is specifically experienced in restaurant HR and will be able to answer more specific food industry questions that other groups may struggle with.

Even though the company offers outsourcing, the Restaurant HR Group team tries its best to integrate with your own team and to create a great experience for you and your employees.

The company's pricing is not publicly available, so you will need to contact Restaurant HR Group directly for pricing information.

The Complete Guide to Restaurant Payroll

The National Restaurant Association originally projected $899 billion for projected sales in 2020, but where those figures will actually land is anyone's guess.

If the 2020 estimations end up being right, that means $270 billion in payroll should have been paid out, which is no small amount. That's roughly the GDP of Finland or Chile.

Inevitably, a large portion of those payroll costs went to labor. It makes sense that the people responsible for keeping the restaurant operating at capacity would cost a lot, but how much is too much? And how can you get payroll costs under control in 2021?

For starters, it's a good rule of thumb is to keep it at no more than 30% of sales. Any more than that, and you're likely bleeding into your profit margin.

From there, you can't go wrong with following best practices and investing in the right technology:

Giving the World of Payroll Perspective

Payroll costs typically include the cost of both hourly and salaried employees, plus employee benefits. Employee benefits include but are not limited to payroll taxes, workers' compensation insurance premiums, employee meals, transportation benefits, education expenses, group insurance, life insurance, and disability insurance.

The former is typically a straightforward calculation, even with overtime as a factor. The latter is a bit more complicated. Nevertheless, it's important to make the effort to get the calculation right. In the restaurant world, payroll typically comprises non-exempt employees, more commonly known as hourly employees. The U.S. Department of Labor takes it a step further and has a classification for "tipped employees."

Tipped employees engage in an occupation where they customarily receive more than $30 a month in tips. Non-exempt employees still need to be paid a minimum cash wage, but for "tipped employees," that's at least $2.13 an hour if their tips bring their rate to or above minimum wage.

If they don't, a "tip credit" of $5.12 kicks into effect, which helps meet minimum wage requirements. It's important to note that some local and state jurisdictions apply and require different cash wages.

Ensure Your Paperwork Is up to Par

There's a lot of corporate red tape that goes into operating a restaurant, and there's no shortage of legalese that you have to shift through to get people on the payroll.

When in doubt, consult with your attorney and accountant, but here's a good list to get you started:

- Get an EIN number so you can properly file taxes for your business.
- Register as an employer with the state's labor department.
- Ensure that your payroll system is withholding the correct percentages from employee income like local, state, and federal taxes + payments into Medicare, FICA, and Social Security.
- Get all new employees to fill out W4 forms so you know exactly how much to withhold.
- Get all new employees to fill out an I-9 to ensure they have proper citizenship and work authorization.
- Provide your payroll policy alongside your employee handbook so that everyone understands the payment schedule and terms.
- Set up employee benefits such as healthcare, paid time off, and retirement benefits (if applicable, of course).

This list may seem a bit overwhelming, but take comfort in knowing that most of these items are things that you have to fill out, create, or set-up only once.

Create a Foolproof Payment Schedule

An equally important payroll attribute is how frequently you pay employees. Each pay period frequency has its own set of pros and cons. For instance:

- Weekly pay periods are great for employees because they get paid more often but are more time-consuming for employers.
- Bi-weekly pay periods are good for employees and are more efficient, but they can get complicated when there's a month with three pay periods. The 27th check gets tricky with employer contributions and tax and benefit implications.
- Monthly pay periods are cost-effective and time-saving but are tough on employees who lack budgeting skills.

With the restaurant industry, you can sometimes get away with longer pay periods if there's a considerable amount of tips coming in, but it's still a decision to consider carefully. Whatever you do, make it easy on everyone by offering direct deposit and easy-to-understand paycheck stubs, so there's little to no confusion or mixups come payday.

Get Ahead of Potential Payroll Tax Issues

The time to prepare for taxes is on day one. If you set up the right systems from the beginning, then tax season is a breeze. If you skip over the details and aren't tax compliant, you're going to have a rough go of things.

For starters, you have to have reporting on lock. Remaining legal in the eyes of the IRS comes down to accurate receipts, pay stubs, expenses, and more.

While you're at it, consult with an attorney to fully understand local labor laws and any penalties that are associated with breaking them.

Lastly, it's wise to hold onto employee records, which include employee contact information, paystubs, timesheets, tax forms, and payroll tax forms. You'll be glad you did if you ever get audited.

Investing in Payroll Tech

One of the best things you can do to streamline payroll for your restaurant is to invest in time tracking and payroll software. ZoomShift stores vital information like timesheets, makes it quick and easy to run payroll, and helps you save on labor costs.

Doing things by hand is cumbersome, hard to scale, and results in quite a bit of human error. Left unchecked for too long, you could be leaving money on the table and making your life harder than it has to be.

Payroll Software - ZoomShift's Top Pick

1. Inova Payroll

Inova Payroll serves businesses small and large. It offers small business solutions for companies with 1 to 50 employees and medium to enterprise solutions for businesses with 51 to over 1,000 employees.

It was named a G2 High Performer in Small Business and Mid-Market for Spring 2021, and it's been named one of the 5,000 fastest growing companies by Inc. five years in a row.

In addition to payroll, Inova offers HR software, including recruiting and onboarding, benefits management, and performance management. This makes it an excellent solution for restaurants that want to streamline the entire employee lifecycle.

Inova Payroll also offers HR outsourcing for those looking for a higher level of support. And Inova's early wage access solution helps restaurants recruit and retain staff by offering them access to earned wages on-demand between pay-periods.

Inova Payroll's features include:

- **Unlimited earnings and deductions codes**
- **Full federal, state and local payroll taxes**
- **Ability to access multiple companies with one login**
- **Direct deposit**
- **Time off accruals**
- **Export reports to CSV or Excel**

Inova Payroll's pricing information is available via direct quote.

15 Actionable Employee Retention Strategies

Do you have an employee turnover problem?

Nearly 70% of organizations report that staff turnover has a negative financial impact due to the cost of recruiting, hiring, and training a replacement employee and the overtime work of current employees that's required until the organization can fill the vacant position (BLR). All things considered, it's been estimated that a lost employee can cost 6 to 9 months of that employee's salary on average. There's a clear need for employee retention strategies.

Employee turnover and staff retention is a major problem, and there are many factors at work, including generational factors, the economy, sweeping changes in the workplaces, and more.

Learning the following actionable 15 employee retention strategies will help you reduce employee turnover, and retain the talent you need to run your company.

But first, let's preface all these retention strategies with the most important principle of all.

In order to retain and engage your employees, you must truly care about them. **No strategy will overcome a lack of empathy or appreciation for your employees.**

Employee Retention Strategies for 2021:

We have put together a list of detailed of strategies that are designed to improve employee retention in the workplace. They consist of the following:

1. Provide More Positive Feedback

We all know that employees need feedback to improve and to do their best work – both positive, and constructive advice.

But in what proportion?

A study on Harvard Business Review shows that the ideal ratio between positive and negative suggestions is **5.6 (positive) to 1 (corrective)**.

Positive feedback should be given frequently to **motivate employees** and to give them the determination they need to do their best work. But constructive and corrective feedback is also important, particularly when there's an urgent issue that needs to be nipped in the bud.

Moving forward, become more aware of how many negative comments you're saying to your employees in relation to positive comments. Move the ratio towards six positive comments for every negative comment.

> **YOUR ACTION STEP**
>
> Give each employee **one positive** bit of feedback each week.
>
> ⊗ZoomShift

For example, tell a waiter, "I really liked how you confidently provided your recommendations for entrees when the customer asked. Keep up the great work."

2. Encourage Employee Creativity

Although many companies say they value creativity, they don't necessarily have any initiatives or policies in place to support it.

Google, for example, has a 20% program in which their employees are given the opportunity to work on side projects that interest them.

Michael Poh, freelance blogger at Hongkiat suggests the following steps for encouraging creativity in the workplace:

- Offer rewards.
  If you're going to encourage suggestions, take them seriously. Recognize and incentivize employees that contribute in a tangible way.
- Provide an outlet.
  Not all employees are going to want to be named or recognized for their ideas. Managers should create opportunities for both public and private contributions or feedback.
- Set up innovation teams.
  These are individual teams that are tasked with coming up with ideas on a specific topic.
- Demonstrate the value you place on creativity.
  Encourage risk-taking.
- Hire a variety of different people.
  Creativity will not come from a group of people that all think alike.
- Have fun.
  Create a positive working environment where creativity and spontaneity can occur.

Your action step: this week, give your employees 30 minutes of creative time to brainstorm ideas or work on side projects that interest them. For example, one of the side projects could be allowing a team member to run the restaurant's social media.

3. Foster Respect In The Workplace

More than ever, people are looking for respect at their jobs. They don't want to feel devalued or unimportant within an organization, which can result from a lack of respect.

CEB's Quarterly Global Labor Market research showed that the top five things people look for in a new job are:

1. Stability
2. Compensation
3. Respect
4. Health benefits
5. Work-life balance

Does your workplace value respect as highly as workers do?
A culture of respect can be fostered by implementing many of the strategies suggested on this list, including: feedback, recognition, encouraging creativity, collaboration, and so on.

It is also essential to empower your team members with the tools and resources they need, and demonstrating kindness and thoughtfulness can also go a long way.

Your action step: this week, say "thank you" to employees that hand in their assignments, greet them with a smile and a cheery "good morning" as they arrive, and instead of interrogating them about work they need to complete, simply ask if they require your help in any way (and provide them with the help they need if they ask).

4. Give Your Employees An Opportunity To Grow

Many companies promote people from outside of the organization, and don't offer ongoing training and education for their workers.

Because there is no way to advance or improve, employees become disillusioned in their roles, and are less likely to stay.

Per Sharon Florentine at CIO, ongoing education makes employees feel valued, and gives them something to look forward to. When there is a clearly laid-out path for advancement, your workforce will feel like they are a critical part of the company's success.

By promoting from within and implementing a training program, or by leveraging outside resources and tools (such as workshops, books, online courses and videos, etc.), you can create a powerful incentive for your team members to stay over the long haul.

Employees see these initiatives as an investment in *their* future.

Find **a course or a book** for your employees to study this month. Tailor the resource to the individual.

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5. Earn The Trust Of Your Employees

Employees perform better when they trust management and the people assigning them tasks. They are more likely to achieve the goals that are set for them when they believe in the person that's getting them to do the work.

46% of employees stated that a lack of transparent leadership communication is driving them to seek new employment. Meanwhile, 79% of highly engaged employees have trust and confidence in their leaders.

If you haven't implemented an employee engagement program, there's a good chance they don't trust you as much as you think they do.

As you're looking to create more trust with your employees, it will be necessary to: build personal connections, emphasize honesty and transparency, motivate your team members, give credit and shoulder blame, avoid favoritism, and demonstrate competence in your work.

Your action step: this week, make it your goal to get to know each of your employees a little better. Have open-ended conversations with them, and make them feel welcome and free to discuss what's on their mind.

6. Encourage Your Employees To Give You Feedback

It's one thing to give feedback to your employees, but you must also accept feedback from them. When workers don't feel like their thoughts are being heard, they assume the company has no interest in improving or pursuing worthy ideas.

Many employees have a tendency of thinking that nothing will change, even if they do propose something new.

Hay Group found that high levels of employee engagement can boost revenue by 2.5x (KaiNexus). This extends into providing them with the right tools and resources, offering feedback, and so on, in addition to encouraging them to give you feedback.

Remember — there needs to be opportunities for both public and private feedback, and it never hurts to thank those who offer their suggestions. Create a culture where staff members feel comfortable offering their thoughts.

Your action step: ask your employees to offer their feedback on an important project this week. For example, it could be about company culture, a high-level executive decision, or a new development in the marketplace that may require your company to adapt.

7. Include Your Employees

No one wants to feel excluded in an organization they are a part of. A new hire wants to feel like they were hired for a reason, and that they are playing a key role in helping the business achieve its objectives.

Josh Bersin, founder and principle at Bersin by Deloitte, found that companies who deliberately work to encourage inclusion, diversity, development planning, and leadership development in their culture were 3.8 times more likely to be able to coach people for improved performance, 3.6 times more able to deal with personnel performance problems, and 2.9 times more likely to identify and build leaders.

This is just one of the stunning findings on companies that make diversity and inclusion a priority.

From hiring and leadership assessment to professional development and performance management, you will need to take a top-down approach to a culture of inclusion, and there are no shortcuts to getting there.

Your action step: this week, have a conversation with each of your employees individually. Or, have an open-ended strategic meeting, and ask each of your team members what their thoughts are on their role within the company. Listen, and take note of what they say.

8. Challenge Your Employees In A Balanced Way

Doing the same thing day in and day out can lead to boredom and apathy.

On the other hand, getting your employees to complete difficult projects or jump through too many hoops could make them feel demoralized and ambivalent about their future in the company.

Kristi Hedges, contributor at Forbes notes that finding the balance between challenge and support is rarely easy.

This is because every employee is different, and what one might find rewarding, another might find tedious and too complex. Hedges suggests:

Expressing belief in your employees.
Leaders are in a position of authority, and when they express the potential they see in them, their belief in self grows.

Pushing people out of their comfort zone.
Give them a chance to take a risk.

Seeing failure as a learning opportunity.
Process failure together by learning from it.

Encourage a growth mindset.
Reward effort – not just talent and brains.

YOUR ACTION STEP

Determine which of your employees are looking for more to do, and give them one **added responsibility** this week.

- Empower them by providing the tools they need, and give them full responsibility over the project instead of micromanaging them at every stage.

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9. Encourage A Healthy Work-Life Balance

Many organizations have high expectations for their employees. But for workers, this can mean less time devoted to personal care, leisure activities, and family.

OECD found that roughly 12% of employees work very long hours in the United States. This is slightly less than the average 13%. But full-time workers in the US only devote 60% or 14.5 hours of their day to personal care and leisure, which is less than the average 15 hours.

When your team members are well-rested and have adequate time to care for themselves and their families, they will also perform better at work.

Establishing regular work hours, policies for working on weekends, or work-from-home programs can offer your team members the flexibility they need to bring their best to work every single day.

Action step: identify people in your company that are overworked this week. Give them a bit of time off, or get everyone out of the office for a walk. Evaluate how your work scheduling promotes a healthy work-life balance.

10. Connect With Your Team

Part of employee engagement and enablement is taking time to connect with your people, and we've already seen how employee engagement can have a dramatic impact on the effectiveness of your company.

When your workforce feels connected, it gives them purpose. It helps them carve out a niche within their department or team, and it helps them see how they are contributing to big-picture objectives.

Per Peter Economy, full-time ghostwriter and best-selling author, "The secret to unlocking this unlimited source of energy for your company is to build and strengthen the bonds between you and your employees. When you trust and respect your people – and really connect with them – they will respond with commitment and enthusiasm."

You can bring out the best in your workforce by allowing them to express their ideas, recognizing their contribution, empowering them with the tools and information they need, giving them opportunities to grow, and so on.

Companies can accomplish this best through corporate philanthropy programs, like employee volunteering and corporate giving. Studies show large companies have reduced turnover by 50% using CSR programs. IBM alone attributes a $600 million return on their $200 million CSR program investment. Fortunately, companies large and small reap the benefits.

Your action step: connect with your team members outside of your place of business this week and consider using that time to bring your team together to give back to the community. This employee retention strategy aims to get more out of your time away from the office with pro bono employee volunteering; a great career development and team building opportunity.

11. Offer A Competitive Base Salary or Hourly Wage

Your employees want to feel like the effort they put into work is worth their time. When it comes to employee retention, money isn't everything, but offering a competitive wage can help your people feel like their work and time is valued.

According to Chron.com, "Regardless of a person's field, she wants to know her compensation is competitive with what others who perform similar work are earning. Salaries need not be the highest in your area but should be among the top. Paying low salaries means top people will leave and low performer will take their jobs."

Your team members need to be able to cover their cost of living, and to feel like they are doing good, rewarding work. If you aren't sure, research what a competitive salary would be for your employees and start paying them what they're worth.

Your action step: review current wages, and determine if you need to make any adjustments to be competitive.

12. Avoid Sudden Changes In The Workplace

Change may be inevitable, but it can also be very stressful. You may need to introduce new initiatives and systems in your company to keep up with growth or to strengthen quality assurance. But forcing too much change too soon can affect employee retention.

Towers Watson found that employee attitude can be affected negatively by organizations going through significant change.

We all like to think of our employees as strong people, capable of adapting as necessary. But without ongoing communication – especially with regards to the status of their job – your workers can begin to feel fearful for their future in the company.

Many entrepreneurs have found that introducing one change at a time is more manageable for workers than many changes at once. Instead of trying to implement broad, sweeping changes, it would be wise to go about it gradually.

Your action step: determine whether your employees are under any undue stress this week. If you have a plan in place to bring about changes within the company – assignments, job descriptions, polices, systems, and so on – consider slowing the projected timeline for completion.

13. Create A Clean & Safe Environment For Your Employees

Dirtiness and clutter is distracting. And if people sense that danger is near, they're going to have a hard time focusing on the work they need to do.

Since your employees will be spending at least one-third of any given day in the workplace, if not longer, it's important to create and maintain a comfortable working environment.

To achieve this end, you may need to carry out risk assessment to identify potential hazards and dangers in the workplace. You may also want to update your health and safety policies and put additional processes and procedures in place to ensure a safe working environment.

And although we are talking about employee retention strategies here, it may also be necessary to let go of employees that are harassing, causing distractions, or not cooperating. This will be for the better of all involved – ensure the comfort of the many over the few.

Your action step: put a plan in place to keep the workplace organized, and do a risk assessment this week.

14. Give Your Employees The Tools They Need To Succeed

If you're going to set goals for your workers, you need to give them the tools, resources, and information they need to succeed. All too often, employees are left to their own devices without any direction or guidance. Is it any wonder they fail to hit a target they cannot even see?

Abigail Phillips, editorial director at WDM Group notes, "We've all heard that 'a team is only as strong as its weakest link,' but the number of business leaders choosing to ignore this sentiment is staggering, as they are more concerned with their own development and less so with their employees. Not a smart move."

If you want to help your employees succeed, you need to be in regular communication with them, asking them specifically about the project they're working on, and if there's anything you can help them with to bring it to completion. You need to be willing to share your knowledge, and to mentor and guide them.

Your action step: this week, assess whether any of your team members are uncertain how to proceed with a project. Ask what they would need to move forward with their assignment, and provide it for them.

15. Provide Adequate Rest Periods For Your Employees

In the US, long hours in the office is often worn like a badge of honor, and hardworking entrepreneurs are glorified and celebrated. But people are not machines, and when pushed too hard for too long, they will succumb to illness, fatigue, and unnecessary (but sometimes costly) mistakes.

According to Chron.com, one-third of workers eat lunch at their desk, and 16% hardly, if ever, take a lunch at all.

It's one thing to support an employee that's driven and wants to make a significant contribution to the company. But for every determined and ambitious employee, there are many others that would collapse under the pressure of stress and overwork.

If employee retention is your goal, then it's important to provide adequate rest periods for them. This will help reduce stress and sick days. Depending on the state, this is also a matter of regulatory compliance.

Your action step: this week, try adding an additional 10 minutes to everyone's rest period. Observe whether this makes any difference to overall performance and morale.

Conclusion

You've just learned about 15 distinct strategies on how to retain employees. So, instead of trying to affect change at a foundational level, why not begin work on just one strategy this week?

Bookmark this page and come back when you are ready to add the next strategy. Start with something you know needs to be addressed in your company sooner rather than later.

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51 Employee Appreciation Day Ideas

Employee appreciation day is on Friday the 5th of March this year. You want to show your employees that you appreciate them. But you don't want to spend an exorbitant amount of money demonstrating your gratitude.

This is a predicament many organizations find themselves in. They want to reward their workers, but they don't necessarily have a huge budget for it.

The good news? Employee appreciation doesn't have to cost an arm and a leg. And even if you don't have the budget for a huge bash, it's better to recognize your team members in small ways than to not do anything at all.

Here are 50+ employee appreciation day ideas that won't break the bank.

1. Virtual Reality Day

Virtual reality is a fast-emerging, much talked about technology trend. Don't you think your employees would love to be able to play in a digital playground for a while? You may be able to find a service in your locality that could provide the technology for just such an event.

2. Personal Project Time

Google had the famous 20-percent-time policy (not in use at Google anymore due to increasing employee commitments). You could consider giving your team members a few hours or a full day to work on a project or assignment they would enjoy doing.

3. Guest Speaker

You could invite a relevant industry speaker or influencer to come in and share their knowledge and experience. This could add value to your team members and give them a break from the usual routine.

TOP TIP

Any initiatives you have in place to **encourage continual growth** can also help with employee retention.

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4. Half Day Off

Give your employees a little bit of time off to recoup and tend to their personal lives. You could schedule the half days just before long weekends if you want to show added appreciation. No one is going to complain about less time at work. Gifts from the employee schedule are a great way to show appreciation to employees. You can use employee scheduling software to help plan this in advance. with an employee scheduler you can invite your team to view their schedules and agree what dates they'd like a company-wide half day. Show your appreciation by allowing employees to make decisions as a group.

5. Concert

Bring in a local artist or band to perform for your team members. If possible, find musicians that cater to the tastes of your workers and play songs you know they enjoy.

6. Walk

Stuck at work on a hot summer day? Why not take your employees out for a stroll? This is a good way to encourage conversation, get everyone's blood flowing, and idea muscle working. You could also combine this activity with another – like getting ice cream.

7. Recognition

Every worker likes to be recognized and thanked for the contribution they make to the company. Public recognition is even better. Whether it's at a weekly meeting, during lunch break or through an employee of the month program, find a way to reward your employees for their hard work.

Additionally, say "thank you" often, learn the names of all your staff, and treat them the way they want to be treated. The little things do add up.

8. Ice Cream

Take your whole team out for ice cream on a day that's convenient. Or, if everyone can't go at once, do it in shifts. This gives your staff a chance to breathe a sigh of relief, spend some time away from work, and enjoy a tasty treat.

9. Thank You Notes

It's a small gesture, but it can go a long way.

YOUR ACTION STEP

Send your employees **"Thank You" notes** periodically to remind them that their work is appreciated.

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You can also pass them around to other team members to have them sign it.

10. Extended Lunch Break

Workers are sometimes rushed throughout the day, and even when they're on lunch, they may not have a moment to collect their thoughts and recharge. Extended lunch breaks can offer more flexibility to their day, and maybe give them a chance to go and eat at a place they're interested in, but aren't normally able to get to.

11. Video Games

You could set up a popular video game in the break-room for a little entertainment – preferably something that's multi-player for added engagement. Have your employees split up into teams to compete. You may have to put a time limit on use or tear it down after a certain time so everyone doesn't get carried away.

12. Dessert Buffet

Put together a dessert buffet for your people to enjoy. It could also be a sundae bar where your team can choose the toppings they want on their dessert. A nice treat can put everyone in a better mood.

13. Movie

How about an afternoon movie to entertain and delight your staff members? You don't have to go to the theatres – you could set this up in a break room or meeting room. Again, you could do this in shifts if you can't have all your team members watching a movie at the same time.

14. Board Game Day

Everyone has their favorite board game. Encourage your employees to bring one that everyone can play. Have a few tables set aside for this so you can have multiple games going at the same time.

15. Take Over Their Tasks

This shouldn't break the bank. You could take over assignments and tasks from your team members and lighten their load.

Alternatively, you could also let your employees trade tasks they don't want to do for ones they would rather work on.

16. Boss For A Day

Let your employees take charge and make decisions for a day. Give them greater responsibilities and higher standards to live up to. You may be surprised by how well they handle their new duties – something to recognize in itself.

17. Small Gifts

Though new technology (like tablets and computers), chairs and desks could cost you a hefty sum, buying smaller gifts like stationery or low-cost software shouldn't run your business into the ground. Another idea might be to buy gift cards.

KEY TAKEAWAY

The main idea here is to **give** your team members **something** they want without having to pay a lot for it.

⊛ ZoomShift

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18. Social Media Love

Recognize your best employees on social media. You could make this a weekly initiative, or a monthly program depending on what works best for you.

This also shows your prospects and clients that you are human and care about your employees. This can boost your overall reputation.

19. Recognition Platform

Use a platform like Bonusly to encourage recognition across your team. Bonusly encourages anyone on a team to recognize anyone else in the form of a small, public bonus, from an intern to the CEO. Your team members can also redeem those bonuses in a catalog with hundreds of reward partners.

You could also do something similar without the use of an app. You could create a leaderboard and award each of your employees points based on their performance. There should be a real reward attached to these points, however.

20. Website Appreciation

Create a section on your homepage for featured employees. Use it to highlight those who are doing extraordinary in their roles.

21. Picnic

Who doesn't like a free lunch? An outdoor picnic can be a great way to show appreciation for your employees, particularly if the weather cooperates. It can also provide an opportunity for everyone to get to know each other better.

22. Caricatures

Invite a caricature artist to come into the workplace to compose funny drawings for everyone. Fun for all!

23. Recognize The Achievement Of Personal Goals

When you take the time to appreciate when employees achieve goals outside of the workplace, they'll be reminded of the fact that you care about them as people, not just as cogs in a wheel.

You can also reward your people with gifts connected to their passions (such as a book about fishing if one of your employees loves fishing).

24. Donate

Donate to a cause or charity of the employee's choice. It doesn't need to be a significant amount, but your team members will appreciate the chance to make a decision like this, and the fact that you're expressing interest in something they believe in or care about.

25. Internal Recognition

If you're using a team communication or project management software (such as Slack or Basecamp), set aside a channel or section just for recognizing outstanding staff members. This gives everyone a chance to congratulate each other.

26. Pizza

Who doesn't like a good slice of pizza? Hold pizza days periodically to show your employees that you care. Or, combine a pizza lunch with other activities on this list, such as a movie.

27. Let Your Employees Choose An Activity

Put together a few employee appreciation day activity ideas in advance, present them to your employees, and then let them select which one they would most like to do. You can find a list of virtual employee activities on teambuilding.

28. Go Bowling

Get away from the workplace for a while. Invite the team out to enjoy a game of bowling, and get to know your people away from work.

29. Ping Pong

Set up a ping pong table in a decent-sized room and let your team members play a few games throughout the day. It should be easy for your employees to take turns, and you could even set up a tournament for more fun. If you want to prepare a prize for the winner, you could also do that.

30. Give Up Your Parking Spot

And don't just let them use it for the day. Consider giving them the convenience of taking it over for a week or even a month.

31. Surprise!

Plan and organize a surprise celebration. This can really lift the spirits of your workers, especially since you never know who might be feeling a bit down (and you may not even be aware of it).

32. Wash Their Car

With the right equipment, you might even be able to do this on-site. If not, a quick car wash at the local gas station shouldn't cost you too much.

33. Company Newsletter

Recognize exceptional workers in your company newsletter. Make them feel special.

34. Field Trip

Take your employees on a tour of a partnering vendor's facilities.

RESTAURANT SCHEDULING SOFTWARE

Staff scheduling software designed for restaurants.

ZoomShift helps you save hours scheduling, reduce labor costs, and have confidence that your team will show up on time.

Start Free Trial

35. Trophy

Get a trophy to recognize employees who go above and beyond the call of duty. Let them hang onto it for a week, and then pass it on to another person who is doing great work.

36. Magazine Subscription

Buy a magazine subscription of their choosing. Since new issues arrive multiple times per year, you get to thank them for their work multiple times – not just once.

37. Love From Everyone

Get everyone from your team to write something for the person you're looking to recognize, whether it's on a card, poster board, or a notebook. Present it to your outstanding staff member.

38. Thank You Video

Go beyond the standard "thank you" note. Put together a special "thank you" video for your team members. If appropriate, the video could also be posted to YouTube, and be featured on your company blog or website.

39. Email

Send out a companywide email acknowledging the great work your team is doing. Again, recognition is better when it's public.

40. BBQ

Summer is a great time to hold an annual barbecue for your staff. This gives them something to look forward to.

41. Make Your Own Video

Let your employees go crazy with a creative video project. They shouldn't need anything more than a good smartphone to capture and create their own masterpieces. You could have your staff break up into groups and compete for the best video. Make it a themed event – such as a comedy or music.

42. Invest In Their Growth

Employees tend to stay with companies that are genuinely interested in their ongoing progression and growth. You could put together a shelf of materials, such as books and audiobooks, that employees can access to learn new skills and improve in their work.

You could also call upon an industry expert or life coach for the day to train your team member.

43. Vision Board

Create a vision board for your entire organization, and let your team members contribute to it. Get them to think about where they'd like to see the company go in the future. Let them post pictures on the vision board. Discuss goals and visions together.

44. Comedy

Invite a local comedian in to entertain your team members. There's no medicine like laughter. Remember – keep it clean and keep it fun.

45. Photos For Fun

Give your workers the opportunity to snap silly photos. Provide props, wigs, and other items to make it fun. You could also make it a group photo op.

46. Nicknames

Many companies are known to give their employees nicknames. It might be characters from The Lord of the Rings, or it might be funny job titles (i.e. Marketing Ninja, or Copywriting Guru).

KEY TAKEAWAY

It's a small gesture, but it can bring some extra fun to the workplace and help people feel **more appreciated**.

ZoomShift

47. Call

You can recognize your employees in a variety of ways – with videos, social media posts, emails, and so on. But sometimes a phone call is exactly what a worker wants and needs. Take the time to thank your people by phone.

48. Meditation

Organize a guided meditation session for your employees. This shows that you care about their general wellbeing. There are many health benefits to meditation, and if you hold the session midday, it may even give your team members a needed energy boost to get through the second part of their day.

49. Contest

For example, you could hold a contest to decide on the company's new tagline or motto. Whoever comes up with the best idea wins, and is rewarded with a nice prize.

You can hold any kind of contest you want, so long as it's appropriate. Contests are fun and encourage creativity among your workers.

50. Certificates

Put a certificate program into place. Create milestones for your employees to reach, and when they earn certain certificates of excellence. Recognize their achievements.

51. Pool

Bowling is just one outside activity that can be a lot of fun. The swimming pool or local leisure center is another place that can be quite relaxing and enjoyable for your team members.

Conclusion

Without employee engagement, your workers will lose interest in their job. The cost of replacing and training a new worker are much too high to ignore.

By showing your employees appreciation on a regular basis, you will retain more of your talent and foster an environment of excellence. People tend to do their best work when they're happy and in good spirits.

So, act now. Implement one or two of the above ideas immediately and watch as motivation within your company begins to soar.

4 Restaurant Marketing

How To Create A Restaurant Marketing Plan

A marketing plan may feel like a fancy term, but all it really boils down to is, "how do I get more customers?"

That's it! How do you get more people to give your restaurant a shot at impressing them?

Having great food and great service is the bare minimum. That's what keeps the lights on, people employed, and a decent level of recurring customers.

To truly wow customers, create lines, and open up the possibilities of franchising or opening new restaurants, you have to create a rock-solid marketing plan. One that gets people talking about your restaurant and excited to not only visit but come back again and again.

In this article, we'll explain exactly how to create a world-class restaurant marketing plan.

It Starts and Ends With Your Brand

Before you can even consider jumping headfirst into the marketing tactics, you need to take the time to understand yourself.

What's your restaurant's identity? What are you working toward? Who do you serve?

All these questions and more will help you craft the perfect restaurant marketing plan.

Create a mission and vision statement

Your restaurant's mission statement defines the company's business objectives. It shows the world and your employees why you're in business and what you hope to achieve.

The vision statement aligns closely with the mission statement by describing what the restaurant hopes to achieve or be in the future.

Make your value proposition crystal clear

Your restaurant's value proposition defines what you promise to deliver to your patrons should they choose to dine in your restaurant. It may describe the quality of food, the level of service, or the overall experience. Perhaps even all three.

Follow through with your positioning statement

Your restaurant's positioning statement describes how your restaurant fills a particular need in the market. It's a crucial part of any restaurant marketing strategy because it acts as a north star that you can align all marketing efforts against.

The better you know yourself, the easier it will be to create marketing content.

Ensure Every Decision Has the Customer in Mind

Beyond knowing yourself, you need to know your customers. The best way to do that is by creating a customer persona. These personas are semi-fictional, but they should be based on real interviews and surveys you conduct on your dining patrons.

The information that you gather dives deep into customer preferences, motivations, goals, behaviors, and mindset. You'll also get demographic info like income, age, and gender. Many restaurants go as far as figuring out what their favorite dish or drinks are.

Do that well enough, and you'll have full-fledged customer personas that you can use to create targeted marketing material and campaigns that are more likely to resonate and convert.

Start by Building Your Own Narrative

People don't just go to restaurants for food, they go because it says something about who they are as a person. It shows what they value and what they're willing to purchase.

Ultimately, it comes down to the story you tell about your restaurant.

To have your company stand out from the crowd, you need a differentiator. Something that gets people fired up. Stand for a cause or against a cause. Stand against frozen ingredients like Papa Johns. Stand for organic and sustainability-focused food like Chipotle.

Do that well enough, and you'll create a following. The magic truly lies in building a community. Advertise free meals for veterans. Have a first responders day. Show people that you care about more than just money.

Invest in Creating a Marketing Loop

Getting people to not only come back to your restaurant but tell their friends too means that you have to create a one-of-a-kind experience that creates a reaction of surprise, delight, and gratitude.

Doing that builds word of mouth, but that's not enough. You have to incentivize people to spread the word for you. Nothing works better than social proof. Give people "buy one get one cards" on their first visit that are valid for their second visit. This encourages them to not only come back but to bring family, friends, or colleagues.

If they don't hear about you through word-of-mouth, then they're heading over to Google or some social media site for ideas. 60% of millennials start their restaurant search just an hour before they visit a restaurant.

Find a way to incentivize people to leave positive reviews or surveys that either end up someplace public like Facebook, Google, Trip Advisor, or internally on your website.

Get Even More Active on Social Media

Gary Vaynerchuk thinks your restaurant should be posting on Instagram 4-5 times *per day*.

It doesn't always have to be about your specials or happy hour either. It can be about college basketball if that's big in your state. You can show them the quality of your food, from how you source ingredients to how it's prepared. Again, incorporate storytelling. Tell your story and the story of your customers.

Gary's famous approach here is called Jab, Jab, Jab, Right Hook, and it's all about providing non-stop value to your customers and earning their attention and the right to throw a right hook.

Jabs are useful, funny, or interesting bits of information or content that keep people interested in what your restaurant's social media posts offer. The right hook is getting people to attend an event, try a new entree, or bring a friend to happy hour this week.

Taking the First Step

Creating an iron-clad marketing plan for your restaurant isn't rocket science, but it does require a certain level of finesse and introspection.

 If you know yourself, know your customers, and focus more on long-term value and relationships than quick wins, you're virtually guaranteed to see better results this year.

7 Restaurant Marketing Ideas to Guarantee Success

Picture this: It's a weeknight, and your restaurant is jam-packed with hungry patrons. They're chatting, passing plates around, and ordering lots of food. To top it off, your reservation list is booked solid for a month.

The scenario above is a restaurant owner's dream – one that many don't get to realize. However, don't believe the urban legend that most restaurants fail in their first year – data from a BLS survey suggests that only about 17% of independent restaurants failed in their first year.

Restaurant management is no easy feat. It definitely takes a lot of hard work for a restaurant to make it past its first five years, but in this article, we'll focus on arguably the most essential piece: *marketing*.

In this list, you won't find common sense items like claiming your Google page or purchasing ads. Those are given. You'll get seven hard-hitting, creative ideas that are guaranteed to bring life to your business. Let's jump in:

1. Promote Your Top-Selling Items

Let's start with an easy one. Pull a report from your point-of-sale system (POS) and figure out what your top-selling items are. Then, take that list and start promoting them like crazy.

Don't promote what *you* like or what has the lowest food cost margin. Promote what people love. People keep coming back for your "greatest hits," so why waste advertising dollars on promoting anything else?

Having high-quality photos of your best-selling items will help tremendously here. Invest in a professional photographer who knows about angles, lighting, and editing. Pay a premium here, and you'll see premium returns on your marketing efforts.

You can use these photos on your menu, Instagram page, TripAdvisor page, website – you name it. These photos will last you years and have some the best ROI of anything you do.

2. Create a Talk Trigger

Word of mouth reach is invaluable. It's the most effective marketing technique, and the best part is that it's completely free. When your customers are as passionate as you are about bringing people in the door, great things happen.

One of the best ways to spread the word about your restaurant is through a talk trigger, which at its core, just means something unique people will tell their friends about. A shining example of a talk trigger in action is Skip's Kitchen.

At the counter, the cashier fans out a 54 card deck (including jokers) face down and asks customers to select one.

Most cards simply act as table markers so the servers know where to bring food. However, pulling out a joker means you win a free meal. Skip's Kitchen is packed most days because people love the excitement and the chance to score from free food.

3. Leverage Content Marketing & SEO

If you're thinking about spending a bucket of cash on your website, then think again. Keep it to no more than $1,500-2,000. Why? Because when people are looking for somewhere to eat, they type what they want into Google.

These days, Google has everything they need, ranging from your hours to your phone number to your menu. It even provides neatly organized customer reviews.

Save your money and spend it on the next best thing: content marketing. If you run a steakhouse in a big city, then you want to show up at the top of the SERPs when people type in "best steakhouse in Dallas." The only way to do that is through SEO optimized content.
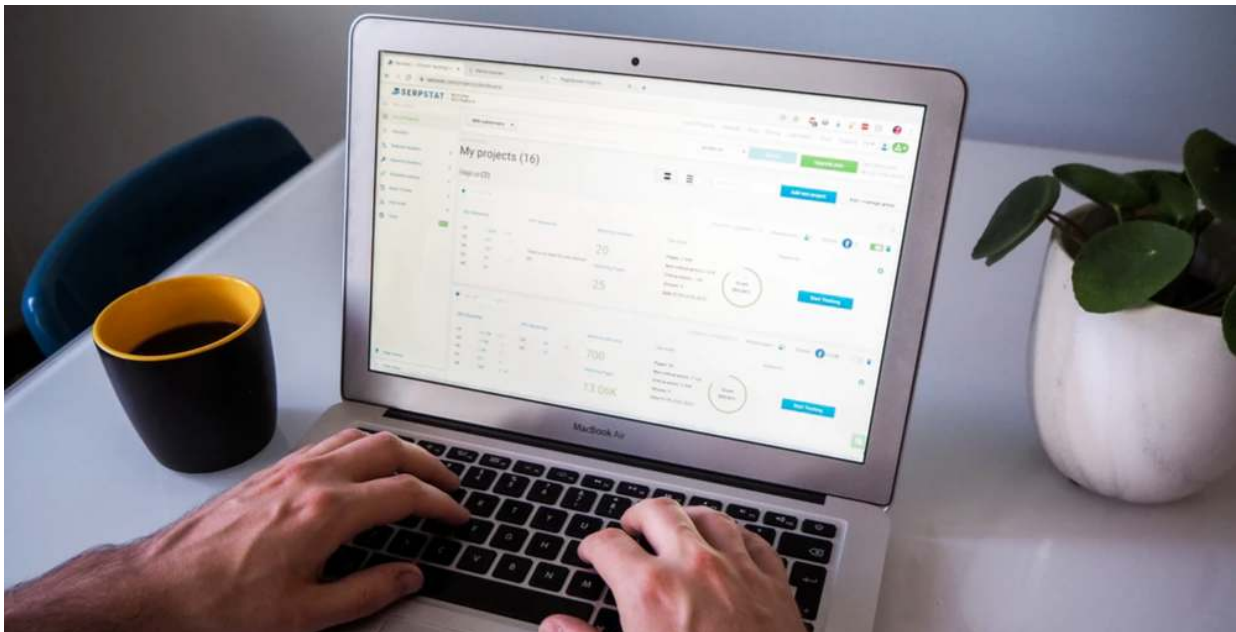
4. Invite Food Critics & Bloggers to Your Door

It isn't just about the food anymore. People want a fun dining experience – something they can enjoy, brag to their friends about, and post on social media. One of the best ways to find great food and experiences is by following various food critics, foodie influencers, or checking food reviews in local publications.

In Lexington, Texas, Snow's BBQ had a respectable customer base that kept them busy most weekends, but it was nothing to brag about. That all changed when they won Texas Monthly's Best BBQ award in 2008. Practically overnight, they had dozens – if not hundreds – of people lined up outside their door.

Your restaurant could be the next Snow's BBQ. Start by figuring out where people find food recommendations in your city and start extending offers for a free dining experience to various influencer types.

5. Give Away Free Meals for Special Occasions

Chances are that you have a go-to spot for anniversaries, birthdays, or graduations – we all do. People create special bonds with the restaurants where they celebrate life events. You want a piece of that action.

Free meals on birthdays is a must for every restaurant. Or a free dessert, at least. It's pretty rare that people dine alone on their birthday, so you'll recoup lost revenue and potentially have new regulars. If you run ads on Facebook, you can even specifically target people with upcoming birthdays.

Make it a point to ask people if they're celebrating anything when they reserve tables with large parties. If they are, then do what you can to make it as memorable as possible.

Decorate the table and bring free appetizers or desserts. Have the chef come speak with them about the menu personally. Get creative, and they'll keep coming back and bring their friends and family, too.

6. Create a YouTube Cooking Show

Millennial food lovers are a loyal bunch – one that's fueled an astonishing 280% growth in food channel subscriptions year-over-year. The best part? The barrier to entry to creating your own show is incredibly low these days, *and* it has the potential to drive serious traffic.

Make videos showing how you make your favorite dishes, how you source your ingredients, and showcase different events that your restaurant hosts. Give behind the scenes access, and your customers will keep coming back for more.

7. Build a Food Challenge

People love food challenges. The Hot Ones YouTube Channel, where celebrities eat a range of the hottest chicken wings during interviews, has over nine million subscribers. That's greater than the population of New York City.

Get your staff together to start coming up with some fun or crazy food challenges. Whip up an extra-tall stack of pumpkin spice pancakes with a half-gallon of Pumpkin Spice Latte and call it "The Pumpkin Spice Challenge." Anyone who finishes every bit gets a free entree on their next visit.

Create extra spicy tacos and invite local politicians to debate while they tear up from ingesting ghost pepper sauce. The potential for creativity knows no bounds here.

As we wrap up, it's crucial that you keep your online reputation top of mind. It's the lifeblood of your business and is often what will make or break you. Incentivize your customers to leave good reviews, and make sure that you respond to every single review you get across all platforms.

Restaurant Website Design: The Ultimate Guide

You have tons of 5-star reviews on Google, and your Facebook page has your restaurant's menu, phone number, directions, and more.

So, why do you need a website for your restaurant?

Technically, you don't. Many restaurants get by just fine without them. However, there are many benefits to building a website for your restaurant, such as:

- Lower advertising costs since you don't have to pay to advertise specials and other services as you do with social media or search engine advertising
- Social proof, testimonials, and awards can all be posted on your website
- Increased brand awareness through search engine rankings
- The ability to sell gift cards and merchandise, as well as give patrons the ability to place online orders or reserve tables

The list goes on, and so does the upside of having a website for your restaurant. Here's your ultimate guide to designing your website:

How to Create a Restaurant Website

When starting on your journey to get a website for your restaurant, you've got two options: make it yourself or hire a professional. Here's a look at what both entail:

Hiring Developers

- No experience is needed, and you can get a completely custom website in a matter of days or weeks.
- It's a lower time investment on your part, but you will have to pay more since someone else is doing the heavy lifting.

Do-It-Yourself (DIY)

- You'll need a general understanding of how websites are built, including buying and registering your domain, connecting it to a hosting server, and setting up other services like email.
- You'll have to learn how basic website builders work because learning to code from scratch takes months, if not years.
- You won't be able to customize your website entirely, but you can get close with the right website builder and the various add-ons available.
- You'll pay less upfront, but the ongoing maintenance costs are about the same.

Ultimately, building your own website is a viable option if your budget is limited and you don't need anything completely custom. But if you consider the number of hours that you'll spend building the website along with your hourly rate, it might also make more sense to hire a professional.

What Are the Best Website Builders for Restaurants?

The barrier to creating a website has never been lower, thanks to the dozens of user-friendly website builders available on the market. Here are just a few to consider:

- **Wix** – At over 100+ million websites built, Wix is a significant player in the market and leverages AI to help build the perfect website for your needs.
- **Squarespace** – It's affordable, popular in the market, and still relatively user-friendly.
- **Weebly** – Highly user-friendly, with a low learning curve and competitive pricing.
- **Duda** – Not as popular as some of the others on this lisst, but it's gaining traction and has more custom options like mobile site builder and detailed analytics.
- **WordPress + Divi** – A powerful combination that requires a greater learning investment upfront but has the greatest potential for customization.

Every website builder comes with its own nuances that'll require a little time investment to figure out. When you get stuck, there's usually plenty of YouTube tutorials that can help get the most out of your investment.

How Much Do Restaurants Pay for Websites?

As with all things in life, the answer varies. The ideal would be a cheap, high-quality website that's finished fast. Many designers like to say that you can pick two of these, but you can't have all three.

The designing, coding, testing, release, and maintenance all factor in heavily. It also depends on how many pages and how many "add-ons" like online ordering you want.

Finally, where your designer operates is a factor. A web designer in India might cost 1/10th the price of a New York designer. It's also true that you get what you pay for, so the cheapest option isn't necessarily the wisest.

Ultimately, you can expect to pay as little as a few hundred dollars for a designer to toss your logo and content onto a template website and call it a day. Or you can pay $2,000+ to get something mostly custom built from scratch.

5 Top Restaurant Website Design Examples

To help you on your journey to creating the best restaurant website, we've gathered five unique websites to inspire you:

1. Italian Fine Dining in Georgia

Coletta Italian Food & Wine built a website where their family-style meals are the focus. You get high-quality photos of all their vibrant food strewn across wooden tables and paired with wine. Above the fold, all you see is food and an "Order Online" button to guide your purchase.

2. Vibrant Caribbean Food in NYC

Miss Lily's knows that people don't just come for the food, but for the atmosphere. With their website, they made their restaurant the focus by showcasing rotating images of the colorful bar, dining areas, and where they play music.

3. Going Green in Canada

Green Rebel is all about being authentic. Their website shows real people and real raw ingredients. Up top, you get a looping video of both, and as you scroll, you get super high-quality resolution images of the natural ingredients they use in their dishes that give off a fresh and healthy vibe.

4. Fresh Cuisine in London

Trullo takes their fresh ingredients from raw through the entire prep process on their website to tell a compelling story about their food. Each hour, they're either proofing sourdough for the oven or printing new menus for the day since their options vary daily.

5. Sizzling Simplicity in Texas

Franklin BBQ is world-renowned for their BBQ, so naturally, they showcase a big cafeteria tray of the best they have to offer on the front of their website. Below that, you get a "serving the best barbecue in the known universe" review, their hours, and location. It doesn't get much more simple than that.

Finishing Touches

Restaurants are a dime a dozen. They're on every street corner across the world, and most are decent at best at what they do. What truly separates them from the competition is the story they tell their patrons, the fresh ingredients they use, how they are managed and the dining experience offered.

5 Restaurant Technology
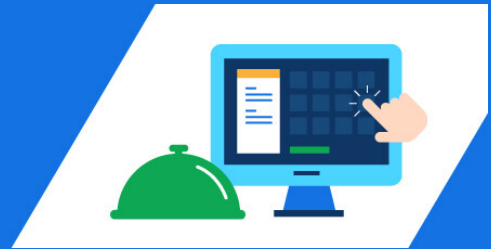
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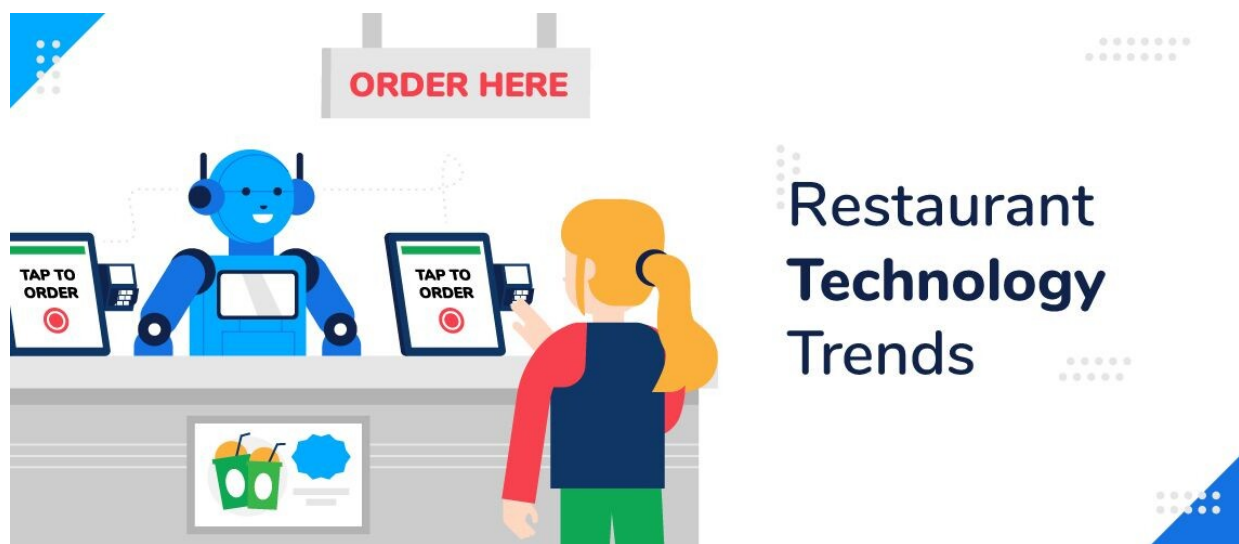
The new decade kicked off in a memorable way, and restaurants are simultaneously thriving and struggling. In 2020, restaurant sales dropped $240 billion from the expected levels. There are 3.1 million fewer employees in the industry now, and as a result, many restaurants are looking to get creative with the resources on hand.

Those thriving are ahead of the game and are diving headfirst into consumer demands of contactless deliveries, loyalty programs, mobile app ordering, and self-service.

It's hard to say what the future holds, but here are five restaurant technology trends already making waves in 2021:

1. Food Delivery Robots Are Taking Over

Companies like Starship are rolling out autonomous robots that partner up with stores and restaurants to make local delivery fast, smart, and efficient. As of 2021, Starship robots have already delivered more than 1,000,000 automated deliveries and continue to receive funding to expand their offering even further.

Much like self-driving cars, these friendly delivery robots use cameras to make 3D maps of their surroundings. They use that data to detect curb edges, obstructions to their path, and people. They drive autonomously down sidewalks and can travel over steps. These robots carry up to 22lbs of food and won't unlock until you approach them and unlock them from your phone.

Delivery drones are on the rise too.GrubHub, UberEats, and DoorDash pay human drivers $6-8 per delivery trip. According to Ark Invest research, it only costs Amazon 88 cents to deliver a 5lb product via drone. UberEats drones can fly 12 miles round trip and carry a meal for up to two people.

2. Self-Ordering Kiosks Become Standard

McDonald's and Panera Bread went all in very early with self-ordering kiosks, and many restaurants are starting to follow suit. Self-ordering kiosks improve order accuracy, reduce wait times, and boost check sizes.

Some, like the Coca-Cola Freestyle drink dispenser, offer seemingly endless drink combinations all at your customers' fingertips. Even restaurants with a wait staff like Chili's Grill & Bar offer kiosks at your table to request drink refills, desserts, and pay your bill when you're finished so you don't have to flag anyone down before leaving.

More than 65% of customers said they'd visit a restaurant more often if they had self-service kiosks. In fact, 30% of customers surveyed said they prefer to order from a kiosk versus a cashier, even if the lines were of equal length.

3. The Rise of Ghost Kitchens

Food delivery and takeout soared as a result of the pandemic. DoorDash increased its revenue by 241% from $850 million annually to $2.9 billion. Naturally, more and more restaurants are revamping their takeout and delivery options to capitalize on the growing demand.

Chipotle even launched its first only "digital-only" kitchen. Dubbed the "ghost kitchen," this digital-only Chipotle only does takeout orders. There's no dining room, and you're required to order in advance from Chipotle or a third-party app. Some benefits of ghost kitchens include:

- Shortened wait times at traditional restaurant locations since all to-go and delivery orders are fulfilled at another location.
- Lower labor costs since you don't need employees taking orders or cleaning dining rooms.
- Lower operational costs because you don't need a cash register or a dining room to cater to traditional diners.

With to-go and delivery on the rise, it's no surprise that more and more companies are shrinking or eliminating dining rooms.
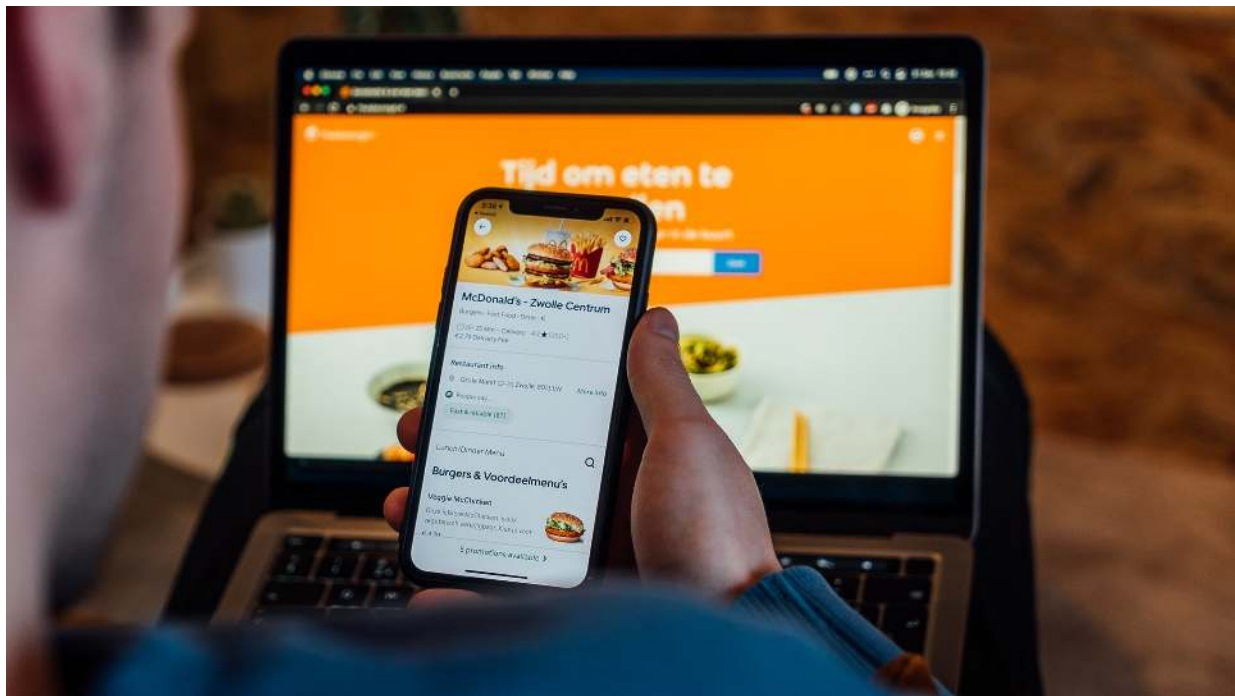
4. Digital Menu & Kitchen Boards Change Everything

Cash registers are rapidly being replaced by tablet POS systems and restaurants that are going cashless. Paper tickets and static menu boards are dying fast too. Kitchen Display Systems (KDS), on the other hand, are on the rise.

The KDS acts as a digital order board so kitchen staff can keep up with orders. They often improve kitchen communication, ensure greater accuracy, streamline your workflows, and create a more sustainable kitchen operation. They can also help with inventory management by displaying priority orders, signal dwindling stock items, and flag special dietary requests – all things that many restaurants still do by hand.

Digital menu boards are similar, but are visible to customers. They can show rotating images and videos of products that entice the senses in innovative ways. They can easily update if something's out of stock or if a specialty item recently hit the menu. And they're more visually appealing to patrons who are waiting to place an order.

5. Employee Scheduling Gets a Makeover

Gone are the days of paper schedules and complicated excel spreadsheets. More and more restaurants are embracing an automation-rich program like ZoomShift that makes employee scheduling a breeze.

With software like ZoomShift, you get a built-in GPS time clock that tells you when and where employees clock in and alerts you if someone's at the wrong location, missed a time punch, or didn't clock in altogether.

It'll also keep up with your team's time off requests and allow them to swap shifts amongst each other, so you're not stuck acting as the middle-man. Instead, you get complete ownership from your team, and all you have to do is click "approve" or "deny" to any requests.

Plus, everyone gets the same features and automation available on their smartphone, tablet, or computer, so everyone's always connected and on the same page.

The Ultimate Guide for the Best Restaurant Point-of-Sale Systems

Choosing the best point of sale for your restaurant is no easy task. Your restaurant's POS system touches almost every aspect of your business. Your choice needs to be carefully thought out and based on your restaurant's current needs, while also keeping in mind how you want to scale your business down the line.

Especially if you're managing a restaurant, having a step-by-step guide can help you consider the most important features and elements a POS system can bring to your restaurant. While the items below aren't an exhaustive list, consider this your must-have starting point for choosing a restaurant POS system ideal for your business needs.

1. Make sure it's easy to use

Restaurant POS systems are designed to make your staff's lives easier. However, if your POS system requires 15 manuals and an advanced calculus degree to operate, getting your staff to adapt isn't going to be easy.

When selecting a POS solution for the needs of your restaurant, consider the following:

- **How quickly orders come in**
- **The flow of the restaurant floor**
- **How many items are on the menu**
- **Average turnover time**

You can add about 1,000 other common variables to this list depending on your restaurant's workflow. Each restaurant is unique, and a restaurant POS system needs to reflect that. A highly customizable, simply laid out restaurant POS system is key to keeping business moving at the right pace, while also being accessible to new staff members. The easier your system is to learn and use, the faster your new hires can hit the floor running (and selling).

2. Choose a POS system that focuses on data

As simple as the POS system interface should be for operators, the backend needs to offer the depth of detail necessary to gain a competitive advantage in a crowded marketplace.

Opting for a POS system that garners customer data, inventory information, and countless other metrics will allow you to adjust ordering, staff appropriately for each shift, and determine the right strategy for optimal success on your busiest nights. Considering all of the information flows through your POS system each day is vital when evaluating POS systems.

What's more, your POS system should more than just gather data; it should organize data and automate decisions based on it, from automatic ordering of low-stock items to optimized seating arrangements. With information about diner preferences, you can quickly identify their preferences, and from there, launch highly targeted, data-driven marketing campaigns.

3. Pick a system with scalability

To get the most out of your cloud-based POS system and plan for restaurant growth, you want to find one that has the ability to automatically upgrade software, add features and apps, increase data collection, and remain optimized for the lifespan of your equipment. Scalability is something that is often overlooked by newcomers to POS systems, but is something that is indispensable when productivity and profitability increase.

Features you may not currently need might become paramount once you expand your restaurant's offerings or open a new location.

Think about this: A couple of years ago, online ordering was something individual restaurants had to carry out themselves. Today there are a variety of apps that do it for you, but they require a POS system that can integrate with theirs.

4. Confirm that updates are a breeze

Traditional POS systems require calling out a professional and paying them for their time—and those costs can add up fast, depending on how important it is to you to have an up-to-date POS system. Instead of hassling with all of those variables, savvy restaurateurs who opt for iPad-based systems can carry out a system-wide update with nothing more than the tap of an app, which means that you don't actually have to be in your restaurant to carry out an update. When you're starting a restaurant, you'll relish every moment you get to spend at home.

5. Allow for easy integration with other platforms

It's important that your POS system can easily integrate with other tech platforms, such as payment processing platforms, inventory systems, CRM systems, reservation systems, loyalty programs, and shift scheduling systems.

6. Read reviews for restaurant POS features you need

POS systems can now accommodate numerous types of restaurants and establishments. So, when reading reviews, be sure they account for the type of needs you have within your specific business, and not just which ones get the best overall ratings. If you're a full-service restaurant, make sure you're choosing a system that gives you room for growth and expansion, and not discounting a cheaper system that's designed for food trucks.

7. Consider the processor

"Look for fair rates, but don't sacrifice service quality," says Tom DeSimone of Merchant Maverick, an unbiased merchant review site.

A lot of merchants have a hard time assessing the overall value of a processing service. They chase the lowest numbers and often end up with the least valuable service, which in the end, ironically, costs the merchant much more in lost efficiency and extra services purchased elsewhere.

Rates are important to consider, and every merchant should carefully review and understand their fees, but they don't tell the whole story.

Tony Lucca, owner of two successful restaurants including 1905 DC, remembers the first time he had to choose processors. The biggest mistake, he says, is getting scooped up by the first processor that comes along.

You might not know where to look for alternatives, who to ask for advice, or what any of it all means. You may also not understand how significant an impact your processor can have on your bottom line.

At the end of the day, a POS system alone typically won't provide you with a complete depth of insights. Perhaps you are going to use manager's log notes, menu analysis and server performance as an indicator of the health of your business.

RESTAURANT SCHEDULING SOFTWARE

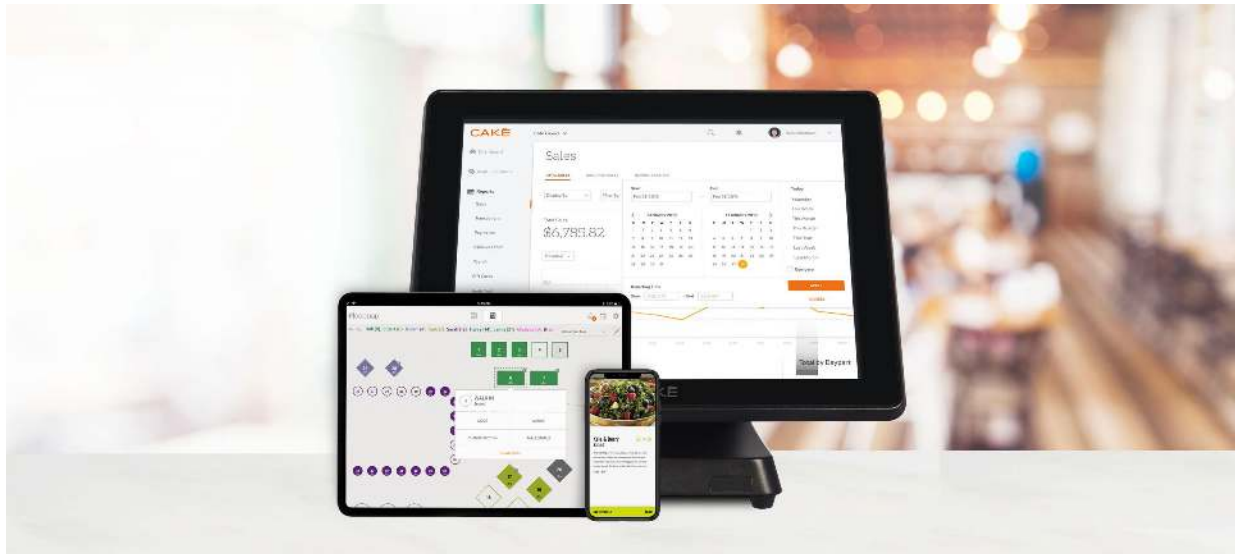# Staff scheduling software designed for restaurants.

ZoomShift helps you save hours scheduling, reduce labor costs, and have confidence that your team will show up on time.

Start Free Trial

Restaurant POS System - ZoomShift's Top Pick

1. Cake

CAKE, a Mad Mobile company, is a fully integrated cloud-based Point of Sale (POS) system specifically built for restaurants.

CAKE's easy-to-use Point of Sale system helps restaurants accelerate speed of service, build customer loyalty, and optimize revenue streams, all while improving our customer's bottom line. Customized workflows, on-the-fly menu adjustments, and order entries on one simple screen help increase efficiency and streamline your operations.

Dynamic reporting that lets you track everything in real time, including weekly category sales, wages, employee hours, and more. Get access to CAKE's cloud capabilities and 24/7 customer support for as low as $69/month.

CAKE's advanced mobile technology allows restaurants more ways to connect with their customers with integrated online ordering, complete with curbside management and contactless delivery options, waitlist and reservations, contactless payments, and more.

Restaurant Food Safety: 6 Best Practices and Solutions

When managing a restaurant, food safety has always been of the utmost importance, but there's no doubt that the Covid-19 pandemic has brought the topic to a heightened public awareness. With sanitation constantly on the minds of consumers and restaurant goers, restaurants need to not only adhere to guidelines, but they need to ensure that patrons know that they're doing so.

In this guide, we're going to cover six tips that you need to keep your restaurant safe in 2021 and beyond. These tips won't just ensure your patron's health, but they'll keep your business safe from potential lawsuits.

What Is Restaurant Food Safety and Why Is It Important?

Restaurant food safety refers to the process of properly storing and preparing foods to minimize the risk of food-borne illness within the context of a restaurant. Some food safety practices, like washing your hands after using the bathroom or wearing a hair net, are widely known, while others are a bit more obscure and less intuitive.

Even though food safety may not be one of the most glamorous parts of the restaurant business, it is one of the most important. Each year, an estimated 48 million people in the United States suffer from food poisoning, of which 128,000 are hospitalized and 3,000 die, according to the CDC.

Although extremely rare, lawsuits for severe cases of food poisoning can be extremely damaging to your business. For example, a California man settled for $1 million after he ate at a restaurant and came down with a severe case of food poisoning.

Of course, even if you don't end up with a lawsuit on your hands, a reputation for unsafe food will not do your business any good.

6 Best Restaurant Food Safety Practices for 2021

1. Read Through Your Government's Guidelines

The first step when devising any type of plan should always be to do your homework. Food safety is a frequently studied subject, and there is a wealth of evidence-based data available on how to mitigate the risks.

Many countries have government organizations that lay out specific guidelines for best food safety practices. In the US, your first stop should be the FDA Food Code.

In the UK, you'd want to look at the guidance from the Food Standards Agency, and the EU Commission has guidelines designed for businesses as well.

You should be sure that your internal procedures are in line with the recommendations from the relevant governing body.

2. Ensure All Workers Properly Wash Their Hands

Over the past year, the importance of hand-washing has been drilled into everyone's minds. But hand-washing isn't just for Covid – it was an important way to reduce the spread of illness before the pandemic, and it will remain essential long after the world has returned to normal.

Restaurant employees should make it a habit to wash their hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds after:

- Using the restroom
- Clearing tables or handling dirty dishes
- Sneezing, coughing, using a tissue, or otherwise touching their face or body
- Eating, drinking, or smoking
- Using chemicals
- Before and after handling raw meat
- Touching dirty aprons or clothing

3. Abide by the 2-Hour Rule

Food that is left out at room temperature can spoil quickly. While non-perishable foods, like peanut butter, oats, and bread, can be left out indefinitely, other foods, like meats, dairy products, and sauces can make people sick if they're eaten after being left out for too long.

As a rule of thumb, it's generally a good idea to toss food that has been left out at room temperature for over two hours. At that point, the risk of sufficient bacteria colonies forming on the food is high enough that some people may get sick.

As troubling as it may be to toss out food that seems fine, remember that food spoilage doesn't always look, taste, or smell like anything out of the ordinary in the early stages.

4. Separate Cooked and Raw Food

Besides adding flavor and texture, the main purpose of cooking food is to kill bacteria that may have contaminated the raw product. However, if you're keeping your cooked and raw food in close proximity to each other, you're defeating the whole purpose.

Foods can easily be cross contaminated. For example, if you pick up a raw steak and then touch a cooked one right after, you could transfer over some of the bacteria from the raw product. In the same way, keeping raw and cooked foods too close can lead to accidental touching of the two, which is not safe for your patrons.

5. Don't Overuse Disposable Tools

Everyone has seen a sponge sitting on the kitchen sink at someone's home that looks like it should have been retired some time ago. While it may seem innocuous enough, disposable kitchen tools, like sponges, can harbor bacteria.

Since they aren't regularly washed and disinfected like utensils and plates, the bacteria can continue to build up over time, and eventually make people sick.

If you use disposable tools in your kitchen, make sure to swap them out frequently. You can also opt for sustainable options to reduce waste and environmental impact.

6. Monitor and Train Employees

Even the best restaurant food safety program is worthless if it isn't followed. That's why employee training is so important.

All restaurant workers should be thoroughly educated on all the aspects of your restaurant's food safety policy. This includes instructing them on proper hand-washing technique, best practices to avoid cross contamination, proper attire, etc.

It's also a good idea to make sure employees know which foods are most likely to cause food poisoning so that they can take extra care when handling these products.

RESTAURANT SCHEDULING SOFTWARE

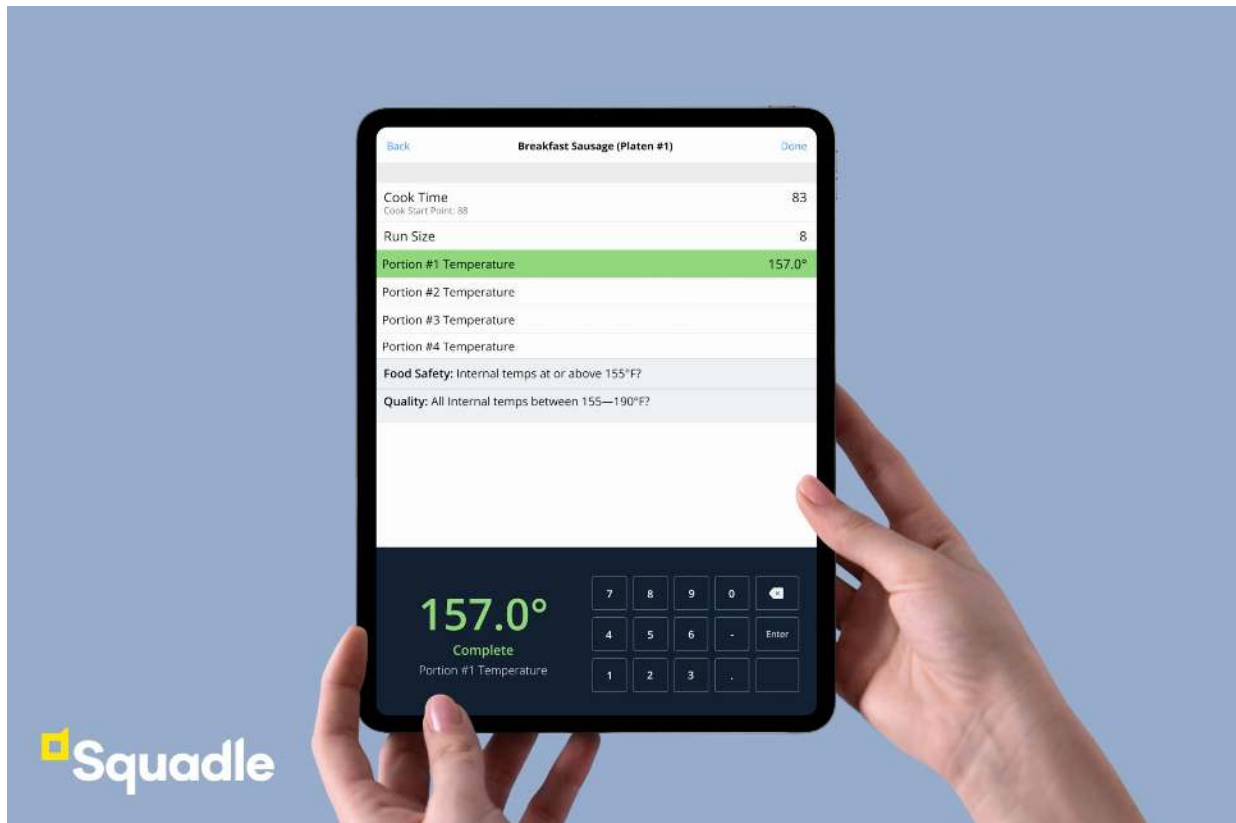# Staff scheduling software designed for restaurants.

ZoomShift helps you save hours scheduling, reduce labor costs, and have confidence that your team will show up on time.

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Restaurant Food Safety Software - ZoomShift's Top Pick

1. Squadle

Squadle is a workflow automation company committed to delivering a flexible, user-friendly platform which enables multi-unit operators, convenience stores, and retailers to simplify complex operations and streamline food safety.

By combining its proprietary digital checklists, patented sensor automation, and machine vision technology with its customer first approach, Squadle delivers intuitive, out-of-the-box ready products. Squadle Checklists™ has stored more than one billion records and completed tasks, while the ZeroTouch™ technology has measured over 40,000,000 bluetooth temperatures.

Squadle's customers operate tens of thousands of locations worldwide and include the largest and most respected brands in their industries.

6 Restaurant Inventory Management Tips and Software

When you run a restaurant, there's a lot to keep track of. Between employee scheduling, customer orders, table bussing, reservations, and deliveries, it's hard to catch a break.

And then there's inventory. Beneath all the other moving pieces of restaurant life lie the raw ingredients that make the entire show possible. If you don't have a rock solid way to keep track of the products and supplies coming in and out of your restaurant, it will be hard to lay the foundation for a successful, organized, and delicious business endeavor.

What Is Restaurant Inventory Management?

Restaurant inventory management refers to the process of tracking the foods, ingredients, supplies, and equipment that arrive and leave your restaurant. If you count up how many bags of flour you have at the beginning of the week, for example, you're managing your restaurant's inventory.

Staying on top of your inventory is important because it's the only way to ensure that you're ready for business and have enough supplies and ingredients to fulfill your patron's orders. If you underestimate how much of a particular ingredient you have, you could end up short on your most popular dish right during your rush hour.

On the flipside, restaurant inventory management helps measure and control your restaurant's efficiency. For example, if you find that you're consistently throwing out too many unused and expired ingredients, you can adjust your order size moving forward. To this end, inventory management typically includes accounting for staff meals and accidents that lead to food waste.

6 Restaurant Inventory Management Tips

1. Choose the Right Tools

Traditionally, inventory management has been done with a pencil and paper, but nowadays, technology plays a significant role. Tech solutions not only make data collection more convenient, but they can also provide actionable insights based on your records that can help improve efficiency.

The most popular solutions for restaurant inventory management are called point-of-sale (POS) systems. These tools can track the entire sales procedure from back-end inventory to payment processing. In today's world, POS systems are practically indispensable.

There are lots of different companies that offer POS systems, so take some time to do some market research to find the best fit for your restaurant's needs.

2. Understand the Terminology

To properly manage your restaurant's inventory, you'll need to make sure your team can communicate efficiently with each other. And to do that, you'll need to ensure that everyone understands the terminology.

Some terms you should understand include:

- **Costs of Goods Sold (COGS): This is the amount of money it cost to make the goods (foods and beverages) you sold to customers. The formula is COGS = Beginning Inventory + Purchased Inventory – Final Inventory.**
- **Par Level: This is the amount of any item or ingredient you need to produce a final product or menu order.**
- **Usage: How much of a product you've used over a set period of time.**

3. Get Staff on the Same Page With Training

The only way to accurately keep track of your inventory is to make sure all your team members are on the same page and understand what they're doing. If every team member is following a different procedure or double counting the same items, things can get messy quickly and increase your restaurant expenses.

To minimize these types of errors, it's important to implement thorough training programs to get staff members up to speed with your system. It can also be a good idea to assign specific jobs to individual team members. This can help to reduce errors from double counting.

4. Keep Some Extra Inventory In Stock and Utilize Surplus Ingredients

Wasting food that's gone bad is a problem, but so is finding yourself short on the ingredients you need to fulfill customer orders. The world is unpredictable, and you need to prepare for unforeseen events, like supply chain disruptions. Plus, you need to make sure you have enough ingredients on hand in case you get an unexpected surge in business!

To deal with these possibilities, it's a good idea to keep some extra ingredients on hand. Don't go overboard, but stock up enough that you'll have some in case of an emergency. If you find that your stock is nearing the expiration date and hasn't been used, try to include it in alternative dishes.

5. Use the FIFO Method

FIFO stands for first in, first out. It refers to the practice of using the ingredients that come into your inventory in the order that they arrive. So, if you receive a bag of flour on April 4th, and another on April 11th, you should make sure you use the bag that came on the 4th before you open the one from the 11th.

This simple method can drastically reduce the amount of food waste due to expiry and should be implemented by every restaurant unless there's a clear reason not to.

6. Use Your Data to Make Better Orders in the Future

The switch from pen and paper to tablet and stylus has made it much easier to analyze your inventory trends and draw actionable insights that you can use to improve your restaurant's efficiency.

If you want to get the most out of your restaurant inventory management, don't just enter your inventory into your system and walk away. Keep checking in and analyzing the data so that you can make better decisions going forward.

Are you consistently wasting jam because it expires before it's used? Use your POS system to make a note and make a smaller order next time.

Restaurant Inventory Management Software - ZoomShift's Top Pick

1. MarketMan
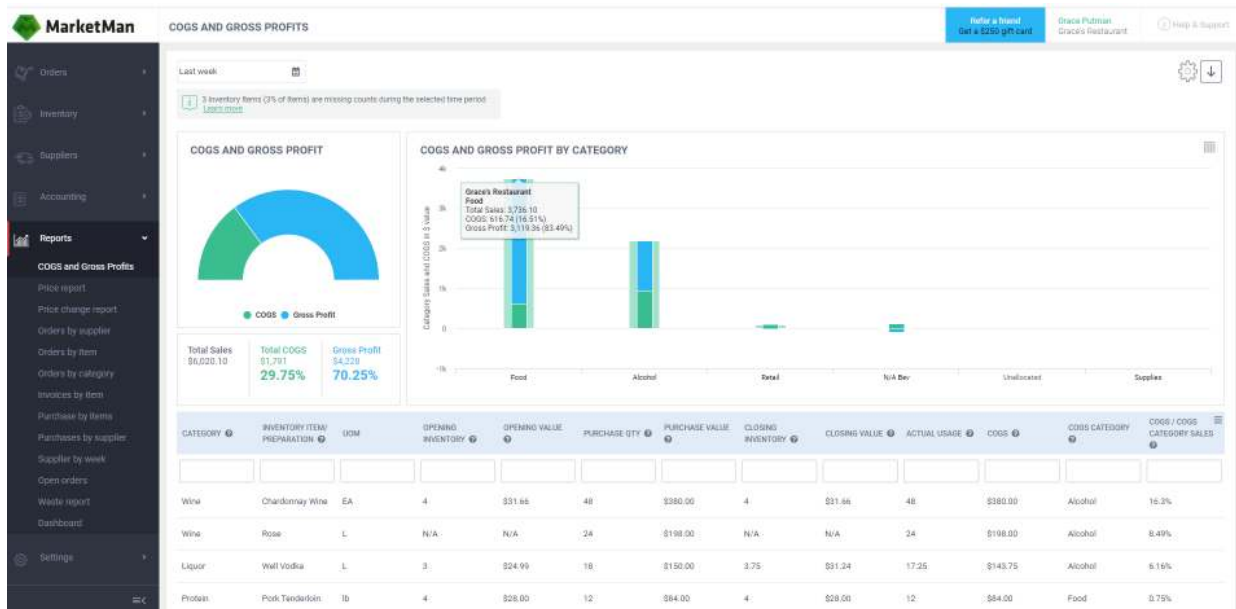
MarketMan is a cloud-based inventory and supplier management system that streamlines back of house operations including budgeting, purchasing, order optimization, food costing, recipes, invoice scanning, vendor payments, supplier management and more.

Available across all devices, MarketMan helps restaurants streamline operations and keep costs under control.

Pricing starts $127 for the Operator plan that gives access to inventory counting and transfers, accounts payable management and placing & receiving purchase orders.

Restaurant Reservation Software: Common Features and Top Software

If you're a restaurant owner, then you know that one of the most difficult aspects of managing a restaurant can be your reservations. Whether you're accepting online bookings or phone call-ins, managing the process is time-consuming and stressful.

If you want your restaurant to succeed, you need the right tools. Restaurant reservation software is one of those key pieces that can make or break your business.

To help narrow down your search, we've created this list of some common features found in popular restaurant reservation systems, as well as our picks for the best reservation software currently on the market.

What Are the Common Features of Restaurant Reservation Software?

Every reservation solution is different, but there is a lot of overlap. Most software offerings will provide the same basic functionality, delivered in their own unique ways. It's in the more advanced features that you'll see some real divergence in capabilities.

1. Online Reservations

Pretty much every modern reservation solution will allow customers to make reservations online. This makes for a very convenient and streamlined reservation process for the customer – instead of calling in, they need only navigate to your site and book a table.

2. POS Integration

One of the most popular features is point-of-sale (POS) system integration. Point-of-sale refers to the checkout or payment at a restaurant or retail store – hence the "point" or "moment" of sale.

With POS integration, you can take customer payments with the same tool you use to manage your reservations. The most popular systems have this feature built-in as standard fare, which makes it easier for staff to handle reservations from start (booking) to finish (paying) all in one place.

3. Waitlists

When business is booming, it can often be hard for customers to snag a table. That's when waitlist functionality is necessary.

With waitlists, you can notify hungry customers that they will need to wait for a table or offer to place them on a reservation waitlist if your tables are all booked for the foreseeable future.

You'll be able to show them how long the estimated wait time is and encourage them with food specials while they do so – like happy hour deals, drink offers, or other perks.

4. Online ordering and contactless dining

Online ordering and contactless dining are two offerings that are in high demand — especially during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Online ordering makes it easier for guests to order ahead while they're on the go, and contactless dining helps guests feel safe eating at restaurants in the midst of COVID-19.

With these features, visitors will be able to skip waiting in line at the register altogether. Plus, that means less time spent by staff members ringing up transactions as well — so more money saved from overhead costs with just one simple feature change!

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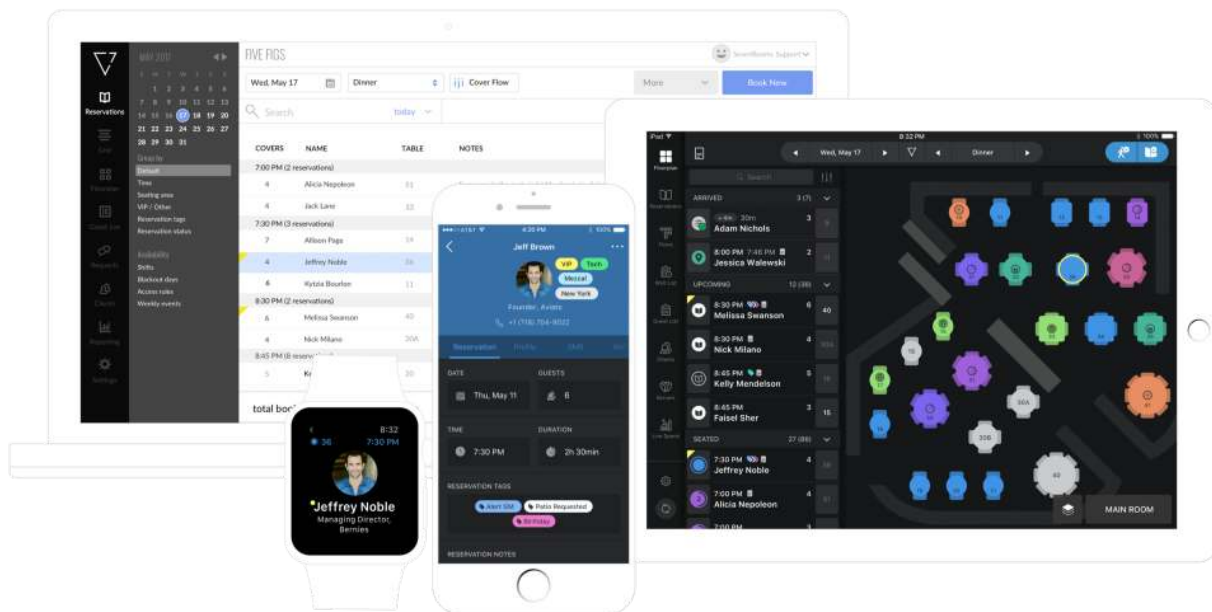# Staff scheduling software designed for restaurants.

ZoomShift helps you save hours scheduling, reduce labor costs, and have confidence that your team will show up on time.

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Restaurant Reservation Software - ZoomShift's Top Pick

1. SevenRooms

SevenRooms is a fully-integrated, data-driven guest experience platform that helps hospitality operators unlock the full revenue potential of their data.

As the only end-to-end global platform with a full suite of products that unlocks a 360-degree view of every guest across both on- and off-premise, SevenRooms' CRM-driven platform includes reservation, waitlist and table management, online ordering, contactless order & pay, reputation management and marketing automation.

These mission-critical products enable hospitality operators to increase revenue and retention by leveraging data to build direct relationships, deliver exceptional experiences, and increase repeat visits & orders.

Founded in 2011 and venture-backed by Amazon, Comcast Ventures, Highgate Ventures and Providence Strategic Growth, SevenRooms has dining, hotel F&B, nightlife and entertainment clients in 250 cities globally.

Online Ordering Systems for Restaurants

Best Online Ordering Systems for Restaurants

What Is an Online Ordering System?

An online ordering system is a digital technology that restaurants use to allow customers to place orders online. Generally, ordering systems will take payment and facilitate the placement of takeout and delivery orders.

Some online ordering systems will also help restaurants manage their reservations, but this is not always the case — after all, not every restaurant that does takeout or delivery also accepts reservations.

Most modern solutions allow customers to place orders either from their mobile device or their computer. This is important as each customer will have their own unique ordering preferences.

Online ordering solutions take payment through a POS system, also known as a point-of-sale system. These systems allow for payment processing and can make payment much easier for online orders.

Once you have your online ordering system set up, you can use it to take orders from customers in-person as well.

What to Look For in an Online Ordering System

There are lots of options out there for online ordering systems. Here are a few of the features you should keep an eye out for.

1. Low Commission Fees

Many online ordering systems make their money through commission fees. That means that every time someone places an order, the system takes a percentage.

Obviously, the lower the fees, the more money ends up in your pocket. So, it's a good idea to look for systems that have low commission fees as your first criteria. However, there are some occasions where it makes sense to choose a more expensive system instead of the cheapest option.

2. Works Well With Mobile

More and more of our lives have been shifting to mobile, and food is no exception. These days, customers expect to be able to place orders at their favorite restaurants right from their mobile phones. So, it's important to give them what they want.

Luckily, most online ordering systems offer mobile ordering, so this isn't too hard to find.

3. Customizability

Recognizable branding is important for the success of any business, and that goes for restaurants as well. If your online ordering page looks just like every other business's with nothing to distinguish it, that won't help your brand recognition.

You don't need to reinvent the wheel (that would probably make your ordering system hard to use anyway), but it's good to have some degree of customizability.

4. Reporting Features

One benefit of online ordering systems is that they can keep data on your sales. Most tools out there provide extensive reporting features that you can use to get insights into how your restaurant is performing.

5. Delivery Features

If your restaurant does delivery, it's a good idea to find an online ordering system that takes care of this too. Especially during COVID, delivery service is practically essential, so make sure your chosen system can handle all your needs.

Best Online Ordering System for Restaurants

Online ordering is practically essential these days. Luckily, there are several great options that restaurants can use to meet demand. Here is our top pick:

1. GloriaFood
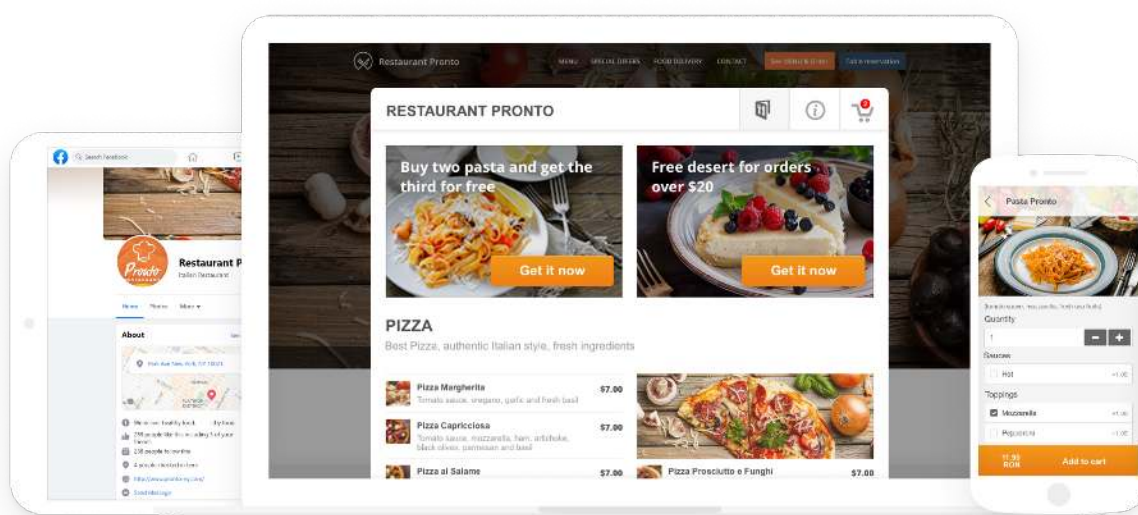
GloriaFood is the world's first free online ordering system. They provide a self-sign-up plan for restaurant owners/managers who want to create and manage their own accounts without extensive IT knowledge. The platform follows a hop-on/hop-off logic in which restaurants decide to pay as they go for the features they deem helpful.

Included in the **free** version are:

- **Website ordering widget**
- **Mobile, real-time ordering**
- **Table reservations widget**
- **Scheduled orders**
- **No-contact delivery and minimum exposure pickup options**
- **Vacation mode**
- **Detailed reports**
- **Promotions module**
- **QR code menu for dine-in ordering**
- **and more***

*Check out the complete list of free features on their Pricing page

However, they have and keep adding more complex **premium** features that restaurants can choose to pay for if they think they might bring extra value to them. Currently, these are:

- **Online payments**
- **Advanced promotions module**
- **Branded mobile apps**
- **Sales optimized website using their restaurant website builder**

6 Restaurant Finances

1. **Restaurant Expenses: 7 Common Costs to Running a New Location**

2. **Restaurant Financing: How to Finance a Restaurant**

3. **The Complete Guide to Restaurant Accounting**

Restaurant Expenses: 7 Common Costs to Running a New Location

For many, starting a restaurant is a dream come true. If you love cooking and want to turn your passion for food into a small business, there are few better career paths than running your own restaurant.

However, as exciting and rewarding as it may be, it's also a very expensive endeavor with some high (and often prohibitive) startup costs.

If you're considering a life as a culinary entrepreneur, it's important that you learn about the restaurant expenses that you'll need to stay mindful of. This will help you budget and assess what you'll need to do to get your business up and running.

Some of the expenses we'll cover are fairly obvious, but several are easily overlooked. By the end of this guide, you'll be well prepared to start working out a financial plan to turn your dream into a reality.

1. Occupancy

The first expense you'll need to account for is perhaps the most obvious: the cost of the building and land that you'll be running your restaurant out of.

This category of expenses includes the rent, property taxes, and the cost of utilities for the property. If you plan to buy an existing property straight out or build a new one on vacant land, those costs will fall into this category as well.

Occupancy costs deserve a lot of your attention as these can often be the biggest roadblocks to getting your business started. They will also typically be your highest monthly cost, so you'll need to make sure you have enough cash flow to cover them.

2. Labor

Very few – if any – restaurants can manage without hiring some help. Virtually every restaurant will need to hire someone to fill the roles of manager, waiter, busser, cleaning staff, cook, and chef. In most cases, you'll need to hire at least several waiters and cooks.

After occupancy costs, labor is likely to be one of your biggest expenses. You'll need to do some careful planning and make a labor forecast to make sure that you don't over or under hire.

Finding the right balance can take some experimentation. Since the amount of business a restaurant receives often fluctuates by season, you may be able to employ seasonal workers in some cases.

3. Food and Goods Sold

Without paying for ingredients for the food you're selling, you wouldn't be running a restaurant at all. Depending on what type of restaurant you're starting, these costs can vary significantly.

If it's a high-end restaurant, you can expect to spend quite a bit on top-shelf ingredients. However, if you're planning to run a diner, your expenses in this department will likely be a bit lower.

Along with ingredients, you may also need to pay for some pre-made items, like pastries from a local bakery, that you won't make on-site.

No matter what type of restaurant you're running, it's generally a good idea to keep these expenses under one third of your total revenue.

To save money in this area, make sure you have good food waste management, don't overstock, and consistently look through your menu to eliminate low-performing items.

4. Paper Supplies

Paper supplies are an expense that's easily overlooked. After all, when you go to a restaurant, you don't typically consider the cost of the receipts, menus, placemats, and napkins that you're using. However, the cost of paper supplies can add up quickly, so it's important to budget for them.

Some items, like menus, will typically be a one-time investment, with some occasional replacements and updates. Others, like napkins and receipt paper, will be repeat expenses as you'll need to replenish your supply on a regular basis.

5. Marketing

Restaurant marketing is another necessary expense that is easy to forget. Since it operates fairly behind the scenes, most restaurant goers don't pay much attention to it.

Depending on your restaurant's location and your market, you may not need to spend any money on marketing at all – if you have social media experience, you may be able to do it all yourself. Plus, once your restaurant has established itself a bit, most marketing will take place via word of mouth.

That said, at some point, you'll likely need to invest in ads or perhaps hire a marketing or social media manager. It's good to budget for this so that you have some funds available if business is slower than you expected.

6. Software and Technology

Running a restaurant in today's digital age requires more than just an old-fashioned cash register with a bell – although adding one of those could make for some great decor!

Most restaurants will need to invest in a kitchen display system (KDS) to route orders to the kitchen, a point of sale (POS) platform to accept money, a guest management platform to organize seating, and employee scheduling software to manage employee shifts.

In some cases, these can actually reduce expenditures in other areas. For example, a KDS can reduce the amount of money you'll spend on paper goods since you'll no longer need to buy paper pads for waiters.

You may also want to look into other services like Uber Eats, Grubhub, Opentable, and more.

7. Repairs and Maintenance

This is one of the hardest categories to plan for as these expenses can take you by surprise – no one is expecting the new dishwasher to break down suddenly, but it can happen. If you don't have enough cash on hand to cover those sudden emergency expenses, you can find yourself in a very tough position.

To avoid this, make sure you set aside some money each month to build up a fund that can cover repairs.

Maintenance expenses will generally be a bit more regular, so you'll be able to get a feel for how much you need to put aside for those once you've been running your businesses for a little while.

Key Takeaways

Running a restaurant is a rewarding but expensive endeavor. If you want your new culinary business to succeed, you need to ensure that you understand all the expenses that you'll incur and make sure all your bases are covered.

This guide should serve you well as a jumping off point. However, you'll need to go further in depth with each of these categories to accurately estimate your costs.

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Restaurant Financing: How to Finance a Restaurant

Running a restaurant is a dream for many a food lover. But there's often an obstacle that stands in the way: finding the money to open it up in the first place. A restaurant is a big investment, and most people don't just have a few hundred thousand dollars sitting around burning a hole in their pockets.

Luckily, there are lots of ways to get the money to start your own restaurant. In this guide, we'll go over a few of the most popular ways.

What Is Restaurant Financing?

Restaurant financing is the process of sourcing money to open a restaurant, whether that comes from earning and saving money yourself, taking out a bank loan, borrowing money from family, or whatever other way you can think of. This money will cover the cost of your location, equipment, and other start up expenses.

Many restaurateurs take out bank loans as this often provides the most direct path towards getting your restaurant financed. Because of this, restaurant financing often refers specifically to taking out a bank loan to cover restaurant costs, just like car financing refers to taking out a loan to pay for a car.

Why Do Small Business Owners Apply for Financing?

Opening a restaurant costs a lot of money – the median cost, according to a survey by RestaurantOwner.com, is $375,000 ($3,586 per seat). As you might expect, most budding restaurateurs can't simply crack open their piggy banks and come up with the kind of money. Similarly, saving up the full price tag could take an entire lifetime, leaving no time left to turn running a restaurant into a career.

Applying for financing from a bank is often the easiest way to come up with the necessary startup funds. However, it can still be difficult to get approved for a business loan, so it's no silver bullet. That said, it's definitely one of the most promising avenues for a restaurant-hopeful who's strapped for cash.

6 Restaurant Financing Options to Consider

There are lots of options available to entrepreneurs interested in opening up a restaurant. Here are a few of the most important ones to know about.

1. Term Loan

A term loan is your stereotypical bank loan: you borrow a certain amount of money from the bank and pay it back on a fixed schedule, called an amortization schedule.

When you take out a term loan, not only will you pay back the principal (the amount you're borrowing), but you'll pay interest as well – that's how the bank makes money. Without interest, the bank wouldn't have any incentive to give you a loan.

Because of the interest payments, a term loan is less appealing than borrowing from friends or family who won't charge interest. But of course, very few people have access to friends and family who can spot them that kind of money.

2. Alternative Loan

Alternative loans for restaurants are similar to term loans, but they are offered by institutions that aren't part of the traditional banking industry. Because of this, it's often easier to get approved for an alternative loan, but they may be from less reputable companies or use predatory lending practices.

Exercise caution when looking into alternative lenders. If something seems too good to be true, it generally is. This doesn't mean that an alternative loan is always a bad idea, but you need to be more careful than you would be borrowing from a well-known bank.

3. SBA Loan

An SBA loan is a type of loan offered by the Small Business Administration (SBA) that's available to qualifying US businesses. They're similar to term loans, but the federal government guarantees the loan, which means that it will pay back the lender if the borrower defaults (can't pay back the loan).

This lowers the risk for lenders and makes it easier for borrowers to get approved. It's often a good choice for borrowers who are having trouble getting approved.

4. Merchant Cash Advance

A merchant cash advance is a type of cash advance (short-term cash loan) in which the lender receives payment by taking a portion of credit card proceeds each day. These loans are typically very expensive, with interest rates ranging from 10-350% APR.

If you can only get money through a merchant cash advance, you probably aren't ready to start your restaurant. A merchant cash advance should be an absolute last resort, and even then it should likely be avoided.

5. Money From Family and Friends

If you're lucky enough to have family and friends that are willing to support your restaurant dreams, then this is often the best option. Family and friends will likely give you very low interest rates – assuming they charge you interest at all.

6. Crowdfunding

Crowdfunding involves financing your restaurant via platforms like Kickstarter. Crowdfunding allows you to skirt past interest rates, but you'll usually have to offer your patrons something in exchange, whether it be free meals, memorabilia, stock in the company, etc.

3 Basic Financing Formulas to Know

When looking through financing options, it's always a good idea to know the math behind them so you can do some calculations on your own. Before we get into specific formulas, here are some symbols you should know:

P = initial principal balance

r = interest rate

n = number of times interest is applied per time period

t = number of time periods

1. Amortization

The amortization formula allows you to determine what your monthly payments will be.

2. Simple Interest

The simple interest formula allows you to determine how much you'll pay over the lifetime of your loan, including interest (assuming the interest does not compound).

3. Compound Interest

The compound interest formula does the same thing as the simple interest formula, but it calculates for compounding interest.

Opening a restaurant is a gargantuan endeavor, and it requires putting up a lot of money up front. This guide should serve as a good starting point, but you'll need to do more in-depth research into (and ideally speak with a financial advisor about) what financing options will work best for you.

The Complete Guide to Restaurant Accounting

For many, opening a restaurant is a dream come true — the smell of the fresh food, the smiles of happy customers, what more could anyone want in a job?

But running a restaurant isn't all smiles and pastries. A restaurant is still a business, after all, and that means that you'll need to be prepared to spend a lot of time and energy getting your finances in check if you want to make it in the restaurant business.

If you're not sure how to get started, fear not. In this guide, we'll cover the basics of what you need to know to start with restaurant accounting and get your business up to speed financially.

What Is Restaurant Accounting?

Restaurant accounting is simply accounting as it pertains to restaurants. There's no secret sauce here: just good old financial records and calculators.

But what is accounting? Well, accounting is the process of keeping financial records for a business, such as information about your cash flow, sales, losses, etc.

You can essentially think of it like getting together all your paychecks, receipts, invoices, and any other financial records you have for safe keeping.

Once you have all this information, it can be used for many different purposes, like drawing insights to help management identify areas that could use improvement. Of course, it can also be used for more straightforward purposes, like tax return preparation.

Restaurant Accounting Basics

Accounting is a deep field that requires years of study to master, so there is no easy way to summarize even the basics. The shortest way to sum up the basics of accounting is this: accounting is used to record the financial transactions that a business makes. By keeping a record of these transactions, the business owners, managers, etc., can get a better look at the health of their business and make adjustments accordingly.

To do all this, they need to look at figures, like restaurant expenses, revenue, liabilities, assets, and many other terms that could fill up an entire book. If you'd like to learn more about restaurant accounting, you can start with these terms and the other terms that we'll go over shortly.

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What Key Financial Reports Do You Need?

There are lots of different reports that you will need to keep track of your restaurant's finances. Here are a few to start with:

- Chart of Accounts: The chart of accounts is an index for all the different account statements in your company. In short, it's the ledger for your business.
- Daily Sales Report: This report records sales figures over the period of a single day. It typically breaks numbers into different categories, like drinks, food, taxes, etc.
- Cash Flow Forecast: This is a record of how much money you expect to flow into and out of your business over a period of time.
- Flash Report: This shows key information about a restaurant's finances at a certain point in time, such as revenue, expenses, debt to equity, etc.
- Monthly Performance Report: This provides information about how your restaurant is performing financially month to month.
- Profit and Loss Statement: This is a financial statement that provides a summary of revenue, expenses, and costs over a period of time.
- Cash Flow Statement: This is a financial statement that summarizes the cash that enters and leaves a company over a specified period of time.

What Key Performance Indicators Should You Track?

Once again, there's no easy way to summarize all the indicators you should keep track of. However, here a few to start with:

- Sales: This should be the first indicator you look at in most cases. Your sales figures will show how much revenue you are making, and that's key to staying profitable.
- Cost of Goods Sold (COGS): This refers to how much it costs you to make the goods you're selling. In restaurant terms, this means only the cost of the ingredients, not labor and equipment costs.
- Prime Cost: Prime cost is similar to COGS, but it includes labor costs as well. That means that prime cost is equivalent to the cost of the raw ingredients plus labor. The only thing it doesn't include are fixed costs. The formula for calculating prime cost is Prime Cost = Direct Raw Materials + Direct Labor.
- Turnover Ratio: The turnover ratio measures how quickly items enter and leave your business. Typically, it's used when referring to inventory. It provides a quick look at how efficiently your business is selling its products.
- Server Benchmarks: This includes several different markers that indicate how well a server is performing, such as the Per Person Average, Server Errors Per Guest, and the Number of Guests Served Per Person Per Hour.

The Benefits of Restaurant Accounting

Restaurant accounting doesn't just provide benefits – it's absolutely essential. In fact, without engaging in restaurant accounting, you wouldn't be able to file and pay your taxes, which could land you in trouble.

Accounting is necessary to make sure that you have records of all important financial data. Not only does it facilitate essential functions like tax paying, but it also provides essential insights into how your business is performing. For example, can you imagine a restaurant that had no idea how much money it was making every month? The restaurant would be unable to determine whether it was profitable or not, and it would likely go under pretty quickly.

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