

Five Steps To Online and Mobile Ordering Success

Online and mobile ordering is a hot topic in the restaurant industry. Restaurants ranging from the largest international chains to local independent restaurants are realizing the benefits of online and mobile ordering. In an ideal world, patrons would place every take out, delivery and catering order from their computer or mobile device and it would be delivered directly to the restaurant POS, thereby reducing labor costs associated with order taking and eliminating costly order entry errors and abandoned orders, all while increasing customer satisfaction and loyalty. We may not be in that ideal world today, but these five steps will start you down the road.

Unfortunately, simply implementing a best of breed online or mobile ordering solution and placing an “Order Online” link on your website is not enough to build a successful online ordering business. To maximize your online ordering business, it should be supported by all of your marketing efforts. Your results will correlate directly to the effort put into marketing.

Here are five proven steps to make the most of online and mobile ordering:

1. Shout It From The Rooftops!

Would your customers order a new item if wasn't on the menu and promoted effectively? The same applies to online ordering. Use every marketing tool at your disposal to get out the “Order Online Today!” message. Make it impossible for a customer to *not* be aware of the online or mobile ordering option.

Here are some suggestions:

- In-Store: Plaster the message on posters, table tents, take out packaging, T-shirts or buttons on your employee, even print it on every receipt
- Advertising: TV ads, radio ads, newspaper ads, billboards, online advertising and social media sites
- Direct Marketing: direct mail, door hangers, coupon mailers and e-mail campaigns

2. Keep it Simple

It's critical to select online and mobile solutions that make the ordering experience simple and easy to use for your patrons. A good solution offers the following:

- A clean, intuitive patron interface that requires the fewest steps and information to place an order.
- Saves customer information, so they don't have to re-enter it each time they place an order and enables customers to save favorite orders and place them again in seconds.
- Suggestive selling ensures that they don't forget to order essentials like sides or a drink.
- Securely accepts credit cards and branded gift cards.
- Allows patrons to enter their loyalty program number.
- Integrates with your POS to ensure their orders are delivered accurately and reliably. This also saves you money on labor costs and eliminates costly order entry errors.
- An extension of your brand that integrates seamlessly with your web presence.

3. Convert Your Regulars

Offer your regulars who order by phone or fax an incentive to make the switch to online or mobile ordering. Recognizing that some people are resistant to change, offer them a meaningful incentive to try online or mobile ordering for their next order. A free drink, side or dessert, or 10% off their first online or mobile order is usually sufficient. Attach a coupon to each phone or fax order with this offer and feature it prominently on your fax order form.

4. Don't Make Them Wait

Make sure they don't wait in line to pick up their order. If you don't have a dedicated pick up counter or curbside delivery, let them know when they place the order that they can go directly to the register and skip the line.

5. Use The Data

Every time a customer places an online or mobile order, you are collecting valuable data including their email address, zip code and ordering habits, use it to tailor offers especially for them. Reward frequent customers with offers for their favorite meal or entice customers who haven't ordered lately to become regulars.

In summary, to get the most out of your investment in online and mobile ordering, promote it as aggressively as you would a new menu item, make the entire experience simple and enjoyable and use the data collected to tailor your marketing to encourage customers to adopt online and/or mobile ordering as their preferred way to order take out, delivery or catering.