

Part 2: Upgrading Digital Menu Boards and Kitchen Display Screens

Last month, we reviewed the “hows and whys” for upgrading or replacing your current POS system, beginning a discussion on technology benefits and return on investment for your hospitality business. In this piece, we lay out the rationale for other technology upgrades in your restaurant — specifically, the addition of Digital Menu Boards (DMB) and replacing those antiquated kitchen printers with Kitchen Display Screens (KDS).

Let's address DMBs first. If you have seen these at your local fast food establishment, then you probably understand their value. Beautiful colors, eye-catching text. You likely ordered what is on the screen instead of what you originally thought you were going to order, right? So, how do I get my money back if I spend a bundle installing screens like this in my restaurant carry out? Here are some important considerations:

The graphics are absolutely attention-grabbing

They are better than hand-held menus, as they tend to be neat, clean, and easy to read. Compared to static images, the slides or videos showing the beautiful menu items are effective in whetting appetites and influencing purchasing behavior. In short, you are likely to sell more — and more of what you want/need to sell.

It is easy to change prices

In fact, you don't even need to be at your location. No more messy and conspicuous pieces of masking tape covering old prices with new. Nutritional, caloric, and ingredient information can also be easily uploaded. Compliance with ever-changing regulations is a snap.



You can do scheduling and prioritization

This means that at breakfast time, you may show only breakfast items, as well as some great graphics for your nightly specials or promotions. Same at lunch. Then at dinner, if you want to skip those inexpensive entrée items on Friday and Saturday evenings, a quick fix makes that happen. Voilà!

You can provide live information and entertainment

Customer waiting time does not seem as long. And hey, the more clever you are, the more the talk of the town you will be! Great word of mouth is always valuable, not to mention the social media impact this move will provide for you and your business.

While there are many reasons for upgrading to DMBs, these are some of the key benefits that will likely provide enough ROI to make this upgrade worth exploring and implementing.

Kitchen Display Screens

Okay, so you have upgraded your POS, and the front of the house is looking better and producing more income. Now, how about the kitchen? For more than 10 years, I have recommended adding KDS technology to almost any kitchen that currently uses only printers. I am making this recommendation again, as the ROI for KDS is really impressive.

First, do know that you keep one receipt printer on your line so that finished orders have an identifying piece of paper, either for your food runner or cashier. This cannot really go away. Now, as to the great reasons for adding these screens:

They allow for faster production of food on the line

No lost tickets, no fumbling with paper — just fast, efficient production with the chits clearly printed and the ability for staff to continually work with two hands. Improved speed and accuracy are an almost immediate outcome.

Properly placed and programmed, these wonder screens will help you reduce your kitchen labor over a relatively short period of time

This is not due only to the improved efficiency of the cooks you still have on the line, but also because there are fewer errors (think reduced food cost). Also, with the ability to minimize chatter between stations and expo, miscommunication virtually disappears.

Guest service becomes better and better

As your cooks use and get used to the new technologies, there will be fewer mistakes and increased speeds.

IN A NUTSHELL, SCREENS DECREASE LABOR AND FOOD COSTS, WHILE ENHANCING THE GUEST EXPERIENCE.

In a nutshell, screens decrease labor and food costs, while enhancing the guest experience. What are you waiting for?

The other game changers, which we will review in detail next month, are the new ovens which utilize computer technology. I know you can hardly wait! The ROI's just keep on coming, so you can just keep on reading, learning, and hopefully taking advantage of these recommendations to improve your business.

As always, let me know if I can help in any way.

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