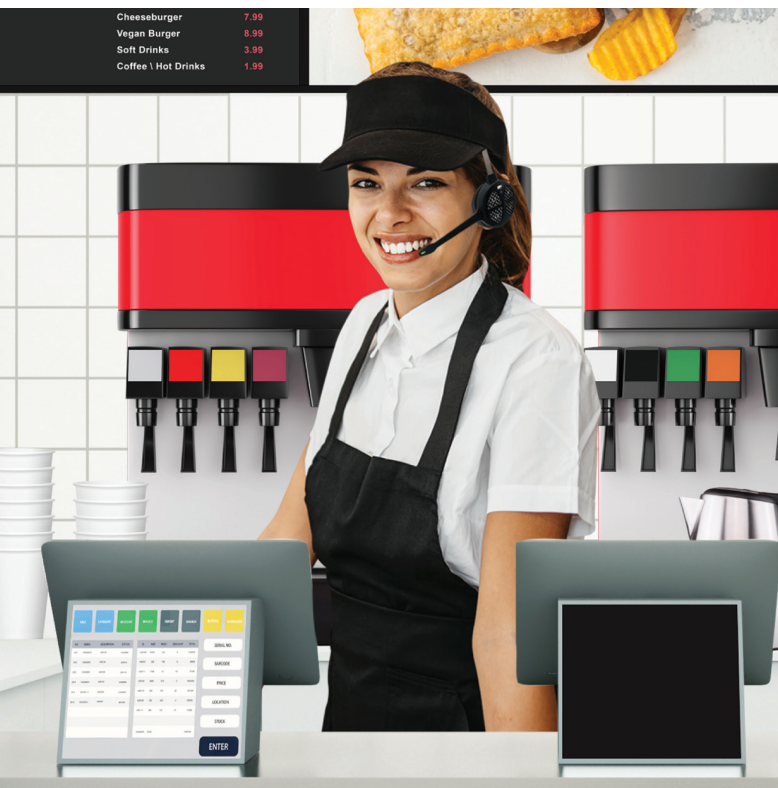


Restaurant Tech: Why Operators Need a Full-Service Technology Partner

The right partner keeps the focus on the customer experience, not technical difficulties. /BY R.G. COLLINS



The use of technology in restaurants has evolved far beyond point-of-sale, drive-thru communications, and kitchen displays. IT professionals are now responsible for managing a variety of systems, including digital menuboard, drive-thru timers, and surveillance systems. During the pandemic, self-order tools such as kiosks and mobile order apps became essential. Looking ahead, artificial intelligence and geo-notifications for mobile orders are poised to become the next focus in the effort to increase efficiency. Managing all these systems can be overwhelming. Having the right technology partner can lead to a competitive advantage, keeping restaurants' focus on the customer.

IT professionals are not only responsible for maintaining the hardware, but also managing software upgrades, subscription services, and compatibility. When a system fails during a busy period,

operations are significantly impacted. Busy managers today do not have the time to diagnose and troubleshoot systems. To alleviate this burden, full-service solutions providers can be a single point of contact. In addition to providing service and repairs, the right partner can offer complete restaurant systems solutions, including proper installation and staff training. Based in Buffalo Grove, IL, R.F. Technologies is such a full-service partner, allowing the staff to focus on providing quality food and operate efficiently.

Scalability and flexibility are key aspects when evaluating available solutions. R.F. Technologies' CEO Bob Noorian explains, "Technology needs vary over time, so operators need to predict the unpredictable. This means investing in flexible solutions to expand capacity while incorporating new features and scalable systems which communicate not only with existing systems, but also the next-generation as the market evolves. A full-service partner is not only aware of available technologies, it helps shape the future like we do with our Apex drive-thru headset system."

Commonly, restaurant operators think about solving one specific problem when upgrading or replacing a piece of restaurant technology. The better practice is to think holistically about the restaurant and how the specific piece of tech fits into the overall environment. Here, too, is where the right partner adds value. An example is data traveling between systems, from the POS and the menuboard, to video analytics of a transaction and into subsequent reporting. This interoperability is essential to a comprehensive awareness of restaurant performance. It influences the customer experience and, ultimately, profitability. If data is siloed within disparate systems the complete understanding is often unattainable. A full-service technology partner knows how systems communicate and knows how to extract maximum value from the investment.

Technology is now an integral part of quick-service restaurants, and IT professionals have an essential role in managing various systems. The right partner helps ease the burden of maintaining systems and offers comprehensive solutions to keep restaurants running smoothly. RFT President Joseph Gierut concludes, "Technology evolves rapidly so restaurants need a trusted partner vetting available tools and recommending solutions providing the greatest value to the restaurant operator while minimizing risk and expenditures."

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