

OUTSTANDING DINING EXPERIENCES— BEYOND THE PLATE

4 HIGH-IMPACT STRATEGIES TO EXCEED
CUSTOMER EXPECTATIONS

BY ECOLAB



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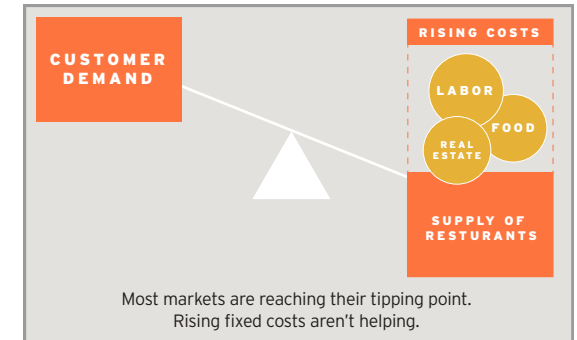
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Overview

THE RESTAURANT BOOM: GREAT FOR DINERS—TOUGH ON RESTAURANTS

Cities big and small experienced a “restaurant boom” in the last decade. But many are now past the tipping point where a “boom” becomes a “bubble.” Rising fixed costs – labor, real estate and ingredients – add margin pressure that fuels intense competition.



THE NEW RESTAURANT CUSTOMER: HIGHER EXPECTATIONS THAN EVER BEFORE

The greatest pressure driving competition, however, comes from the demographic shift happening among restaurant customers:

- Millennial and Gen Z diners replacing Baby Boomers
- Nicknamed “American Foodie 2.0” by the National Restaurant Association
- Much higher “food IQ”—awareness of food quality, food safety, sourcing, etc.
- Accustomed to diverse, high-quality dining options
- Value dining experience as much as food quality



1. http://www.restaurant.org/Home/old_files/2016-Restaura

OVERVIEW:

UNLOCKING THE LOYALTY OF THE MODERN RESTAURANT GUEST

While plenty of restaurants have lamented these “overly picky” customers, blaming them for declining foot traffic, forward-thinking restaurants recognize an incredible opportunity. Younger generations are actually dining out more often, and spending significantly more on restaurant meals than previous generations.² But research shows they want to spend money on outstanding experiences, not just outstanding food.³ Restaurants that are thriving in the current environment understand that in order to deliver outstanding experiences that unlock customer loyalty, they need to deliver much more than exceptional food.



2. <https://www.forbes.com/sites/alexandratalty/2016/10/17/millennials-spend-44-percent-of-food-dollars-on-eating-out-says-food-institute/#14f011333ff6>
3. http://eventbrite-s3.s3.amazonaws.com/marketing/Millennials_Research/Gen_PR_Final.pdf

As restaurants look for new ways to exceed customer expectations, they're finding huge potential beyond the plate—focusing on enhancing every aspect of the dining experience. This eBook offers **four high-value strategies** that give restaurants quick-win ways to improve customer experiences and gain an edge in an increasingly competitive restaurant world.



4 HIGH-IMPACT STRATEGIES TO DRIVE STAND-OUT EXPERIENCES

1 FOCUS ON FIRST IMPRESSIONS



2 GET GUESTS SEATED SOONER



3 SET THE TABLE FOR SUCCESS



4 MAKE YOUR RESTROOMS SHINE



STRATEGY #1:

FOCUS ON FIRST IMPRESSIONS

Research now shows that customers view the cleanliness of restaurant spaces—both inside and out—as the biggest factor driving their satisfaction.⁴

Call it cliché, but there's no understating the power of a great—or poor—first impression. Customers begin subconsciously assessing a restaurant from the second they pull into the parking lot, setting the tone for the rest of their experience and adding seasoning to everything from their perception of service to the taste of their food. Research now shows that customers view the cleanliness of restaurant spaces—both inside and out—as the biggest factor driving their satisfaction.⁴ Many restaurants are refocusing on specific spaces that play the biggest roles in shaping first impressions.



4. <http://www.mintel.com/blog/foodservice-market-news/cleanliness-menu-selection-and-comfort-most-important-when-dining-out-reports-mintel>

FOCUS ON FIRST IMPRESSIONS

KEY AREAS OF FOCUS

1

CURB APPEAL:

The exterior appearance of a restaurant can bring new customers in—or turn them away. Clean exterior windows and signage is a must. The cleanliness of the parking lot—including well-maintained pavement—is also a major factor in this *first* first impression.

2

THE ENTRYWAY:

The highest-traffic space in the restaurant, the entryway and/or vestibule requires constant attention. Hosts should have clearly defined, regular spot cleaning procedures to keep floors shining and windows so clean customers might walk right into them.

3

PUT FOOD SAFETY FRONT & CENTER:

Restaurants can deliver immediate peace of mind by placing their inspection certificate(s) in the entryway or near the host stand. It's a simple way to bring instant transparency to what's going on back in the kitchen.

STRATEGY #2:

GET GUESTS SEATED SOONER

No one likes to wait. Minimizing the time from when a customer walks in the door to when they're seated and talking with a server can make a huge impact on his/her decision to return again and again—and tell others. Leading restaurants are taking a new look at how they can improve their process for turning tables quickly, minimizing wait times while increasing customer throughput.



STRATEGY #2:

GET GUESTS SEATED SOONER

KEY AREAS OF FOCUS

1

IMPROVE SERVER/HOST COMMUNICATION:

New technologies promise that advanced algorithms will optimize seating, but nothing beats old-fashioned communication between servers, bussers and hosts. Regularly updating hosts on the status of a table can help them pre-assign waiting parties to soon-to-be-available tables.

2

SPEED TABLE CLEARING/CLEANING:

Every second a table sits empty costs a restaurant—both in terms of dollars and customer satisfaction. Restaurants can make table-turning a quick, tight process by using multi-purpose ready-to-use (RTU) products simultaneously clean and sanitize to help bussers get tables ready for the next party.

3

CHOOSE THE RIGHT FURNITURE:

Many restaurants are paying more attention to the aesthetics and comfort of tables and chairs as they aim to craft a superior experience. But simplicity of cleaning is a feature that shouldn't be overlooked when selecting furniture. Tables, chairs, booths and other surfaces that can be quickly wiped down and resist stains can take minutes off every table turn.

4

IMMEDIATE SERVER ENGAGEMENT:

Many restaurants now make it a goal to get a server to the table within the first minute. Even if it's just to fill water glasses or deliver a bread basket, this immediate engagement enhances customers' perception of fast, attentive service.

STRATEGY #3:

SET THE TABLE FOR SUCCESS

Lacking cleanliness in a table setting ranks above rude waiters among reasons customers choose not to return to a restaurant. ⁵

The second critical “first impression” happens the second a guest sits down at a table. Customers make a quick, often unconscious assessment of everything on the table. It shouldn’t be surprising that anything that’s lacking from a cleanliness or aesthetics standpoint can be disastrous for customer satisfaction. In fact, lacking cleanliness in a table setting ranks above rude waiters among reasons customers choose not to return to a restaurant. ⁵



5. <http://www.mintel.com/blog/foodservice-market-news/cleanliness-menu-selection-and-comfort-most-important-when-dining-out-reports-mintel>

SET THE TABLE FOR SUCCESS

KEY AREAS OF FOCUS

1

SPOT CLEANING:

Effective, multi-purpose cleaning chemicals are essential for basic table-turn cleaning. But bussers and servers also need more intensive products for spot cleaning when spills or other situations require more attention. It's better to keep guests waiting a few extra minutes than sit them at a dirty table, but the right cleaning products can minimize

2

SHINING WARES:

Your wares—utensils, plates, glasses, etc.—are one of a restaurant's biggest investments. They're also the medium on and through which customers experience their food. Best-in-class warewashing solutions are needed to ensure wares consistently look their very best, while extending the life of this major investment.

3

SWEATING THE DETAILS:

Everything on the table gets heavy use by each party. Servers and bussers can't overlook the little things when preparing a table for guests. Are the menus clean—free of stains and fingerprints? Are salt, pepper and condiment containers clean, full and tidily arranged? These little things make up a superior table setting and can immediately derail a customer's experience.

4

REGULAR DEEP CLEANING:

Efficient spot cleaning throughout a day of service is critical. But restaurants should do a weekly deep-clean of tables and chairs. This more intensive cleaning will not only speed everyday table-turn cleaning, but extend the life of furniture.

STRATEGY #4:

MAKE YOUR RESTROOMS SHINE

Fantastic food and superb service go a long way, but a less-than-stellar restroom can overshadow even the most spectacular dining experience. Here are four troubling statistics that drive home the importance of consistently superb restroom cleanliness:

- The restroom is one of the three most influential aspects of the restaurant experience.⁶
- One-third of consumers will never return to a business with an unclean restroom.⁷
- After a bad restroom experience, half will proactively warn friends and acquaintances.⁸
- As they look to social media reviews, 80 percent of customers will immediately avoid a restaurant reported to have dirty restrooms.⁹



6. <http://www.mintel.com/blog/foodservice-market-news/cleanliness-menu-selection-and-comfort-most-important-when-dining-out-reports-mintel>

7. <https://www.bradleycorp.com/handwashing>

8 Harris Interactive survey for SCA Tissue North America

9 <https://www.qsrmagazine.com/outside-insights/dirty-little-secret>

MAKE YOUR RESTROOMS SHINE

KEY AREAS OF FOCUS

1

CREATE A SPECIFIC RESTROOM MAINTENANCE PROGRAM:

Staff should know exactly what needs to be done, how often and by whom. This program—and restroom cleanliness in general—must be reinforced as a top priority from the very first day of a new employee's training.

2

OPTIMIZE ONGOING SPOT CLEANING:

Restroom cleaning can't be a once-a-day task. Spot-cleaning checklists should hit touch-points and high-traffic areas (door handles, sinks, floors, toilets etc.). Schedules should take into account typical customer volume, as busier days require more frequent spot cleaning.

3

MAKE "RIGHT WAY" CLEANING = "EASY WAY" CLEANING:

Restroom cleaning is a dirty job, and it's tempting to take shortcuts. Cleaning tools and chemicals should be chosen to minimize the hassle of an already frustrating task. In short, it should be easier to clean the right way than the wrong way.

4

REGULAR DEEP CLEANING:

Just like the kitchen, tables and chairs, the restrooms should undergo regular deep cleaning. All surfaces should be treated with a multi-use disinfecting solution. Choosing effective, simple-to-use deep-cleaning products makes this process more efficient, helping staff complete deep-cleans at the beginning or end of shifts without pushing into overtime.

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