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Get Ahead of the Shift

"Food services accounted for more than 19% of all retail leases last year, rising in recent years to the highest proportion for any category since data firm CoStar Group began tracking the statistic in 2007. The uptick reflects how Americans are spending more time and money at restaurants, from fine-dining hot spots to fast-casual chains."

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The Wall Street Journal

*Disclaimer: This framework is for informational purposes only and is not intended as a substitute for any audit or other professional advice, consultation, or service.

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GoTab was founded in 2016 as a pioneer in mobile payment solutions, expanding to include contactless ordering in 2018 and introducing its POS system in 2021. Even before it became a necessity, we were ahead of the curve in the realm of "contactless ordering and payment". Initially, it posed a challenge to convince hospitality operators to embrace change and modernize their traditional methods in exchange for the potential of increased order sizes and more efficient service. Our successful strategy at the time focused on introducing innovative practices and cutting-edge techniques that operators could adopt to elevate the dining experience for their guests and enhance the service provided to their employees.

As America's dining rooms buzz anew with activity, the burning question remains: are they operating at a profit?

With persistent high food and labor costs, many operators find that their profits are slimmer and more unpredictable than ever.

This highlights the challenge of maintaining traditional service models in the current environment. While there is a nostalgia for traditional table service, the increasing labor expenses associated with it are a significant concern. To stay competitive and adapt to the current uncertain environment, operators need to rethink their approach and adjust their guests' expectations of service quality.

Before diving deeper, let's cut to the chase: Introducing a hybrid service model for your business will yield four key benefits—boosting average check amounts, enhancing employee satisfaction and retention, fostering loyal repeat customers, and ultimately elevating your profitability. This isn't just a bold claim; it's a proven strategy employed by numerous successful operators in the field today. Keep reading to discover the essential steps to implementing this innovative service model for your business, and feel free to reach out if you're eager to learn more.

Rising labor costs and inflation are just a piece of the puzzle driving the shift towards hybrid service in the hospitality industry. Operators are seizing the opportunity to blend food and beverage offerings with entertainment experiences. Whether it's live music, interactive games, or unconventional activities like pickleball and ax throwing, incorporating these communal activities into a food & beverage program can be a positive driver of business growth and success.

Following are key steps to embrace hybrid service at your venue. While each step could warrant a detailed report, this straightforward framework aims to simplify the process for easy implementation.

Embrace the Mindset

Just like any innovative endeavor, adopting a hybrid service model at your restaurant begins by stepping away from conventional thinking, not only in terms of logistics but also in reimagining how on-premise guests interact with your brand. Operating model changes can run the gamut, from removing a bar and incorporating new self-serve pour walls, or adding space for events and live music.

Know Your Guests

No matter your concept, you will likely encounter three distinct types of guests:

- Guests who are eager to engage
- Others who are content to observe
- Some who prefer to be left alone

Be sure to think through how to identify which type of guest you're encountering as quickly as possible so you can serve them accordingly. Train your staff to pay attention to subtle cues, like guests scanning the table for QR codes or menus, or showing hesitancy and seeking assistance.

Ensure Staff Visibility

As always, it is crucial to ensure that your staff are readily available to assist guests with any inquiries or offer recommendations on menu items. The traditional method of table side ordering can often lead to frustration for guests. Guests may struggle to grab the attention of staff during peak hours, or may perceive frequent staff table visits as bothersome

if they are having an intimate conversation. By guaranteeing that your staff are easily accessible, whether they are physically present in the dining area or reachable through messaging, guests will feel well taken care of.

Implement Consistent, Friendly Beginnings

In any human-to-human interaction, it's important to kick things off with a friendly greeting. Contrary to many operators' expectations, hybrid service often involves **offering guests more service rather than cutting back.** When people go out to eat and be entertained, they have a certain idea of what's going to happen. When they are presented with something different, it can throw them off. There's a bit of a learning curve on both sides.

Revise Host Scripts

Consider giving a fresh update to the scripts crafted for your staff members who greet guests. Maintain the warm and welcoming approach, showcasing a willingness to go above and beyond to assist, while incorporating a hybrid-specific touch.

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SAMPLE SCRIPT: "Welcome! Have you visited with us before? How would you like to explore our menu today? We have digital and printed options for your convenience."

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This approach not only acknowledges the guest's potential unfamiliarity with your service model but also places the power of choice firmly in their hands.

HOP & VINE TAPROOM *Upon arrival, each guest is warmly welcomed at the front of the house where they are asked to present their ID and credit or debit card. We then open a tab for them and provide a small RFID card that resembles a hotel key card. This card is connected to their payment method, allowing them to move freely throughout the space. Guests can conveniently tap the card to pay for any selections from the self-pour wall.*

—Connor Rasmussen of Hop & Vine Taproom
   in Stamford CT

Get Staff Engaged

Engaging your staff to actively participate in the experience is key. While you don't have to micromanage, guiding guests on how to maximize their experience at your location is crucial. Offering a hybrid model where staff can adapt and switch roles fluidly opens up a myriad of possibilities for your business.

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Staff are encouraged to have conversations with guests, provide recommendations, even sit down and talk to guests when appropriate. It's been very successful in creating a new experience for everybody, staff and customers alike.

—*Connor Rasmussen of Hop & Vine Taproom in Stamford CT*

Add Signage and Wayfinding Queues

Utilize a combination of traditional print signage and modern digital displays to effectively guide guests through your space and highlight the range of services and amenities available to them. By strategically placing signage and wayfinding queues, you can enhance the overall guest experience and ensure that guests are informed and engaged every step of the way. Whether it's directing them to ordering and payment options, or promoting special offers, leveraging signage in your hybrid service setup is key to creating a seamless and enjoyable experience for your guests.

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Introduce Optionality by Design

Hybrid service allows you to customize your approach to each guest's preferences, rather than forcing a one-size-fits-all service style. This involves providing a variety of engagement and service options for your guests. If you're installing a self-pour wall, maintain a separate bar for guests who prefer the traditional interaction with your bartenders.

If table service is the model in part of your venue, ensure your staff have handheld POS devices for taking orders tableside. This will save your staff countless steps and ensure prompt and easy transactions, rather than requiring guests to wait for busy staff to place orders, take payment, etc. It's important to make these transactional touchpoints as quick and easy as possible.

Add RFID passes or QR codes at the table for those comfortable with self-service. Your guests will value the variety of choices available to them, from accessing information about the products they are buying to completing their purchases in a way that best suits their preferences.

Offer Transparency with Unified Tabs

You'll likely have guests who prefer to order the traditional way and those who are more adventurous in the same party. In that scenario, it's important to have staff ready to assist, and with the ability to pull up open tabs at the table. This eliminates any confusion about which tab to charge and allows multiple people to place digital orders at the same time without needing separate tabs for each person.

With a hybrid service model supported by a robust POS, all orders, whether from the bar or kitchen, can be connected to the same tab, providing visibility and transparency for both staff and guests.

Review Your Tipping Policy (and Tech)

Implementing tip pooling/sharing among staff in venues with hybrid service models has proven to be a valuable strategy for enhancing staff compensation and fostering a team-oriented approach to guest service. With the seamless integration of modern point-of-sale systems with tip-pooling/sharing tools, say goodbye to tedious spreadsheets and complex reconciliations. Invest in the right tools that can streamline this process for you.

Prepare for the Unexpected

Of particular interest for venues with large outdoor spaces, the goal should be to ensure that every guest enjoys an exceptional experience, rain or shine. To achieve this, consider implementing a dynamic print routing system that intelligently directs orders

to the appropriate preparation stations, whether that's the main kitchen, the bar, or any number of stations throughout our venue. This will allow your team to adapt in real-time, ensuring that food and drink orders are fulfilled efficiently and accurately, no matter what the weather brings.

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You know, the staff here love being here. They make great money. It's very much a fun, laid-back sort of atmosphere.

—Connor Rasmussen of Hop & Vine Taproom in Stamford CT

Improve Staff Retention

Implementing a hybrid service model gives you the opportunity to bring on individuals with vibrant personalities who thrive on fun, and who are dedicated and proactive, even if they don't have a background in hospitality. This shift results in staff members finding greater enjoyment in their roles, ultimately leading to improved staff retention rates.

Labor cost management often revolves around the idea of minimizing the number of staff on the floor. However, a key aspect of labor expenses lies in staff retention. It is far more cost-effective to retain and empower the right individuals than constantly hiring and training new staff members. By redistributing earnings based on business needs rather than staffing levels, you can ensure a more sustainable and equitable compensation structure throughout the week, month, or year.

PLEASE DROP YOUR TAP WALL CARD HERE

If you haven't closed out your tab on your phone, a 15% gratuity will be added automatically.

THANKS FOR COMING!

PINTS PADDLE
TAP WALL

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Emphasize Convenience

Guests often find themselves in moments where time is of the essence, whether it's rushing to catch a train, make it to a show, or get to a dinner reservation. Give your guests the option to save their precious time by closing out their tab on their own. Whether it's dropping an RFID card in a box on their way out the door, or closing out the tab on their mobile device. Even paying tableside with a Handheld/Pocket POS you drop at the table can save them a ton of time. It's all about efficiency and convenience, ensuring that guests can enjoy their time with you without any unnecessary delays. Just a small gesture that can make a big difference in their overall experience.

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Talk With Our Experts

In conclusion, the introduction of a hybrid service model in your business can bring about four crucial advantages—increasing average check amounts, improving employee satisfaction and retention, cultivating loyal repeat customers, and ultimately boosting your business's profitability. Follow these simple steps to incorporate hybrid service models into your business. We are confident that it will result in higher guest satisfaction and increased profitability. Contact us. We'd love to help.

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