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# THE EVOLUTION OF DIGITAL DINING CONVENIENCE



We live in a world where on-demand access is prevalent. Frequenting your favorite lunchtime establishment has evolved over the past several years to become more of a technology-oriented experience.

Today, leaving the office for lunch is perceived as a less efficient use of our increasingly constrained time. And consumers in general are beginning to feel restricted when required to use traditional methods to book reservations or order meals by phone. This has led to the emergence of digital platforms for on-demand, mobile ordering and reservations across the hospitality industry. Mobile ordering makes it easier than ever for guests to order, pay for and pick up fresh food while spending the day perusing other resort amenities.

Technology, executed well, is designed to make life easier. There are many instances when it simplifies our personal and work lives. This simplification is particularly the case for dining establishments. Today's buzzword technology — mobile apps, smart devices, kiosks and analytics — focus on food service environments. In this article we identify how the latest technologies are improving internal workflows and growing revenue while creating a convenient dining experience for guests.

## We Love Online Ordering

Why do we, as diners, prefer to place orders on a mobile device and pick up our meal with limited human interaction? What makes these platforms so desirable? For the most part, online ordering works seamlessly to meet the desires of guests who want immediate fulfillment. While digital ordering was created for diner convenience, it also provides an unexpected boost in restaurant revenue. In addition to driving sales, mobile ordering can streamline processes in the kitchen, such as order throttling, that increase overall productivity. This in turn saves considerable staff time — and time is money when it comes to fulfilling orders.

Not convinced mobile, on-demand ordering is the future? According to recent reports from PYMTS.com, only 11 percent of consumers reported placing an order via smartphone app in 2015. Today that number hovers at around 40 percent with much anticipated growth in the next 12-24 months. Restaurant owners and managers have several technology choices, too. Digital ordering tools are vast, ranging from downloadable apps to website widgets. Mastering restaurant tech in the digital age is about delivering the best value and convenience to your guests.

## Downloadable Apps

Whether you have a quick-service restaurant or a food truck, there's an app-based function that serves your business objectives.

- Apps provide a modern, convenient channel for diners to place online orders for delivery or pick-up.
- Diners are likely to spend more through mobile ordering than in person because they have more time to decide, and sometimes they're looking for purchases that will score extra reward points.
- Mobile ordering reduces the amount of time your staff spends taking orders, enabling them to focus attention on other needs.
- A downloadable app allows you to better target potential diners with location-based push notifications and incentives. It also aids in guest retention with integrated or built-in loyalty programs.
- Finally, apps also bring new payment options that allow diners to pay with their mobile wallet, a secure alternative to sharing credit card details over the phone.

## Kiosk Ordering

You see them popping up everywhere. Lately kiosks are finding their place in more food service venues and with good reason. For operators who have employed them, kiosks increase the average check size with intuitive upsell prompts where diners are encouraged to add side items, extra toppings or to make it a combo. Kiosks give diners the freedom to place orders exactly to their liking without the risk of miscommunication — or worse, social judgment. Taking their time to ensure the order is



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LAEL HALL, DIR. OF IT, HO-CHUNK NATION



accurate and then paying through the security of a self-contained payment terminal, diners appreciate the reduced social friction.

Designed to provide guest conveniences beyond self-order and pay, many kiosks feature digital messaging, allergen and nutrition information, and even support loyalty programs. Hardware manufacturers continue to fine-tune their self-service kiosks, while POS software developers introduce kiosk integration with mobile ordering, kitchen display systems and advanced back-office management tools.

### Website Widgets

Widgets, or dynamic web-interface applications, are an excellent app alternative for fine-dining venues. They allow guests to book a table directly from your website, without having to place a phone call. Perhaps more importantly, restaurant operators are not obligated to use a third-party solution that redirects the diner to an external website when making a reservation. Widgets have already had a significant effect on the early adopters, allowing diners the convenience of booking not just a specific date and time, but by the table or section of their preference.

Some widgets support front-of-the-house automation as well, facilitating floor management to make it easier to follow shifts in guest traffic and staff workflows. Add in wait-list management capabilities, helpful in providing the most accurate times to waiting guests, an integrated widget can see availability across all outlets to identify open seating opportunities. Still, some widgets can leverage multiple floor plans, particularly useful when optimizing space and organizing special events. Much like downloadable apps, widgets support various payment categories to accommodate advance-pay pre-fixe menus, special functions, or custom pricing for kids and seniors. They also allow diners to pay with their mobile wallet.

Expanding your business with an ordering app or branded widget requires that you understand how these tools should be structured to enhance your existing workflows without having to change them completely.

### Active Social Media Presence

According to Forbes, Facebook ordering stands to become one of the largest technology endeavors in the coming year. While restaurant owners are looking to add or enhance their Facebook presence, companies that specialize in payment integration are helping



Courtesy of iStock

restaurant chains add menu ordering onto the social platform. This is a low-cost option that offers additional sales potential.

Responding to social media engagement and being present on all platforms is a great way to foster an appreciation for your brand. A guest becomes loyal for two key reasons: your food and your service. Your active involvement on social media is an expectation that guests relate as an important part of your overall service. From a social media standpoint, people will enjoy the experience of doing business where they feel appreciated for their views, and they respond positively when you can create a comfortable and open exchange.

### Diner Insights

While social media is a popular vehicle to gain insights about your guests, it's certainly not the only way. When someone tweets at your restaurant or places an online order, it produces information to help you identify a menu item that receives the most accolades, for example. Other technologies provide less anecdotal data however.

Too often restaurant operators see analytics as an afterthought. Analytics bring intelligent data to help identify which menu items are selling well and which items are struggling the most, possibly requiring a price adjustment or menu change. This business intelligence allows you to see some of the most important contributing factors for success, including your busiest meal periods, average guest spend, table turn times, tip percentages by server and your most profitable items. Such insights draw you closer to understanding what guests love most about your business.

Still, each diner has their own expectation

of how they prefer to interact with service staff. While some diners may enjoy a server who adds to the encounter with their own narrative, other diners prefer a much different experience tucked away in a quiet corner. The more you can learn about guests' behaviors, the easier it is to strengthen the connection created through your food and service levels. For this, there is technology that helps deliver a full-service guest experience from first impression to subsequent interactions, seeking to keep the guest engaged.

Technology has changed the restaurant business for the better. As more operators recognize the efficiency of handling orders digitally, this convenience will become an expectation held by an expanding population of diners. Perhaps you have not envisioned your business as one that provides takeout or delivery options, but as this expectation grows you may need to employ technology to better adapt to diners' mindsets. Foodservice operators are encouraged to not only take a comprehensive look at the types of technology affecting their businesses, but to also explore how they may apply the same technologies beyond foodservice areas.

*Mr. Sridhar Laveti is the Vice President of R&D and Global Customer Support at Agilysys. In this role, he is responsible for leading the product engineering and product management strategies for the company's mobile property management and point-of-sale solutions. Mr. Laveti is an accomplished executive who brings more than 25 years of demonstrated technology expertise and leadership to the customer support teams.*



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# Agilysys...

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## Intelligent Logic is Transforming Hospitality

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Automation is nothing new. It has existed across industries for decades driven largely by increasing competition and the need to provide rich customer experiences. Hospitality operators, not to be outdone by other industries, want technologies that help them develop and deliver customized guest experiences. Not only is intelligent logic a marketing marvel – automatically creating personalized promotions based on an individual’s responses and historical behaviors – studies have also shown that most respond favorably to personalized guest service. This personalization in turn helps operators create brand awareness – a culture of guest loyalty. Intelligent logic that combines with real-time alerts is one such technology designed to streamline mundane yet essential tasks like housekeeping, maintenance requests or in-room dining. In fact, it’s rapidly transforming and automating the roles and responsibilities of staff workflows, once considered unlikely to change.

To the hotel guest, there is a big difference when their stay is one that provides exceptional, expedient service at every opportunity. Here are just a few examples of how intelligent logic is deeply improving the resort guest experience.

Agilysys recently introduced rGuest® Service, an events-based technology that takes the guesswork out of staff and task assignments. It operates on both Android and Apple devices using a configurable message format enabling it to integrate with a variety of external products. This technology also works in multiple languages and has text-to-speech (TTS) capabilities, where users receive alerts on their mobile device or Android watch, the latter being particularly useful for valet, bell desk and food runner staff. The solution supports three critical areas that can routinely impede resort staff efficiency — housekeeping workflows, room maintenance and F&B management.

According to Sridhar Laveti, vice president of research and development at Agilysys, the technology allows management and staff to exchange information in an instant.

“Real-time data directly affects both profitability and guest satisfaction,” he said. “It allows resorts to save time, conserve their resources, improve operational efficiency and handle guest requests in an expedient manner.”

Housekeeping management is often a challenge. Many properties still use outdated manual methods, and it’s not unusual for guest

rooms to be overlooked and slip through the cracks. The result is a decrease in guest satisfaction. With rGuest Service, room details are updated in real time, so staff can be optimized, and rooms never overlooked. A built-in communication tool allows supervisors to text an entire team or an individual team member. For all staff, this technology provides up-to-the-minute room status while front-desk personnel can see the same status update in the system.

This innovative technology also uses built-in scheduling for maintenance requests to ensure the right technicians are deployed for a given job. Managers can define custom workflows or tasks, and maintenance staff can use almost any mobile device to receive assignments and share progress reports. rGuest Service can initiate routine maintenance checks so guests don’t end up in rooms with plumbing issues, for example.

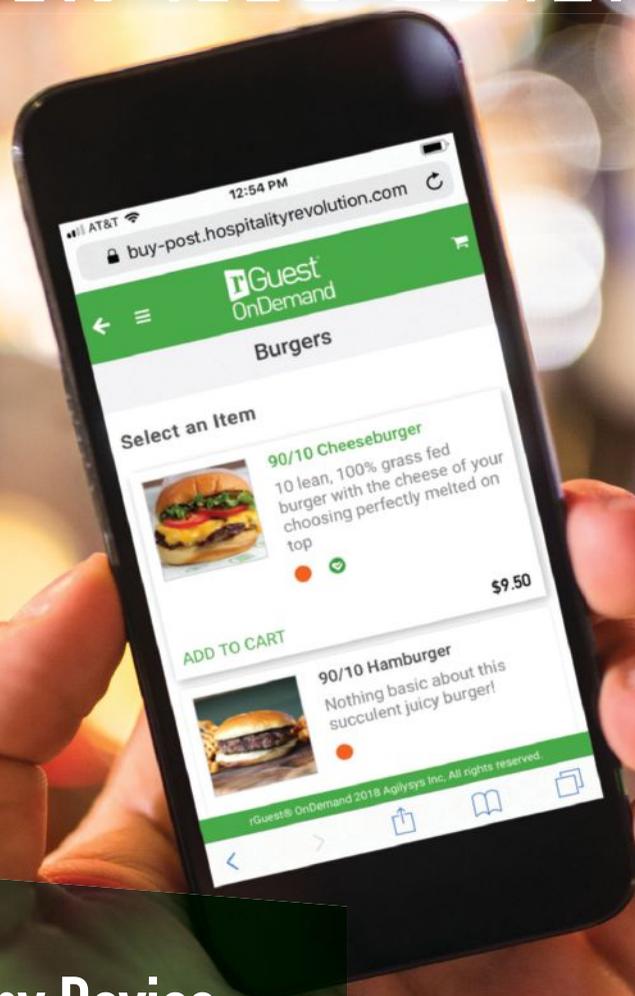
rGuest Service also enhances the entire in-room dining execution, making it easier than ever to oversee food runner assignments and delivery status. Managers can define custom workflows, allowing staff to focus on the task at hand. Staff are used most efficiently with this technology’s ability to mobilize task assignments.

When integrated with one of Agilysys’ property management systems, rGuest Service streamlines the entire guest lifecycle. When a VIP guest arrives, the technology can initiate a series of events —notifying the manager, alerting guest services or placing a bottle of wine in the VIP’s room. During the stay, all guest requests are automatically routed to the appropriate staff, ensuring the guest’s needs are attended to in a timely manner. And once the guest checks out, this innovative technology informs the valet and bell desk, ensuring the departure is as seamless as possible.

“Now, more than ever, real-time data sharing is critical to the resort’s success,” Laveti continued. “It allows the property to operate more efficiently and helps maximize profitability through time and labor savings. Most importantly, it enables hotels to deliver the outstanding experience guests expect.”

To enhance the guest’s stay, staff workflows should be as seamless, effortless and as hands-free as possible. With real-time, intelligent logic and mobile notifications, rGuest Service communicates the way staff prefers and optimizes the guest experience. Never miss another opportunity to impress.

# EXPERIENCE MATTERS



## Mobile Ordering on Any Device

Guest-facing F&B ordering that works anywhere, on any device. rGuest® OnDemand makes it easy to enhance the patron experience and keep revenue flowing.

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Agilysys...



Use at Multiple Venues



Let the System Locate Patrons



Display Real-Time Order Status

877-369-6208  
Sales@Agilysys.com  
www.Agilysys.com