TRADE

From sceptics to converts; how Trade took a chance on digital ordering to survive a pandemic

If you were to ask Trade what has changed in the last year, the answer you would get would be: what hasn't changed?

The four-site foodie heaven, which has a reputation for great coffee, enormous artisan sandwiches and yummy breakfast/brunches, recognised early on that if was going to survive the COVID-19 Pandemic it would have to make quick adaptations. It set about changing its operating model radically, dropping cash handling and table service when able to open.

The Challenge

Prior to the crisis, digital ordering was something it hadn't considered right for its company. The team knew the benefits of ordering and payment technology. However, they were concerned by the perceived effort needed to drive uptake and believed it might take away from the personal interaction between its staff and the public.

Then, in May 2020, Trade decided to reopen it Islington store for takeaway only. Its customers and team were excited to emerge from lockdown but were anxious about social interaction. It began to look for a system that would allow customers to pay on their own devices, reducing the need for queuing and avoiding groups congregating at our front door.

The Solution

Looking at the market, Trade noted only a few companies offering a combined pay-at-table, order and pay at table and order-ahead for collection function, but also a flurry of new vendors looking to capitalise on the COVID-19 market.

Trade had come across QikServe's technology in the years prior to 2020. QikServe provided a feature rich mature platform; one developed and streamlined over time, and with appropriate support systems in place. Its belief

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was rewarded; the platform was easy to setup and, unlike many of the other solutions it reviewed, it was clear that QikServe could support multi-site operators (it appreciated being able to manage each site individually and globally on the same dashboard).

The results

The pandemic had an immediate, negative impact on the revenue streams of restaurants and food businesses across the world. At Trade, like many others, it became essential to reduce operating costs. By making QikServe its default ordering method for dine in customers, it was able to reduce labour by up to 20%.

Now, as the world prepares to return to a new state of normal, and vaccinations

are rolled out, hospitality companies like Trade have been able to look forward and make plans. Despite being set against digital ordering just a year ago, it's now taken more than 14,000 table orders on the platform. Its intention is to continue offering the solution, refraining from returning to the labour-intensive service it relied on previously.

Prior to adopting the QikServe platform, Trade had never collected customer data; for the first time its customers have been able to opt in and receive marketing emails. As a result, in October 2020, it was able to launch a new dinner menu at one of its sites and offer soft-launch discounts to regular customers. It will now launch a native ordering

> **Using the QikServe platform we had complete control and we were able to communicate directly with the customer when they have a query or issue, giving them the best possible experience with our brand. That's something we'll never be able to do via an aggregator. Our customers use our platform because they appreciate the extra level of personalisation they get with it.**

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app, allowing it to create even closer relationships with those customers.

Commenting on the future of the hospitality market, Trade says: "Unfortunately, a lot of venues have closed, and I fear this is only the tip of the iceberg. That said there will always be customer demand for great quality venues of all shapes and sizes and there will always be passionate operators willing to go above and beyond to create experiences. I think it is likely over the next couple of years we will see the focus of hospitality a lot more focussed on suburban locations. City-

centre businesses have seen the biggest reduction in sales and, overall, much higher property costs. As these properties become available, they will make ideal spaces for new hospitality and social experiences. Many suburban restaurants have boomed throughout the pandemic, supported by a base of loyal, local customers. It's in this environment that a system like QikServe really demonstrates its value."

"This period of pause has been an opportunity to businesses, like ours, to review their model of operating. We've used it to embrace technology as much as possible. From stock systems and supplier ordering to order and pay, the way we run our business is very different to a year ago. We've found customers have been reassured by us offering a Covid-safe order and pay method and several have commented that QikServe's is a slicker system than others they had experienced in different venues.