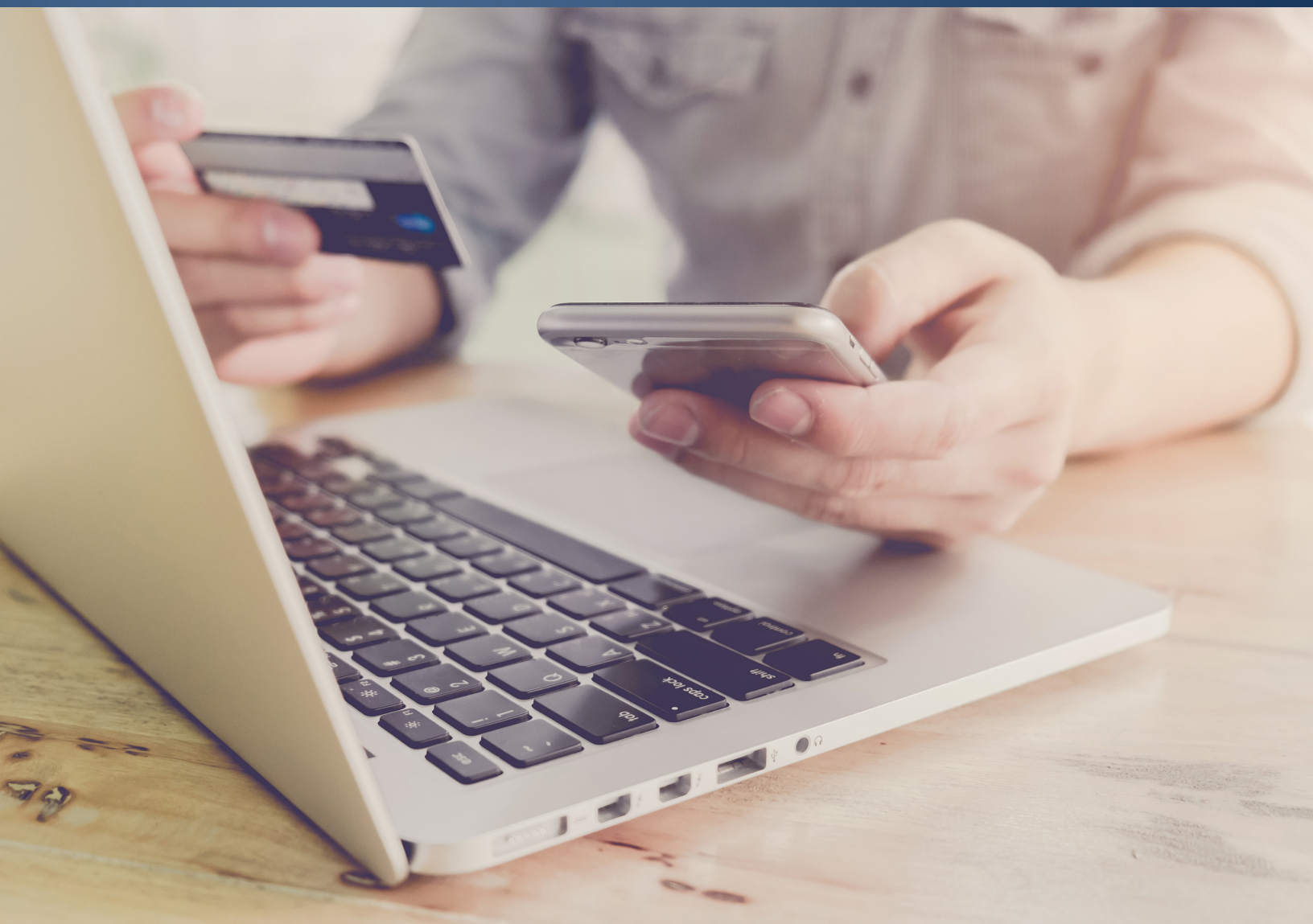




Is Your Restaurant Ready for the Growing Online Ordering Trend?



Are you looking for a new way to grow your restaurant business? Consider **online ordering**. According to *QSR Web*, digital ordering is growing 300 percent faster than dine-in traffic, and analysts project in a few years, more restaurant sales will come from takeout, delivery, and other forms of off-premises dining than from customers who dine-in.

The trend isn't difficult to understand. Your customers lead busy lives and may not have time in their schedules to cook or dine out. Online ordering gives your customers the convenience of placing orders and scheduling pickup or delivery. Making the process of placing those orders easier for your customers and more efficient for your business could be a key to significant traffic and revenue growth.

Build a Competitive Advantage

Restaurant competition is fierce and profit margins are tight. The majority of independently-owned restaurants that open today will not survive beyond a few years, and, according to an Ohio State University study, more than 60 percent will fail in the first year.

A Cornell University study revealed restaurant survival is based on finding ways to differentiate your business from the competition and being agile enough to successfully respond to consumer trends.

Don't become a statistic. Offering online ordering is a feature your customers are looking for, and it also elevates your digital presence, which can help raise awareness about what makes your restaurant and your brand unique and appealing.

There are three options for adding online ordering services:

- **Sign up with a third-party online ordering network.** There are a variety of options for online ordering networks you can work with depending on your location. Investigate costs — some will charge a percentage of each order and others charge a flat fee for being listed on their websites.
- **Sign up for the online ordering service of your current POS solution (if available).** This option provides the added benefit of integrating online sales with your finance report, but functionality of the online ordering application itself may be limited.
- **Integrate your own online ordering system on your own website.** You can establish online ordering through your own website or app. This option locks a customer into your brand when they are ready to place orders and can build customer loyalty.

Meet Customers Where They Live

Recent data shows the average consumer now spends more than 6 hours per day online. At work, while traveling, and at home, your customers have more technology options available, and they are using them to select restaurants. The National Restaurant Association reports technology options offered by restaurants are important to about one-third of all consumers and 40 percent of millennials.

When the task at hand is searching for a place to order dinner, consumers may turn to third-party online ordering sites such as Caviar, UberEATS and Tapingo. These sites list restaurants in the customer's vicinity, display their menu and images, and allow the user to place an order for takeout or delivery. Working with a third-party online ordering network will instantly make your restaurant visible to a larger pool of potential customers.

Having an elevated digital presence addresses two important issues facing restaurants:

- **How to provide what millennials are looking for:**

The millennial generation, now the largest demographic in the U.S. and growing in its spending power, is used to searching online for information or recommendations from their friends when choosing restaurants. Even if they plan a night out to dine, they research restaurants in advance, online. If you are not online, you are invisible to them.

- **How to be more accessible to customers:**

Your restaurant may not be open 24/7, but with online ordering, your customers can order in advance and choose a time for pickup or delivery that works with their schedules. Customers whose native language isn't English may be more likely to use online ordering since they can take their time to translate and understand your menu. In addition, online ordering for delivery may boost sales from customers that don't want to venture out during inclement weather and from people with disabilities.



Eliminate the Game of Telephone

Customers have traditionally placed orders by telephone, but online ordering increases the efficiency of the process in a number of ways. According to GrubHub, 75 percent of phone orders take more than one minute to complete. So if a restaurant takes 25 orders per day, online ordering could save at least 175 minutes (almost 3 hours) per week. Online ordering also eliminates interruptions that occur when the phone rings. Employees' productivity can increase when they don't have to stop to answer the phone.

The accuracy of orders can also increase with online ordering. The process isn't dependent on the customer communicating the order over the phone to an employee — perhaps working in a noisy kitchen or distracted with other tasks. Problems of miscommunicated orders, putting the order in for the wrong time or wrong address are eliminated. This means less waste, less duplication of effort to correct problems, and happier customers.

Beef Up Sales with New Revenue Opportunities

If you don't currently offer food for takeout or delivery, this could be a new revenue stream. National Restaurant Association research showed takeout sales reaching \$70 billion last year — and growing. The NRA estimates by 2020, 70 percent of all restaurant traffic will be outside the restaurant. In addition, 60 percent of consumers said they would likely take advantage of delivery if quick service or fast casual restaurants offered it. You can gain additional traction by considering options like curbside pickup and online ordering for food trucks, which offer additional convenience.

Online orders can make this part of your business even more lucrative. Orders placed in advance online tend to be larger than phone orders or orders placed in person. Furthermore, food delivery app Eat24 reports mobile users tend to spend more than PC users when placing orders. In either case, the company attributes the increase to the customer being able to see all options for toppings, sides, upsizing, etc. and choose exactly what they want.

Online and mobile food ordering company GrubHub reports restaurants that add online ordering options show an average increase in takeout revenue of 30 percent, and about 20 percent of the restaurants that work with them double their revenue.

Boost Your Restaurant's Online Ordering Efficiency

The process of receiving orders from a third-party ordering site and getting them to the kitchen can still be a pain point for some restaurants. Restaurants usually receive orders via email on a tablet in the restaurant — or on several tablets if they work with more than one third-party network. During a shift, one or more employees may be assigned to communicate the orders to the kitchen and enter them into the point of sale (POS) system. The lack of integration between online ordering sites and the POS system means the process still requires labor hours and errors can still occur when orders are transferred.

Consider the gains in efficiency, productivity, and customer satisfaction for your restaurant if you could download an app that would send your online orders directly to the kitchen printer where your staff could start food prep immediately and ensure orders are ready at the appropriate times. Technology solutions are available to help your restaurant bridge the gap between online orders and the kitchen.

Maximizing online order processing efficiency will enable you to truly benefit from adding this service to your business, allowing you to address this major consumer trend, reach a wider pool of potential customers, and fully develop this revenue stream.

About cloudPRNT

Star's cloudPRNT is an innovative technology that enables users to print to Star printers directly through a cloud service. CloudPRNT works with online ordering services to store and create print jobs and communicate with the printer, which will print orders at defined intervals. It eliminates the need for an extra tablet to send online orders to the printer, and seamlessly integrates online ordering into your business.

About Star Micronics

Star Micronics America, Inc. is a subsidiary of Star Micronics Company Ltd., one of the largest printer and POS manufacturers world-wide. Star Micronics also manufactures high precision machine tools and precision parts. Star Micronics Company Ltd. is ranked as one of the Top 50 "Most Stable" Japanese companies on the Japanese Nikkei. For more information, visit www.starmicronics.com or call 800-782-7636.