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What Customers Think ... Right Now!

On The Spot offers a new way to **survey**

BY D. GAIL FLEENOR

Two years ago, Dunkin' Donuts chief marketing officer Ken Kimmel wanted to use cell phone cameras to capture images of doughnut cases that needed improvement, but the technology just wasn't up to the task — until the iPhone came along. Now On The Spot Systems, Kimmel's Newton, Mass.-based company, has developed an app to survey customers using the latest mobile technology.

Aimed mainly at the retail sector, Kimmel says the company currently has more than 20 customers, the largest with 99 restaurant sites.

Customers complete the survey on smartphones while waiting for their payment transactions to be processed; servers bring the smartphone (mounted on a bamboo cutting board) to the table.

Kimmel notes his most successful customer so far, the restaurant chain Not Your Average Joe's, gets responses from almost every customer.

Survey for Dessert

"Creative casual cuisine" is the theme at Middleboro, Mass.-headquartered Not Your Average Joe's. Started in 1994, the chain has 15 sites: one in Northern Virginia and the rest in Massachusetts, mostly in the Boston area. Founder Steve Silverstein's goal was to bring big-city cuisine to the suburbs at reasonable prices.

"We are big on guest feedback," Silverstein says. Prior to using Survey on the Spot, the restaurant chain used mystery shoppers for feedback, but "Mystery shops are to iPhone surveys what paper gift certificates are to plastic scanning gift cards," he says. After a six-month test, he is rolling out the app company-wide. "We're getting about 750 surveys per week per restaurant," he says.

Although he expects survey numbers to "settle down" some, the immediate feedback is what Silverstein values. For example, if a particular store receives three comments in a row regarding slow food service, action can be taken quickly to remedy the situation.

On The Spot customized the mobile app for Silverstein's company and added



a new dashboard to provide summaries of all store survey results.

Data for Dinner

"There is no technical limit on the number of questions that can be asked," Kimmel says, "but we have found that, given the small device format, 10 questions works best." Surveys can use branching and random question order.

To review survey results, clients access a secure web portal. Companies can receive reports with all statistics compiled — all stores compared, pie charts, graphs, whatever is needed to delve into the data, Kimmel says. Clients using the mobile app also receive verbatim customer responses, which help detail situations. "They can also enter a tag word, to see how many times this word is repeated in verbatim results."

Survey on the Spot is affordable, Kimmel says. A restaurant chain with fewer than 10 units "pays \$60 per month per location. The amount scales down with more units."

"This new technology reflects positively on our brand," Silverstein says. Retailers "need to employ technology to improve our product. It is not a question of if, it is a question of when — this is the future. It can be a competitive advantage."

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