



December 22, 2010

INDUSTRY NEWS *(NEWS)* | December 21, 2010

How to Improve Customer Service 'On the Spot'

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Customer service is of the utmost importance to most restaurant brands, and in the age of technology like smartphones and iPads, some are finding that customer service can be improved just minutes after a guest visit.

Mobile systems provider On the Spot Systems' survey solution, Survey on the Spot, is one tool that takes advantage of such technology to survey consumer opinion and send to operators almost instantaneously.

Ken Kimmel, cofounder and president of Survey on the Spot, says the collection of customer opinion through his company's app—available for iPhones, iPods, iPads, BlackBerrys, Androids, and other smartphones—helps restaurateurs have more control over how customers perceive their brand.

“Being able to answer questions on customer service and guest satisfaction while you're on site gives you a much better understanding of what's actually going on in the restaurant,” he says.

Kimmel says information collected by Survey on the Spot is sent directly to a database that the operator has access to, and that the operator can program it to alert him when certain opinions—like bad experiences—are received.

Not Your Average Joe's, a casual-dining chain based in Massachusetts, uses Survey on the Spot at several of its locations. Waiters at the restaurant bring an iPod Touch to consumers with the bill and invite them to fill out the interactive survey. The tool helped the chain increase their consumer survey count from 300 a month to 900.

Kimmel says good customer service is becoming more

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important by the day, making consumer surveys an essential tool for restaurants.

“People are so much more focused on their personal finances and how they spend their money, and getting what they expect for the money they spend,” he says.

“Knowing how they’re feeling about your restaurant is critically important.”

Au Bon Pain is testing Survey on the Spot in some of its Boston locations. Kimmel says the tool works different for quick serves because there is no waiter spending time with the consumer and encouraging them to fill out a

survey. Instead, Au Bon Pain uses table tents to gauge customer opinion, and offers \$1 off a \$5 purchase to encourage customers to take the survey.

“You still have the same available guest time,” Kimmel says of quick serves using a tool like Survey on the Spot to collect customers’ opinions. “If somebody is sitting in the restaurant, this doesn’t require that they go home, remember to pull out their receipt, remember to go to their computer to take a survey. If it’s on a table tent in the restaurant ... you get the same results immediately.”

By Sam Oches