

Survey firm says: Keep customer app-y

By Cameron Sperance | Monday, October 10, 2011 | <http://www.bostonherald.com> | [Technology Coverage](#)

A decade ago when a Dunkin' Donuts executive Ken Kimmel saw his friend showing off his new camera phone, he didn't realize a seed had been planted for a successful start-up.

"Geoff (Palmer) was showing off what was then the latest in technology, and I thought how it'd be great to get a photo of every Dunkin' shop at 3 p.m. to monitor store performance," said Kimmel, a former Dunkin' marketing vice president. "A few years after that, he had an iPhone and said we could actually move forward on what I had wanted."

Kimmel and Palmer co-founded Survey on the Spot and developed an application that delivers instant customer feedback to managers. The program, employed on an iPod Touch or iPad tablet computer, is heavily marketed to restaurants as superior to comment cards that become outdated and often require incentives to get customers to fill them out.

"When you provide the device to the consumer, you don't need to offer a costly incentive, because what's more fun than playing with an iPod or iPad?" Palmer said.

Survey on the Spot charges \$40 per month per location, giving owners the option to ask customers questions and see their replies. A \$60 option can send instant alerts to managers and owners if any customer delivers a negative response to service.

The Not Your Average Joe's restaurant chain offers the survey at the end of meals. Since starting the program, the restaurants have received more than 200,000 surveys and added 30,000 names to their marketing lists.

"There is a tactical way to try to intercede and check to see how an experience was," said Kimmel. "By having this, a manager can immediately drop by a table, or at the very least have a discussion with the staff before the shift is over."

The app is quickly branching out to other parts of the service industry. Convenience store giant 7-Eleven is using a version of the program to allow field managers to check competitor's prices and collect store data. Brockton Hospital has patients evaluate the nursing department and transitional care unit on iPads.

Regional dining chain Ninety-Nine Restaurants has used the app for menu research and development.

"We've used it during the testing process to get customer response on elements like flavor, value and what suggestions they have," said Brad Schiff, Ninety-Nine's vice president of marketing at. "We've even canceled menu items based on the response received."

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