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Pathway

Digital Restaurant Tools:

Implementing Technological Infrastructure

RESTwithEU

European Commission

Technology is a fundamental pillar for restaurants and the catering industry in today's business landscape. Ensuring that all aspects of the business – from the kitchen to the dining area – are equipped with up-to-date technology is crucial for success. Failure to do so can lead to operational challenges. A complete technological infrastructure that seamlessly integrates with all processes can enhance efficiency, reduce staff workload, and build trust with customers. In an era of fierce competition, a robust technological foundation distinguishes businesses, improves operations, and unlocks growth opportunities.

Most of the improvements implemented by restaurants require some form of technology. A restaurant's technology infrastructure includes an integrated system of technological components and solutions that support the operations and functions within a restaurant, such as computers, tablets, intelligent machinery, high-speed internet, and cloud-based digital tools. Furthermore, it also refers to a diverse array of components, encompassing point-of-sale (POS) systems, kitchen management software, reservation and guest management systems, online ordering platforms, inventory and supply chain management tools, payment processing systems, customer relationship management (CRM) software, and various other technologies. It is a holistic approach to utilising technology to enhance various aspects of the restaurant business, from front-of-house operations such as customer service and reservations to back-of-house functions like food preparation, inventory control, and financial management.

Restaurants should adopt the tools and technologies that can be tailored to suit their specific needs. Depending on your unique characteristics, embracing a technological upgrade can lead to fewer challenges and greater resilience following the integration of these solutions. Get ready to delve into the world of technological possibilities as we explore how you can enhance your restaurant's tech infrastructure in this complete and comprehensive guide.

WHAT ARE THE RECOMMENDED BEST PRACTICES FOR THIS CHALLENGE?

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BEST PRACTICE 1:

IMPLEMENT A SOLID TECH INFRASTRUCTURE IN YOUR RESTAURANT.

What is **RESTwithEU** **Pilot Project**

RESTwithEU is a European Commission Pilot Project that aims to make the restaurant sector more resilient and sustainable by 2030 through accelerated digitisation.

DIGITALISATION WITHIN RESTAURANT INDUSTRY

Digitalisation in the restaurant industry involves more than just integrating new technology or connecting to the Internet. It's the process of transitioning a company's operations into the digital realm. This guide specifically addresses digitalisation challenges faced by restaurants and provides recommendations for implementing best practices in your day-to-day operations.

WHAT IS A BEST PRACTICE

A best practice, in essence, is a method or technique consistently proven to yield superior results compared to alternatives in a specific field. It represents the most effective and efficient way of accomplishing a particular goal, typically developed through experience, research, and experimentation, enjoying widespread recognition within an industry or field. In the context of the restaurant industry, these practices aim to optimize restaurant operations for maximum effectiveness and efficiency, contributing to improved performance and heightened customer satisfaction.

RESTAURANT CHALLENGES

The most effective strategies that can significantly benefit your business have been organised and redefined as restaurant industry challenges. The aim is to make these challenges relatable to you, so you can personally connect with one or more and feel inspired to explore and implement the corresponding best practices in your business.

DIGITAL PATHWAYS

Digitalisation pathways refer to the various routes that restaurants can take to incorporate digital technologies and processes into their daily operations and overall functioning. The objective of these pathways is to guide you through digitalization processes, offering support, assistance, and recommendations to help you initiate and navigate these initiatives effectively.

Are you in need of assistance in selecting the ideal challenge for your business?

Delve into the Digital Pathway Tool to explore and pinpoint the most fitting best practices aligned with your current level of digitalisation. This tool has been designed to help restaurants SMEs identify and prioritise your digitalisation efforts.

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Why should you embrace the best practices in this challenge?

We highly recommend embracing these best practices for the following compelling reasons:

ESTABLISH THE GROUNDWORK FOR ALL FUTURE DEVELOPMENTS

Introducing technological infrastructure lays the initial foundation to digitise your restaurant. With a sturdy infrastructure in place, the incorporation of digital solutions becomes seamless. Beyond securing internet service and essential business devices, such as mobiles, computers, or tablets, the focus must be on enriching this foundation with applications and solutions that enhance your day-to-day operations.

INTEGRATING EVERY ASPECT AND PROCESS OF YOUR BUSINESS

Every technological integration in your restaurant leads to an enhancement in the connectivity among your processes. Interconnected systems pave the way for improved automation and efficiency, facilitating data compilation and providing valuable information for informed decision-making.
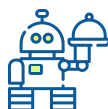
REVEALING HOW ADVANCED TECHNOLOGY TRANSFORMS THE CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE

Surprisingly, every action within your restaurant, even measures undertaken in the back office, contributes to the overall perception of your business. The speed of service and the ease of booking a table influence customers' choice of returning. Going beyond the fundamental aspects of technology and digitalisation can serve as a distinctive selling point. Have you considered transforming your restaurant into a fully automated, robotic experience? It might be the key to creating a business that stands out as truly unique and appealing.

ENSURE THE SECURITY OF YOUR DATA
As you leverage digital tools, various risks emerge that demand attention. Make cybersecurity a top priority to safeguard not only your customer data but also your business operations.

* We would like to share a crucial best practice to address this challenge. It is vital to exercise discretion while applying any best practices, as not all may suit your restaurant's specific needs. This challenge outlines the essential steps for establishing a robust technological infrastructure in your business. If you have already built a solid foundation, the focus shifts to continual growth and process enhancement. Our guidance in this challenge aims to steer you towards further improvements and advancements. Take the time to identify the best practices most relevant to your business. While implementing the presented best practice may naturally lead to others, you should prioritise them based on how well they align with your establishment's unique circumstances.

The term "digital transformation" encapsulates a broad concept that signifies the changes driven by the growing accessibility and utilisation of digital technologies. Any initiative undertaken in the digitalisation of your restaurant will serve as a catalyst for advancements in productivity, competitiveness, resilience, and sustainability.

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BEST PRACTICE 1:

IMPLEMENT A SOLID TECH INFRASTRUCTURE IN YOUR RESTAURANT

In the modern business landscape, it is evident that establishing a robust tech infrastructure, with a well-designed IT framework as the foundational cornerstone, is absolutely essential.

This technological framework serves as the central nervous system to present vital business information, ranging from network reliability to cybersecurity measures and software integrations. Furthermore, it often forms the foundation upon which more sophisticated tech capabilities are built, including digital ordering systems, automated workflows, and streamlined data management. However, it is essential not to underestimate the significance of ensuring the correct tech basics.

What you should keep in mind to implement this best practice

We break down the crucial factors you need to consider when applying the recommended best practices. Utilise the provided template to verify that each recommendation is in place before commencing the implementation process.

Mark either a tick or a cross in the boxes presented on the following page.

☑ **CHOOSE THE CORRECT SOLUTION FOR YOUR RESTAURANT**

ENHANCED OPERATIONAL EFFICIENCY

Implementing tech infrastructure in a restaurant can significantly improve operational efficiency. Digital tools, such as point-of-sale (POS) systems, kitchen display systems, and automated order management streamline tasks and reduce errors. This efficiency leads to faster service, increased table turnover, and a smoother overall dining experience for customers.

IMPROVED CUSTOMER ENGAGEMENT

Tech infrastructure allows restaurants to engage with customers in new and meaningful ways. Online presence, including a well-designed website and active social media profiles, enables direct communication with customers. Loyalty programs, online ordering, and personalised promotions can enhance customer engagement and build a loyal customer base.

Despite recent advancements in the sector, there is still room for further digitisation. Studies conducted during this initiative revealed that only 68% of businesses have Wi-Fi, a mere 39% utilise a Point of Sale (POS) system, 34% offer web reservations, and only 29% employ a digital solution for table management in restaurants.

BEST PRACTICE 1 - DIGITAL DIGITAL RESTAURANT TOOLS: IMPLEMENTING TECHNOLOGICAL INFRASTRUCTURE - **IMPLEMENT A SOLID TECH INFRASTRUCTURE IN YOUR RESTAURANT**

IDENTIFY YOUR MOST IMPORTANT NEEDS:

While thinking about implementing technical infrastructure, it is imperative to focus on what would bring the most value, either from customers or your staff/business. Do you want to improve your customer touchpoint? Do you need a better way to connect your systems? There is no good or bad answer, just start with what appears to be a better fit for you.

COMMENCE WITH THE BASICS:

In today's business landscape, meeting specific technological infrastructure standards is crucial. This includes acquiring a computer or a tablet to oversee operations, utilise office applications, manage emails, as well as ensuring a stable internet connection. Your restaurant also requires a POS system for business management, payment processing, table assignments, and a menu that can be digitised. Have you considered establishing a website or engaging in social media platforms? To accommodate customers without internet access or in areas with poor coverage, providing robust Wi-Fi connectivity is crucial. Start by establishing these fundamental elements before considering the possibility of digitising all processes within your restaurant.

CONSIDER AN ALL-IN-ONE SOLUTION TO KICKSTART YOUR INFRASTRUCTURE:

The adoption of an all-in-one solution offers a holistic approach to restaurant management. Integrating various systems and devices from different providers can prove to be challenging, as compatibility is not always guaranteed. If feasible, seek a solution that provides a range of cohesive features to ensure that you will not encounter any challenges in the future. These solutions, including Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) systems, will offer you management services that surpass basic restaurant management, including inventory, supplier relationships, reservations, table management, payments, and accounting, among other features. Choose a solution that aligns with your essential needs. You can also enable functionalities progressively, as numerous providers offer starter packages that allow for the gradual expansion of features over time.

THINK EVEN BIGGER:

While it is crucial to focus on short-term goals for continuous improvement, take the time to envision what you aspire to achieve in the long run. Even if you do not consider your long-term goals in your initial iteration, it is essential to prevent building something that may become obsolete, requiring a complete reconstruction in the future. Keep scalability and futureproofing in your considerations. Are you aware that you can digitalise your inventory, automatically link reservations with table assignments, and enable orders to seamlessly reach the kitchen without relying on waiters, reducing the chances of mistakes or misunderstandings? Gradually, you will be able to enhance your restaurant in no time.

EMBRACE INTEGRATIONS FOR SEAMLESS OPERATIONS:

Incorporating integrations into your system is highly recommended to enhance efficiency and streamline your operations. By seamlessly connecting various aspects of your business, such as inventory, reservations, and payment processing, integrations pave the way for a more cohesive and synchronised workflow. This not only reduces manual effort but also ensures accurate and real-time data across various functionalities. Seek solutions that offer versatile integration options, allowing your business to adapt and grow effortlessly, particularly if you are already utilising a solution you wish to retain, such as a POS system or a website.

KEEP AN EYE ON YOUR INITIAL BUDGET:

While recognising your needs is crucial, having a well-defined budget is essential. The implementation of digital technology can, in some cases, incur significant costs. A defined budget enables you to allocate funds strategically across various needs and goals, preventing overspending in a single area and ensuring the capacity to invest in additional technologies and processes. A basic tablet or computer may come with a price tag of up to 1000 euros, whereas mobile phones, PDAs, or similar devices for your waitstaff can be acquired for less than 500 euros each. The cost of an internet connection also varies by country and provider. As a reference point, all-in-one solutions with tailored functionalities for your business are available for no more than 1000 euros per year. Keep in mind that the choice of solution or tools is dependent upon your budgetary considerations.

BEST PRACTICE 1 - DIGITAL DIGITAL RESTAURANT TOOLS: IMPLEMENTING TECHNOLOGICAL INFRASTRUCTURE - **IMPLEMENT A SOLID TECH INFRASTRUCTURE IN YOUR RESTAURANT**

TRAINING AND SUPPORT:

Introducing new processes and technology requires proper training for your staff to become accustomed to them. A solution provider with robust support to address queries or handle the training process is necessary for the successful implementation of any new technology. Consider the user-friendliness of the chosen technology solutions. The ease with which your staff can adapt to and efficiently use the new tools is essential. Look for intuitive interfaces and functionalities to minimise training time. A user-friendly system ensures smoother operations and a quicker return on investment.

DATA SECURITY:

The protection of customer data and your business information is vital. Invest in robust cybersecurity measures to prevent data breaches and cyberattacks, and make sure that the same is a priority for your provider. Ensure the implementation of strong and non-reused passwords, reliable antivirus software and firewalls, and regular backups to fortify your defence against potential security threats. This point holds significance, given that 28% of European SMEs encountered at least one form of cybercrime in the year 2021.

SCALING UP YOUR OPERATIONS

Considering the scalability of any new technology is paramount. Opt for solutions that not only meet your current needs but also have the flexibility to improve with your business. A scalable technology ensures that it can adapt to the evolving demands of your restaurant, allowing for expansion without the need for a complete overhaul. Prioritise solutions that provide scalability, offering a future-proof investment for the continued success of your establishment.

CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT AND FEEDBACK LOOP:

Establish a culture of continuous improvement by encouraging feedback from both staff and customers. Regularly assess the effectiveness of implemented technologies and processes. Create channels for employees to provide insights on the way in which the systems can be optimised for better efficiency and facilitate day-to-day activities. Additionally, gather customer feedback on their experience with the implemented technologies, which can help you identify areas for improvement and innovation.

Take note of:

Incorporating technology in a restaurant requires careful consideration. Take the time to research and understand your current and future needs, processes, and business goals to make informed decisions from the start. This proactive approach helps to avoid unnecessary expenses in later modifications, aligning with the principle of "measure twice, cut once".

While we advocate for integrating fundamental technological infrastructure in your restaurant, it must be noted that many references pertain to digital solutions for your operations. Assess the remaining challenges and best practices based on your specific requirements for implementation.

Recommendation:
Start with Levels of Difficulty

⭐☆☆☆☆ **LEVEL 1 – Basic Infrastructure:** Ensure access to mandatory tools such as computers, smartphones, or tablets with internet connectivity. Also establish a reliable infrastructure within the restaurant, including accessible Wi-Fi or high-speed internet. At this stage, the restaurant may have adopted a basic POS (Point-of-Sale) system for fundamental business management and may use basic office software.

⭐⭐☆☆☆ **LEVEL 2 – Digital Presence Establishment:** In this stage, the focus is on establishing a digital footprint for the restaurant. This involves the creation of a basic website to showcase essential information as well as the initiation of social media accounts to engage with a broader audience. Simultaneously, the restaurant can start incorporating advanced digital features, such as a digital payment system, integrated within a more sophisticated POS system.

⭐⭐⭐☆☆ **LEVEL 3 – Digital Advancements:** In the transition to Level 3 of technological infrastructure, the restaurant can introduce a suite of advanced tools to enhance its digital capabilities. This includes the implementation of a digital menu, a table and command management features, a sophisticated booking system, or the integration of Enterprise Resources Planning (ERP; an all-in-one software solution). These tools collectively contribute to streamlining operations, optimising reservations, and laying the groundwork for more efficient resource planning within the establishment. This level signifies a notable advancement in the restaurant's technological integration, promoting a smooth and interconnected approach to business management.

⭐⭐⭐⭐☆ **LEVEL 4 – Use of Advanced Digital Solutions:** At this level, the restaurant should undergo a comprehensive digital transformation. In addition to the tools considered till now, this transformation involves customer relationship management (CRM) solution, inventory management software, supply chain management software, environmental monitoring and energy-efficient infrastructure, human resources software (covering staff scheduling and skill/training management), as well as accounting or finance software (including e-invoicing). This holistic suite of tools enables the restaurant to achieve a highly sophisticated level of operational efficiency. The restaurant emerges as a technologically advanced entity, capable of fostering a seamless and interconnected approach across all facets of its business management.

⭐⭐⭐⭐⭐ **LEVEL 5 – Comprehensive Digital Integration:** Positioned at the forefront of technological sophistication, Level 5 in the restaurant's digital infrastructure signifies a pinnacle achievement in cutting-edge advancements. This level prioritises seamless integration of advanced technologies, with a particular focus on the Internet of Things (IoT), intelligent machinery, and other interconnected systems. The establishment maintains a robust commitment to innovation, leveraging these advanced tools to optimise operational efficiency. With the help of a strategic implementation of IoT and machinery, the restaurant achieves a high level of automation.

Recipe for Success:
Implementing Technological Infrastructure **– 5 Step Guide**

01

ASSESS YOUR NEEDS.

Before diving into tech implementations, take the time to assess your restaurant's specific requirements. Identify areas where technology can make a difference, whether it's streamlining orders, enhancing customer service, or improving internal operations. This information will help you prioritise and decide the solution you wish to implement. Consider your budget and prioritise the solutions that will have the most significant impact.

02

CHOOSE THE RIGHT TOOLS (AND PROVIDERS).

Once you have identified the areas for improvement, select the tools that align with your goals. They can be as straightforward as purchasing a tablet or a mobile phone or securing an internet service. In other instances, you might encounter new and potentially challenging technologies and software. In such cases, conduct thorough research and opt for reputable providers offering user-friendly and scalable solutions. Make sure that these tools are tailored to meet your specific needs.

03

INCORPORATING INTEGRATION INTO YOUR BUSINESS.

Verify that the selected tools can integrate seamlessly with each other. A cohesive tech ecosystem facilitates efficient data sharing, such as between your POS system, kitchen operations, and online ordering platforms. The goal is to establish streamlined workflows that enhance overall efficiency. While researching your tools and provider, employ this criterion to guide your selection process. Examine the additional challenges within this European project to pinpoint the workflows and identify the tools that can be chosen to streamline these tasks.

04

TRAIN YOUR STAFF.

Training your staff is paramount, as employees should be well-versed in the new systems to maximise their benefits. Many tech providers offer training resources, and some may even provide on-site training for your team. A knowledgeable and confident staff is essential for a smooth transition to digitised systems. The shift to new processes and technologies may pose challenges by introducing new responsibilities and altering the routines of your staff. Hence, it is imperative to engage your staff throughout the entire process transparently and select employees who are most dedicated to embracing the change.

05

CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT.

Tech implementation is a continuous process. Collect feedback from your staff and customers about their experiences with the new technology and use this feedback to make necessary improvements and adjustments. Remaining current with technological advancements is equally essential for sustaining a competitive advantage and resilience within your business. This step is pivotal, as each new implementation of technology opens the door to enhanced processes, new automation, and the potential for business improvement.

Other SME restaurants have already proved the best practice

Blagichka Lth (from Bulgaria) implementing the product of Smart & Bright Ideas LDA Arroz Seco (Portugal)

Objective of the pilot

Build a new website and connect it to an all-in-one back-office solution that allows the restaurant to manage all the restaurant processes from the same, unique platform.

Overview

The pilot was initiated to establish an all-in-one infrastructure in the restaurant to manage all restaurant processes such as stock management, digital menu, reservation, technical sheets, and finance. For this purpose, a new, tailor-made website was created, along with the implementation of the solution provider software. The total cost was around €8100 and the initiative took about four weeks to be implemented.

HERE ARE OUR ACCOMPLISHMENTS:

- Initial consultation between the restaurant and the solution provider to align the tool's functionalities with the restaurant's needs.
- Creation of the new website with the information, logo, menu, etc., provided by the restaurant.
- Translation of the website to Bulgarian.
- Integration of the back-office tool to the new website.
- Provision of an onboarding process by the solution provider.
- Creation of new photos and resources for the digital menu.

ABOUT THE RESTAURANT

Blagichka Ltd is a standalone restaurant located in Sofia, Bulgaria. Distinguished as the first zero-waste restaurant in the area, Blagichka takes pride in its commitment to sustainability and social impact. The restaurant goes beyond merely serving local food, as it also focuses on hiring underprivileged youths and providing them with employment opportunities. These young individuals are trained to cook local cuisine in a sustainable manner, ensuring zero waste throughout their operations. Blagichka's innovative approach not only promotes eco-conscious dining but also offers valuable employment and skill-building experiences to those in need. Their seating capacity is for 22 guests.

ABOUT THE SOLUTION PROVIDER

Arroz Seco is an all-in-one system that provides a website to restaurant managers for their restaurants. The website as well its information can be managed through a BackOffice tool on demand, which can also assist in managing various subjects of the workday. Subjects such as financial reports, stock management, staff management, menu and event creation, reserves management and delivery orders can also be managed through this BackOffice tool, which is easily accessible on any device (Android, iOS, and any browser) as long as there is internet connectivity.

Using an all-in-one BackOffice solution or an ERP system in a restaurant facilitates digitalisation by enabling simplified processes, centralised data management, improved efficiency, advanced reporting and analytics, seamless integration with digital channels, and enhanced customer experience. These solutions digitise various operational processes, provide centralised data access, and optimise workflows, leading to increased efficiency and timely decision-making.