

# Tapping Table Management

## Exclusive survey reveals qualities most desired in a TMS

It's no wonder that restaurant operators are tuning in to technology to save time and focus on making the dining experience better for guests. A table management system (TMS) ensures just that by guaranteeing increased table turns and seat utilization, leading to a greater return on investment.

A TMS helps coordinate and streamline a restaurant's operation to get more guests seated, served and satisfied. It assures turning more tables more often, which means higher profits. Overall, the benefits of a TMS are abundant, including enhanced guest services that will create repeat business and better staff organization and communications that lead to increased productivity.

### SATISFIED GUESTS

Feedback from restaurants which have installed a TMS is positive. *Hospitality Technology* magazine conducted a TMS survey in September 2006, polling readers who are operators of table service restaurants. The majority of polled readers — 60 percent — express that the greatest advantage of a TMS is increased seat utilization and table turns. About 40 percent note that the system's greatest advantage is its ability to reduce training time and stress for restaurant employees, and 30 percent feel that its value is in helping to personalize the guest experience.

The survey indicates that the most important requirement of a TMS is its ability to integrate with other systems used in the restaurant, such as the POS, kitchen automation and labor management systems. A TMS is usually integrated to the point-of-sale (POS) system, and there is even one solution on the market that takes it a step further and links to the kitchen for the most enhanced efficiency, accuracy and guest delight. The most advanced TMS can track what is actually happening in the dining room and the kitchen — by party — and can evaluate the best

table matches for each waiting party based on expected turn times, party sizes, guest preferences and other factors such as VIP or priority status. This results in an automated wait list and happier guests who are pleased with accurate wait times.

**70%** of those implementing a TMS will be gathering guest data and timing metrics to use in a data warehouse.

Source: Hospitality Technology Reader Survey: Table Management Systems, September 2006

While a TMS enhances the guest experience and the floor staff's ability to work more efficiently, the restaurant can also analyze and warehouse tremendously valuable information. With a sophisticated TMS, at all times, floor managers can get real-time metrics of the activity in the restaurant. In addition to analyzing the information after a shift is over, managers have the ability to affect events while they are happening.

### DATA DYNAMICS

About 70 percent of the participants in the *HT* survey strongly agree that while implementing a TMS, they will be gathering guest data and timing metrics to use in the data warehouse. Data capture and reporting is another valuable benefit which a TMS offers to operations. It captures such data as guest preferences, number of visits, items ordered, and birthdays — as well the timing between each phase of the total guest experience.

According to industry experts, many more restaurant operators will be moving to this technology in the near future once they do the math on dining room efficiency. The days of crossing names off a clip board are long over and innovations are being made to existing TMS, taking the systems to a higher level of efficiency. For instance, a TMS should enable operators to manage and capture the total guest experience — connecting hostess data with guest data, kitchen data and POS data, to provide measurable guest experiences.

As table management technology continues to evolve, smart operators will seek out cutting edge systems to help protect those intangible yet most vital tools of the trade — time and guest loyalty. ■

## TOP 5

### Requirements of a table management system:

- 1 Integration to other systems (POS, kitchen and labor management)
- 2 Highly intuitive interface optimized for touch user
- 3 Ability to provide accurate wait times and seating suggestions
- 4 Access to guest and timing data in real time and historical formats
- 5 Ability to manage deployments of updates remotely

Source: Hospitality Technology Reader Survey: Table Management Systems, September 2006