



The Benefits of a Digital Table Touch

By Zack Oates

The “traditional” table touch has been a huge part of what makes hospitality...well...hospitality. Having a person to come up and quickly ask, “How is everything” has been a foundational element of the restaurant customer experience for decades now. With the COVID pandemic and all the changes mandated...is “traditional” hospitality dead? The experience has shifted from a restaurant’s dining room to a customer’s living room. Social distancing prevents traditional table touches. Online ordering eliminates traditional table touches. But off-premise necessitates tables touches more than ever. So how do you keep real hospitality alive? Maybe there’s a better way than traditional table touches. The reason for the table touch is simple:

- If there was a problem--solve it on the spot because a yelp review and a lost customer is worth thousands of dollars.
- If it was great--invite them back and ask them to share because nothing drives business like word of mouth. So how can we do that in today’s environment?

We Need to Rethink Hospitality. Every consumer carries the key to the new hospitality in their pocket. Americans spend around 5.4 hours per day on their phones. It is not a surprise that the number one daily activity on the phone is texting (guess what isn’t in the top 10? Phone calls...it’s #11, source: Mobiles.co.uk). An amazing 98% of text messages are read within 3 seconds (source: Axiom). Even more incredible, 89% of customers want text to be the primary form of communication with businesses (source: Twilio). The great thing about hospitality is that it has always been about the customer. So it is time to meet the customer where they are at and how they want to interact. It isn’t a lengthy survey, it isn’t uncomfortable follow-up phone calls, and it isn’t even the traditional table touch.

Issues with “Traditional” Table Touches. There was always two shortfalls of the traditional table touch: awkwardness and lack of data. Imagine at the end of a first date walking them to the doorstep and asking, “Well, how good of a date was I?”. It creates this social hesitation to be honest because people don’t want to cause a scene, they don’t want to be a “Karen,” and they don’t want to hurt someone’s feelings. So inevitably, “It was great” is blurted out without any other thought than to move on from that moment. But as the server walks away, the whispers of, “the chicken is dry” “the burger was bland” “the service was slow” begin and before they get to their car in the parking lot, they leave a one-star review.

So not only was the “traditional” table touch giving more and more false positives, but even when honest feedback was given and the issue resolved, the problem stopped there. Issues with the dry chicken in the afternoons would happen over and over and over and no one would tell corporate and no changes were made. Each piece of feedback lived in a vacuum. For the feedback to be truly actionable, it needs to not only be able to be solved in the moment, but the root issue should be solved to prevent it from happening again.

The New Table Touch. Given the multiple channels customers are ordering and the archaic nature of the “traditional” table touch, there needs to be a punchline, right? A solution? Of course. Utilizing QR codes and texting, you can put bag stuffers in your to go orders, third-party deliveries, drive thru window, table toppers in your dining room, etc. to get feedback from your customers. Ask “How was everything?” and leave it an open ended question to get the honest answers. Have it go to a simple survey or even just text you.

Data shows that the maximum number of questions you should be asking is five (including name and contact info, mind you). So be judicious and don’t bombard your customers with 75 questions about the cleanliness of the bathrooms when they ordered through some third-party delivery platform. Utilize different QR codes, phone numbers, and keywords to be able to segment your customers, set up processes to quickly and easily respond to them, and use their feedback to drive operational results.

Using this type of methodology streamlined with our easy-to-use tech, we at [Ovation](#) have been able to help customers like Domino’s increase their feedback from 5-7 pieces per week per location to 50-70--all while reducing the time to address the unhappy customers by 60%. El Pollo Loco is seeing 40% of their unhappy customers recovered. Acetuna found out that yes, in the afternoons their chicken was dry, made the operational changes needed and increased customer satisfaction.

Hospitality is NOT Dead. Hospitality is not dead...it’s just gone digital. We need to adapt and move to improve things that were broken, try things that have elegant fixes, and be open to continue a dialogue with our customers on their terms. That is the “new” table touch, the “better” table touch, the “digital” table touch. If you want to give it a try, visit www.ovationup.com for a free consultation about your restaurant.

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