

# Creating the Drive-Thru Experience

As drive thrus spread to other concepts, technology makes to-go easier to manage.

The drive thru isn't just for quick service anymore. As restaurant operations pivot to address changing consumer desires and elevate customer experiences, other segments of the industry are adapting the way they do business.

"We find that many brands that traditionally didn't offer drive-thru service are now doing so," says Doug Watson, president and CEO of **The Howard Company**. "This is especially true for fast casual."

Many fast-casual brands may have once considered themselves to be above the need for a drive thru and prided themselves on their customers' willingness to come in and sit in the dining room, Watson says. As busy consumers increasingly opt to spend less time at the restaurant, the drive thru has become essential to business.

An additional trend is the increasing presence of digital technology in the drive thru, says Watson.

"The acceptance of digital technology on menuboards and signage outside the dining room makes it easier [for restaurants] to manage their menus and make necessary changes quickly, in addition to posting calorie counts and other information," Watson says.

Because the drive thru may be the only part of a restaurant the consumer sees, it's important to make that experience as impressive as possible. The Howard Company offers a comprehensive suite of solutions that will convey that message to the consumer. These include everything from canopies to headsets to menu systems and the ability to customize those for each brand.

As a veteran in the background music industry, **Mood Media** considers curating the perfect customer experience its spe-



cialty. Mood offers an end-to-end digital signage solution complete with system design, software, hardware, content, service, and support. This comprehensive approach allows brands to take control of the customer experience in a dynamic way. Mood TV for QSR allows brands to create unique television "channels" to run on digital displays, engaging and interacting with customers within the restaurant in entirely new ways.

"People spend so much time considering the lighting, the color on the wall, the type of tables in their store," says Dave Van Epps, global chief product officer. "This part of the visual experience is just as important."

Mood TV for QSR combines the power of digital signage with popular television programming to deliver a fully branded and personalized visual experience. The solution allows brands to create and control their own private TV networks, featuring seasonal items, local promotions, or social media feeds while eliminating

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competitor commercials and inappropriate content.

"The ability to control the content provides enormous opportunity for operators to create a more localized, personal, and engaging experience for their customers," Van Epps says. "Whatever restaurant it is, experience is always going to be the biggest thing, and there are subtle things that can really make or break that experience."

With a focus on speed and efficiency, many quick-service restaurants are turning to other options for customers, such as

kiosks equipped with various functions, says Brian McClimans, vice president of sales, Americas and APAC at **Peerless-AV**.

“At Peerless-AV, we’ve seen the demand for these self-service kiosks grow, not only in the quick-service space, but across many verticals,” McClimans says. “We offer a full line of customizable kiosks that can be built to meet their needs, including indoor and outdoor kiosks in landscape

drive-in solutions that express their brand visions, **OrderMatic** positions itself at the intersection of manufacturing and technology. OrderMatic’s premier products enhance the customer transactional experience, increase employee productivity, and improve operational efficiency, says Paul Crawford, CEO at OrderMatic Corporation.

“Our designers and engineers execute

we’re still innovating.”

Automated technologies can improve speed of service in restaurants. The Transporter by **Easi-Serv** is a continuous-loop overhead conveyor system that runs at high speed, designed specifically for carrying food from a load point to a remote unload point in a quick-serve restaurant.

“On the surface, it’s a simple food-carrying conveyor system,” says Brian Hanson, sales and marketing manager at Easi-Serv. “What it enables restaurants to do with their layouts is its even greater value.”

The Transporter conveyor system makes a variety of layouts suitable for service by allowing restaurants to place additional POS systems or customer service counters apart from kitchens—even on different floors of the building—without compromising speed. This creative use of space affects the bottom line in three areas—improved access to customers with additional drive-thru lanes, increased flexibility of restaurant layout, and saved labor costs by eliminating the need for food runners.

Food waste is a problem in foodservice, and so is the overuse of paper products. It is estimated that the average quick-service restaurant with a steady stream of customer flow uses about 5,000 to 10,000 napkins daily, which is a significant expense.

With cost pressures bearing down on restaurants looking for ways to reduce waste, delight patrons, and leverage technology where it makes sense, **GP PRO’s** Dixie Ultra SmartStock Automated Napkin System can help. In a test with a major quick-service chain in nearly a dozen of its stores, the new system cut napkin usage by as much as 64 percent. Staff and customers expressed a pronounced preference over the previous solution—single-ply napkins dispensed via two-sided, open faced-dispensers.

The SmartStock Automated Napkin System enables drive-thru staff to set three programmable dispense modes to accommodate varying order sizes. So, with the push of one button, the system automatically dispenses a set number of napkins, which it gracefully doles out in a neatly folded pile.



and portrait orientation in both large and small footprints.”

Many quick serves are looking for a self-serve kiosk that matches their aesthetic and branding, something Peerless-AV accomplishes through graphics and powder coating. The company also offers additional features for self-ordering with credit card readers, receipt printers, gift card purchasing, and menu details with nutritional information.

“We have even created self-serve kiosks that incorporate speakers and cameras along with touchscreen interactivity for entertainment purposes,” McClimans says. “Restaurants are looking to provide their customers with quick and reliable service, and one strong way to do that is putting the power in their hands with self-serve kiosks.”

Offering customers drive-thru and

custom concepts tailored to the weather-hardened, easy-to-maintain product needs of the quick-serve restaurant industry,” Crawford says.

OrderMatic’s latest advancements include a pivoting canopy and a next-generation menuboard. Pivoting canopies move out of the way when hit by a vehicle, and then, after initial impact, the canopy returns to its original position, ready for the next customer. These menuboards provide the ultimate in flexibility and durability. The main units are energy efficient and use the newest LED lighting technology and premium powder coating finishes to enforce brand communications.

“When combined with our advanced software, they provide any business with an invaluable tool to increase productivity in service delivery,” Crawford says. “Our engineers stay curious, and 60 years later,



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