

GUIDE

# Create Amazing Digital Experiences

A complete guide to the capabilities, requirements, and considerations involved in your digitally transforming your restaurant.



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# Introduction

In the past decade, digital experiences reshaped almost every business and changed the behavior and expectations of consumers around the world. The events of 2020 and 2021 brought accelerated change to the restaurant industry and new opportunities to provide guests with a seamless, fast, friction-free digital experience.

## DIGITAL EXPERIENCE GOALS

- **Turn every new guest into a repeat customer**

Gain control of the customer relationship and use data to keep customers coming back and acquire new ones.

- **Excel at “any style” dining**

Master the art of taking direct orders and fulfilling orders from any channel—dine-in, digital (online/app), phone, or kiosk.

- **Protect yourself against future disruption**

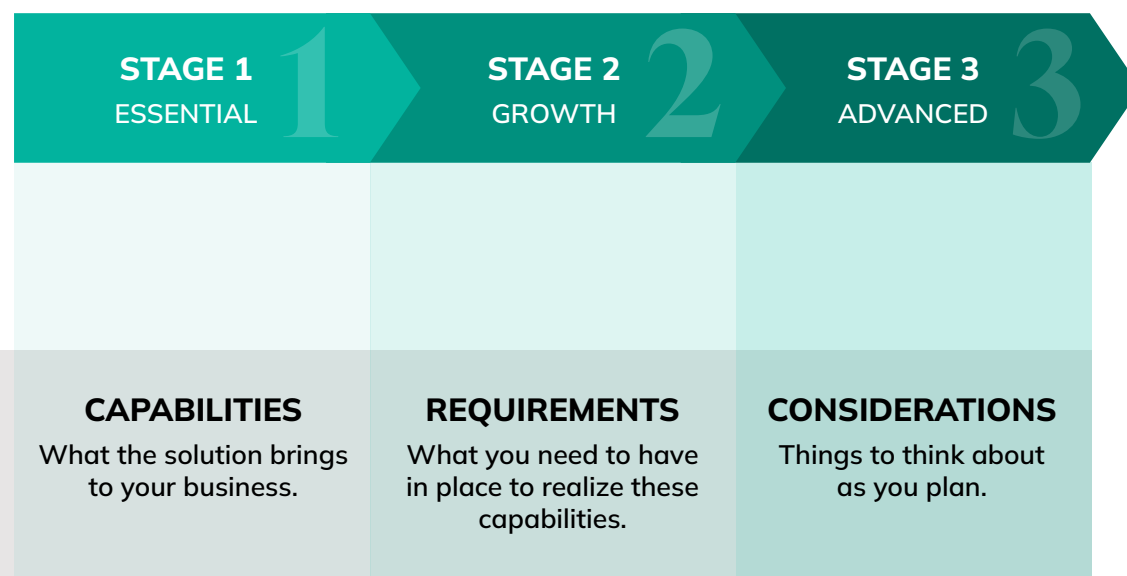
Create a foundation for growth that doesn't just help you keep up, but lead the pace of change in technology and consumer preferences.

## BUILDING YOUR DIGITAL EXPERIENCE

In 2020 and 2021 many restaurants accelerated their digital transformation, however, each restaurant is at a different stage of the journey. Some have the essentials in place to facilitate online ordering and contactless payments. Others are creating omnichannel experiences and developing loyalty programs. And some are planning advanced digital experiences like mobile apps and delivery rails.

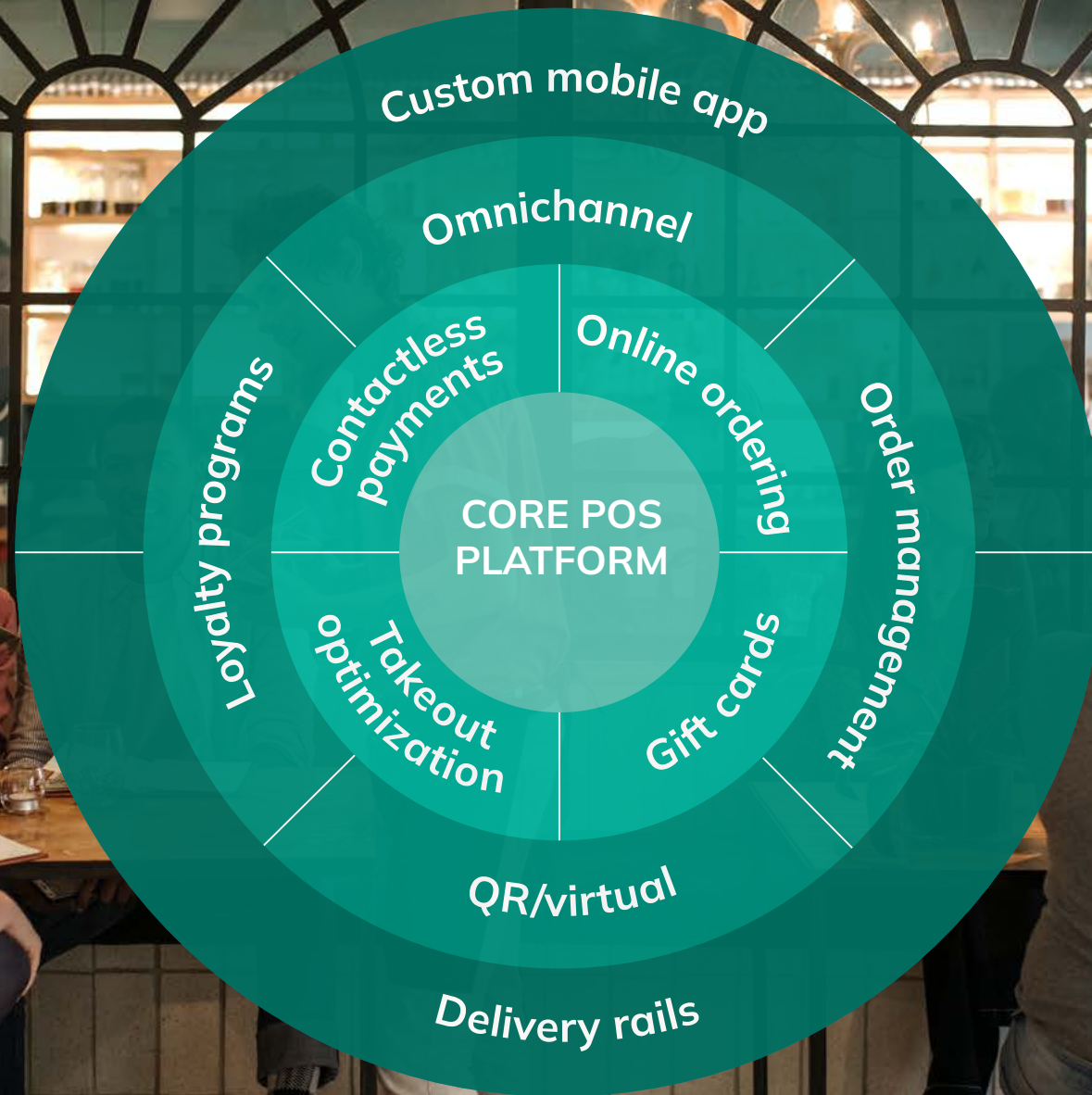
As you move further along your digital roadmap, you become closer to your guest—not only providing more ways to serve them but also building a personal, lasting relationship with them.

Regardless of where you are in your journey, playbook plots a roadmap to success for you, and outlines the capabilities, requirements, and considerations you need to be successful today and in the future.





## DIGITAL EXPERIENCE ROADMAP



# Ordering & Payment

Ordering and payment are at the heart of any experience in the hospitality business. Many establishments already have basic online ordering and payment capabilities—but there are many opportunities to enhance the experience for guests.

## ONLINE ORDERING

Consumers today expect the ability to order food and get quick delivery, regardless of their location. They are typically comfortable with the variety of order methods—via a website, phone, app, or third-party. Omnichannel ordering capabilities have quickly become a must-have for off-premise service.

## HOW DOES YOUR MENU LOOK?

Digital menus streamline the order process, simplify content updates, and prevent the need to maintain multiple menus.

- Use the same content online and in-store
- Update easily on the fly
- Change menus for breakfast/lunch/dinner service
- Include zero cost items such as cutlery or accompaniments in the menu for contactless or online orders
- Include ability to modify menu items

CAPABILITIES	ESSENTIAL	GROWTH	ADVANCED
	<p><b>Single Page Ordering</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Accept online orders</li><li>• Credit card payments</li></ul> <p><b>POS Integration</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Menu updates made at the terminal or back office automatically update online</li></ul>	<p><b>Variable Menus</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Ability to adjust menus displayed based on time or location (i.e., happy hour specials, breakfast/lunch/dinner menus, local offers)</li></ul> <p><b>Geo Awareness</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Guests can see and choose which location to fulfill their order from—a must-have for multi-unit locations</li><li>• Order routing to correct location</li></ul> <p><b>Deferred Ordering</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Allow guests to place orders and specify time for fulfillment</li><li>• Deferred orders are managed by the POS and kitchen automation with no manual intervention</li></ul>	<p><b>Mobile App Ordering</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Custom or white-labelled iOS/Android app that allows ordering and geo selection</li></ul> <p><b>Guest Communications</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Text, notification, or email capability to inform guests of order status, timing, and availability for delivery or curbside pickup</li></ul> <p><b>Unified Guest Experience</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Same platform and experience for online and app ordering for takeout or curbside pickup, room service, and delivery</li></ul> <p><b>Payment Agnostic</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Credit cards, Apple Pay/Google Pay, and gift cards</li><li>• Consolidation of on-premise and online payment processing</li></ul>

	ESSENTIAL	GROWTH	ADVANCED
REQUIREMENTS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Your business owns a web domain i.e., <a href="http://www.yourrestaurant.com">www.yourrestaurant.com</a></li> <li>You have the ability to update your menu and edit your website to include "order now" calls to action</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>You have a POS and kitchen management solution that supports deferred ordering</li> <li>You have IT resources to manage geo and locations</li> <li>You have centralized menu management to handle updates, specials, and departments</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>You have the resources to white-label or develop a branded iOS and Android application</li> <li>You have a loyalty and gift card program or plan to develop one and have a platform in mind</li> <li>You have the ability to automate text messaging communications</li> </ul>
CONSIDERATIONS	<b>Payment Essentials</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Does your business require a separate processor or gateway for online transactions?</li> </ul>	<b>A Cohesive Approach</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Keep future requirements in mind when selecting technology.</li> </ul>	<b>A Digital Transformation</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A Digital Transformation Strategy A unified digital experience touches on many areas of the business. Do you have the executive commitment to set the strategy and execute?</li> </ul>

## CONTACTLESS ORDERING AND PAYMENT (ON-PREMISE)

For all the benefits online ordering and payment brings, it can impede impulse orders and affect incremental revenue for restaurants. To alleviate this, some restaurants use virtual kiosks, which allow for quick in-person purchases without the need to touch a physical kiosk or menu. A well-placed QR code on a window, sandwich board, or website helps guests seamlessly view the menu, order, and pay—all from their mobile device.

When it comes to payment, 87% of guests prefer to pay with a contactless method (i.e., tap to pay or near-field communication (NFC) like Apple Pay and Google Pay).<sup>1</sup> Similar to online ordering, contactless payment solutions can be configured to pull the menu from the point of sale and accommodate the same menu items, add-ons, and modifiers that an online solution provides.

### BEST PRACTICE: WEB BROWSER-BASED KIOSKS

Some kiosk solutions are entirely browser-based so don't require an app. These solutions are also integrated with the point of sale so orders flow into the restaurant as if they had been entered on a terminal in the dining room.

	ESSENTIAL	GROWTH	ADVANCED
CAPABILITIES	<b>Contactless Payment Devices</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Basic tethered or wireless payment devices (pay at the table) that allow guests to pay by tap using a credit card</li></ul>	<b>NFC Support</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Support for Apple Pay and Google Pay</li></ul> <b>Virtual Static Menus</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• QR Code or online menus replace traditional menus</li></ul>	<b>QR Code Ordering and Payment</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Allow guests to order and pay on their device—even on-premise</li></ul>
CONSIDERATIONS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Your POS is capable of semi-integrated EMV payments</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• You have the ability to update online menu or have a site where the menu is updated from your POS</li><li>• You have a plan for payment processor or devices to support NFC</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Your POS is capable of integrating with online and QR code ordering and payment solutions</li><li>• Your payment processor has the ability to handle online and on-premise transactions</li></ul>

<sup>1</sup> Datassential. COVID-19 Report Ready or Not.



## CONSIDERATIONS

### ESSENTIAL

#### Service Style

- Consider your style of service when planning to move to contactless payment, e.g., counter service may only use tethered devices. If you plan to do provide your own delivery services, cellular devices make. payment at the door possible

### GROWTH

#### Menu Format

- Many operators shifted away from reusable menus to digital menus as a sustainable, hygienic, and cost-efficient alternative. This will be dependent on your style of service, *i.e.*, it may not be appropriate for fine-dining.

### ADVANCED

#### Think About Workflows

- When guests are able to order and pay with limited server interaction, staff must be trained on the process (*i.e.*, for closing tables/cheques, tipping).



# GIFT CARDS

Regardless of the size of your business, gift cards are an easy way to reap a number of benefits:

- Cash now for product and services delivered later—gift cards are essentially interest-free micro-loans that help smooth out revenue bumps.
- Drive new guest business—get new guests and convert them to repeat customers.
- Increase guest loyalty—guests with a gift-card or carry balance will become repeat visitors.
- Add additional order value—guests who use gift cards tend to order and spend more than the value of the card.

	ESSENTIAL	GROWTH	ADVANCED
CAPABILITIES	<b>Physical Cards</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An easy way to get started, physical cards can be purchased on-site or online in multiple denominations</li> </ul>	<b>Electronic Gift Cards</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enable immediate fulfillment online</li> <li>• Can be personalized and seasonalized (holidays/gifts)</li> </ul>	<b>Integrated / Unified Gift Cards</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can be used as payment online or in-person for takeout, delivery, or dining room service</li> </ul> <b>Unified Loyalty App</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Guests can manage and order via mobile iOS/Android app, attach gift cards, and earn and redeem points</li> </ul>
REQUIREMENTS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Your POS can take payment from a gift card</li> <li>• You have the ability to manage gift card orders and fulfillment, or have external resources to do so</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• You have or are planning an online ordering solution that can accommodate gift cards</li> <li>• You have the equipment and staff training to process e-gift cards on-premise</li> <li>• Your online store can process e-gifts <i>and</i> you can process e-gifts in the restaurant</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• You have or are planning to utilize a delivery rails service or have first-person delivery</li> <li>• You have the resources to white-label or develop a branded iOS or Android application</li> </ul>

## CONSIDERATIONS

### ESSENTIAL

#### Plan Ahead

- Think about how guests will receive them and gift them to others—postal service is a simple starting point for off-premise purchases.

### GROWTH

#### A Natural Fit Online

- If you're planning a broad digital strategy, e-gift cards are a great fit.

### ADVANCED

#### Build a Community

- When paired with loyalty and communications programs, gift cards can act as a catalyst to drive engagement with your customers.



# Order Fulfillment

While ordering and payment make up two-thirds of the experience, the final third is arguably the most impactful—fulfillment.

## TAKEOUT/CURBSIDE PICKUP

Takeout or curbside pickup has been around for a long time but was mainly used at counter-service restaurants or for traditional takeout staples like pizza. With demographic changes and the pandemic, most restaurants have recognized that takeout and curbside pickup are important fulfillment channels.

Takeout is not usually a complicated model (with the exception of multi-unit or multi-concept restaurants). It involves consideration for menu selections, packaging, label printing, sanitization, and pickup location. Paired with online ordering and payment, these takeout strategies can elevate the guest experience and provide significant revenue for your business.

### DO MY DISHES TRAVEL WELL?

Consider adjusting menu strategies for takeout:

- Feature more travel-resilient food on the takeout menu versus the in-person dining menu.
- Consider packaging and ensure you have the right containers to maintain food quality and temperature in transit.
- Package hot and cold items separately.
- Offer wine-pairing or liquor options to boost revenue.



	ESSENTIAL	GROWTH	ADVANCED
CAPABILITIES	<b>Takeout Specific Menu</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Manage a distinct menu for takeout for flexibility on quality and pricing</li> </ul> <b>Packaging Strategy</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Clear and personalized labelling enhances the experience for the recipient</li> </ul>	<b>Curbside Support</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Allow guests to identify vehicle/license plate and arrival time for curbside pickup</li> </ul> <b>Deferred Ordering</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Allow guests to place orders and specify a time for fulfillment</li> <li>Deferred orders are managed by POS and kitchen automation to ensure quality with no manual intervention</li> </ul>	<b>Guest Communications</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Text, notification, or email capability to inform guests of order status, timing, and availability</li> </ul>
REQUIREMENTS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Your POS allows label printing with custom fields for guest name/address/packaging contents</li> <li>Your POS has the ability to manage separate menus or departments accessible from either terminals or online</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>You have a POS and kitchen automation solution that supports deferred ordering</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Your order management system and POS can track orders and your POS is easily integrated with other solutions</li> </ul>
CONSIDERATIONS	<b>Comfortable Experience</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Consider the process and ensure guests are comfortable and safe while waiting for their order.</li> </ul>	<b>Smooth Process</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Is it easy for guests to set a time for pickup and understand how they can receive their order at a specific area, parking slot, etc.?</li> </ul>	<b>Manage Order Flow</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>As you increase the number of ordering channels, consider how you prepare for an influx of orders so the kitchen doesn't get overwhelmed.</li> </ul>



## DELIVERY

Executing a great delivery strategy means adding complexity to your takeout model. The fastest, easiest, and most common approach is to offer service via a third-party delivery (3PD) provider like Uber Eats, Grubhub, or DoorDash. However, this approach also poses some challenges:

- Managing multiple devices and delivery services creates complexity for staff.
- Manual order re-entry introduces potential for errors and mistakes.
- Delivery service commissions eat into margins and profits.
- The third-party owns the relationship with the guest.

<sup>2</sup> Euromonitor. [Ghost Kitchens, Virtual Restaurants, and a Delivery-Optimized Future](#).

## THE RISE OF GHOST KITCHENS

Ghost kitchens—cooking facilities that produce food only for delivery and takeout with no dine-in areas—could create a \$1 trillion global market by 2030.<sup>2</sup> They allow restaurants to cut costs and boost profits and make sense for businesses that want to capitalize on the dine-in craze. Despite the uptick in off-premises, brick-and-mortar restaurants won't disappear. People will always want to go out for a dining experience—the key word here being experience.



	ESSENTIAL	GROWTH	ADVANCED
CAPABILITIES	<b>3PD Accounts</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Partnering directly with a 3PD service to provide delivery</li> </ul>	<b>Omnichannel Ordering Solution</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Allow third-party orders to flow directly into POS and menu updates to flow to 3PD</li> </ul> <b>3PD-Specific Menu and Pricing</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Manage the costs of 3PD by limiting low-margin items and offsetting commissions with 3PD-specific pricing</li> </ul>	<b>Delivery Rails</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Capture the guest order on your online ordering platform and use 3PD as a delivery service only to reduce costs</li> </ul> <b>Loyalty Programs</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Loyalty programs with incentives to order takeout or curbside pickup can reduce 3PD costs and maintain the guest relationship</li> </ul>
REQUIREMENTS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>You have enough staff transcribe orders and manage 3PD workflows</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Your POS is capable of integrating with omnichannel order management or directly with 3PD services</li> <li>Your POS can manage separate menus or departments accessible from terminals or online</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>You have a unified online ordering system that is integrated with your POS</li> <li>You have an integrated loyalty program and guest communications</li> </ul>
CONSIDERATIONS	<b>Human Error</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>3PD introduces potential errors due to manual order re-entry in your POS. This potential for error increases with the number of 3PD solutions used.</li> </ul> <p><b>NOTE:</b> Guests blame restaurants for order errors.</p>	<b>Longevity</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Is 3PD a long-term component of your business model?</li> <li>What percentage of revenue should 3PD deliver, and how are your costs/pricing strategies impacted?</li> </ul>	<b>In-House Delivery</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>For service models with high delivery revenue potential, in-house delivery can be profitable</li> <li>If in-house doesn't make sense, do the 3PD vendors offer a service that could provide a foundation for long-term delivery strategy (i.e., DoorDash drivers).</li> </ul>

# Guest Engagement And Retention

Customer retention plays a crucial role in the success of a restaurant. It is far more expensive to acquire a new customer than to retain an old one. Loyalty and mobility play important and complementary roles in customer engagement and retention.

## LOYALTY

Restaurants often only start to think about loyalty programs as they grow and mature. Some don't consider loyalty programs at all—it doesn't fit with their brand or they don't feel that developing expertise in this area is as important as other endeavors.

However, when a business pivoted to take-out or counter service operations, or extended their patio, or had new items or services to offer, how could they let their customers know? Loyalty programs offer a way to communicate with customers, even from afar. They can also incentive guests to take the additional steps required to choose takeout over 3PDs. As such, loyalty programs are a crucial part of the mix for any restaurant business going forward.

	ESSENTIAL	GROWTH	ADVANCED
CAPABILITIES	<b>Guest Club Program</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A basic system to track purchases with a sign-up incentive (reward points)</li> </ul>	<b>Online Guest Profile</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Guests can check points, see specials or offers, redeem points, and manage information through your online ordering website</li> </ul>	<b>Delivery Rails</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In addition to the online profile, guests can manage and order via a mobile iOS/Android app, attach gift cards and earn and redeem points</li> </ul>
REQUIREMENTS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A customer database that you can begin to collect information in (name, phone, email)</li> <li>A communications plan that includes social media, email, and other channels</li> <li>Updated Yelp/Google profiles</li> <li>Your POS can manage point redemption/loyalty incentives at time of order or payment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>You have a centralized customer portal that guests can log in and manage their profile, history, and points that tie to the POS for redemption and discounts.</li> <li>You have the staff and direction to build out and maintain a communications plan and strategy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>You have the resources to white label/develop a branded iOS or Android application</li> </ul>
CONSIDERATIONS	<b>Communications</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Can you stick to a communications plan?</li> <li>Do you have someone who can own the outreach for your brand—frequent and relevant content is important?</li> </ul>	<b>Personalized Approach</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Are your guests relatively homogenous or is your customer base diverse?</li> <li>Do you need to tailor your channels to reach different demographics in their preferred way?</li> </ul>	<b>Geolocation</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What opportunities does your service model allow? Geolocated specials (i.e., “Hey you’re near our location, here’s a discount”) or other app/mobile specific features.</li> </ul>



# MOBILITY

Regardless of the size of your operation, equipping your servers with mobile POS is a great way to both increase efficiencies – reducing labor costs, increase guest satisfaction – reducing wait times, and increase average order size – capitalizing on impulses.

“ Rather than having servers run back and forth to remote terminals, the mobility solution provided a platform where they can stay in their section, provide better guest service and up-sell. It’s made a huge difference. The mobility system allows us to put the right people, in the right place, at the right time. ”

**Paul Bognar**  
President & COO  
SIR Corp

	ESSENTIAL	GROWTH	ADVANCED
CAPABILITIES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Deploy mobile POS for specific areas of the restaurant (e.g., patios, private rooms).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mobile first-floor service. Servers managing tables are all equipped with mobile POS, fixed terminals are function specific (e.g., host, bar).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mobile POS &amp; Self-serve via guest device.</li> </ul>
REQUIREMENTS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Your POS has a mobile client</li> <li>You have pay at the table capabilities / devices</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Your POS has a mobile client</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Your POS can act as a centralized hub for all orders, via server or guest, and integrate with back of house solutions (kitchen automation).</li> </ul>
CONSIDERATIONS	<b>Technology</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Consider your technology platform and assess if it meets current mobility requirements.</li> </ul>	<b>Scalability and longevity</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Does your POS support multiple platforms? Does your business plan/ budget account for device replacement?</li> </ul>	<b>Workflows</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>When guests can order and pay with limited server interaction, staff need to be trained and aware of the process (e.g., closing tables/ cheques, tipping).</li> </ul>

# Next Steps

There is no one-size-fits-all approach to point of sale or restaurant management systems. Every restaurant is unique and on its own digital transformation journey.

The digital transformation of a restaurant is a multi-stage, multi-year journey. Whether you're starting with the essentials or moving on to more advanced stages to grow your business, Squirrel Systems has a solution to fit your needs and can scale as you grow.

The Squirrel experience can be as simple or complex as your restaurant is comfortable with. Our agnostic approach to hardware and open ecosystem of partners helps you deliver the perfect guest experiences tailored to your unique requirements. Plus, Squirrel is the only POS platform built exclusively for the hospitality industry.

If you're interested in learning more, contact us for a personalized Digital Guest Experience consultation.



## FURTHER RESOURCES

**Webinar:** [The Value of Self-Service \(On-Demand\)](#)

**Video:** [Introducing Squirrel Cloud](#)

**Blog:** [Restaurant Loyalty & Omnichannel Marketing](#)

# About Squirrel Systems

Squirrel knows that hospitality providers have a vision. An experience that they want to share. It's a unique industry and deserves unique service. Ever since technology entered the Food and Beverage service industry, we've been there. We understand the needs of your business, because it's our business too. We also understand that past performance is no guarantee for the future. That's why we've continued to drive the kind of innovations that embrace the changes our industry faces. Whatever the technology you think best supports the guest experience, whatever opportunity you see for your business, Squirrel can help make it a reality. Visit [squirrelsystems.com](https://squirrelsystems.com) to learn more.



Squirrel Solution Center  
[solutions@squirrelsystems.com](mailto:solutions@squirrelsystems.com)  
1.800.288.8160

1.800.388.6824  
[info@squirrelsystems.com](mailto:info@squirrelsystems.com)  
8585 Baxter Place, Burnaby  
BC, Canada V5A 4V7