

Five ways restaurant owners can use SMS to grow their business

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Opening a restaurant is one of the most popular and challenging forms of entrepreneurship. In fact, it's popularity is one of the reasons it's so challenging. Restaurant ownership is a crowded marketplace and it can sometimes seem impossible to stand out when there are already so many restaurants offering every kind of cuisine you can imagine. Developing brand identity and finding something unique to offer is critical if you want your restaurant to thrive. Another good strategy to keeping your restaurant successful is to take advantage of the SMS marketing channel. Here are five ways a restaurant can do this.

Send special offers

Probably the most popular use for SMS marketing is sending mobile coupons or other deals to customers. This can be a great way to get more people through the doors during slower times if you do it right. The offer needs to be good enough to incentivize but not so good it will put you out of business if everyone comes to redeem it either.

Send reservation reminders

Missed reservations can really hurt your restaurant's bottom line. Since 98% of text messages are opened (and 90% of those within minutes of being received) there's no better way to send a reservation reminder that the recipient is going to see. Best of all, these SMS reservation reminders enable recipients to add the reservation to their calendar app by clicking on the date and time included in your text. This way they can get reminded again by their phone when the time of their reservation is near.

Create an SMS loyalty program

Just as punch-cards reward frequent customers with every ten visits, an SMS loyalty program can reward your frequent customers with exclusive offers that no one else can get. Make sure that at least a portion of the text

messages you're sending are exclusive to those who've opted in to receive your texts. If anyone can get the deal regardless of whether they've opted-in, then there's less incentive to do so.

Make table reservations easy

Text messaging is the preferred method of communication for younger generations who are becoming increasingly uncomfortable with calling up a place of business, including your restaurant. You can deploy a chatbot via SMS that allows customers to make a table reservation by simply sending a text to your chatbot. The easier you make it for customers to make a reservation, the more reservations you'll get.

Gather feedback

Many receipts nowadays have instructions for going to a website to offer feedback in return for some deal during a future visit. These tend to be ineffective because it involves too much work for the customer. A better way is to send a text (if they've opted in) a day or so after their visit to your restaurant asking them to participate in a very short survey (three or four questions tops). Since you initiate the survey and they know up front it's short and they get something in return, you're going to get more feedback which you can then use to improve your restaurant.

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