DELAGET™

The Speed of Service Playbook

With limited time in your day, figuring out the best – and most efficient – ways to improve your speed of service can feel daunting.

From forecasting and planning, all the way through execution, we'll show you lots of ways to improve your speed of service and make a positive impact on both your guests' experience and your organization's bottom line.

Table of contents

Sales forecasting

Speed starts with being organized and well-stocked, so you won't have to slow down service to re-stock or, worse yet, run out completely.

Sales forecasting also allows you to schedule correctly, with enough employees to handle the rush without wasting money on overscheduling.
For the most accurate forecasts, follow these practices:

01 Create a calendar

Make this your first stop when preparing to forecast.
Include all national, regional, and local events.

02 Stick to brand recommendations

Follow your brand's assumptions and directions
on holiday forecasting and limited-time offers.

03 Learn from the past

Build the forecast from store history and trends from previous years. Remember to factor in comp sales.
If sales trend down 10%, forecast down 10% (and adjust from there).

04 Keep to a 4-7% variance of actual versus forecasted sales

This is the optimal range for executing the schedule in meeting customer demand and scheduling the right people at the right time for every task (i.e., meetings, training, food prep, and cleaning).

05 Use reports to make smart decisions

When reviewing previous dayparts, use consolidated store-level reports like Delaget Coach. Valuable reports include productivity or sales per labor hour, hours variance to your labor guideline, labor percent, like volume locations, and productivity reports.

QUICK TIP

Dedicate time every week to sales forecasting. This isn't something that should be done at the last minute or when you're in a rush. Put it in your calendar.

Training for speed + quality

It's critical to make sure your training program prepares team members to handle slow and busy days with grace and efficiency. Learning the ins-and-outs of your POS system is one of the biggest hurdles new employees faces when starting out. Does your new cashier know how to enter a Double Venti Nonfat Decaf Iced Vanilla Double-Shot Frappuccino Extra Hot with Whipped Cream into the register? Does anybody want them to try to figure it out in the middle of a rush?

Here are some tips for any training program:

Make sure your training program includes the nuances of your POS system. If your brand offers a practice mode or training mode, include this in training. Teach the cashier to navigate the keyboard before putting them in front of guests.

Have trainees roleplay with experienced workers, so they know how to work with different types of customers, including challenging ones.

Make sure new employees have the opportunity – and are encouraged – to ask questions of seasoned employees.

01   Optimize your register techniques

Make sure your employees are focusing on fluid transactions. There are only so many things that can happen at the register – the customer might ask for a beverage or condiments, and then is probably going to make a payment using cash or a credit card. If you manage a burrito restaurant, a good percentage of your customers are going to ask for chips and salsa when they pay – your cashiers should anticipate these scenarios so they can respond immediately. Quick access to drinks and condiments is a necessity, as is the ability to quickly count change. If your cashiers are stumbling on these steps, get a more experienced employee to help them out.

Similarly, make sure your cashiers are repeating orders back to customers. Repeating a customer's order back to them can feel tedious, and many customers won't even listen – they'll just nod and say "yep" – but the few extra seconds it takes to repeat an order can save you minutes of extra work down the line (which can also save you from food waste due to incorrect orders)

02 Prioritize the drive-thru

You already know that a backed-up drive-thru is frustrating, but it may be causing more problems than you think. A backed-up drive-thru can be like a gridlock downtown, with cars unable to clear due simply to the sheer amount of traffic.

A long line at the drive-thru can cause traffic to back up into the street, blocking access to (and from) your restaurant, making things worse. Customers who see a backed-up drive-thru might opt to park and come in the store to order, which can actually slow things down even more – after all, you have the same number of employees working on in-store orders as you have working drive-thru orders. Even worse, some folks will simply drive right past your long line and find their food elsewhere.

QUICK TIP

To prevent the snowball effect of a backed-up drive-thru, make sure your employees are always working on drive-thru orders.

If someone's making an order for an in-store customer, someone else should be making food for – or handing an order to – a drive-thru customer. Keep the drive-thru always moving.

Scheduling

Smooth scheduling has a trickle-down effect on the efficiency of your operation – and it can have a negative impact when it's done poorly (you end up short-staffed, employees are poorly motivated, etc.).

Here are some scheduling tips that have a direct impact on speed of service:

01 Don't skimp on time to open/close properly

Set realistic targets for the number of hours needed for pre-open tasks and post-close tasks. For reference, a typical restaurant should expect around 90 minutes to prepare the restaurant for the next business day.

02 Set up every shift for success

Productivity and customer experience suffer when the opening team must finish the previous night's closing tasks or when the evening shift begins with lingering tasks left for them by the previous shift.

03 Stagger the schedule

Avoid chaos and confusion during peak hours by staggering the clock in/out times for your team. As a best practice, you should schedule no more than two employees coming or going at the same time.

04 Schedule overlap time for cashiers

Allow them the opportunity to count their cash drawer before and after their shift without impacting the flow of customers.

05 Plan for the holidays

Every year, the holidays prove to be a difficult time for scheduling employees – and for some restaurants, holidays can be one of the most lucrative times of the year!

QUICK TIP

Scheduling shouldn't be done alone. Constantly gather feedback from your team on how the schedule is working and what adjustments can be made for better execution and a better customer experience.

Restaurant equipment

Missing or broken equipment can sabotage your best intentions when it comes to speed of-service.

Make sure the line equipment used to hold and prepare food is in good repair, and that you have a system in place to make needed repairs immediately. Broken equipment can slow down service, so spend the time on proper maintenance to avoid losing valuable time during an in-service repair.

Beyond that tip for all equipment, headsets may be the equipment most directly tied to speed of service. The drive-thru can't function without them, but they can dramatically improve communication and efficiency throughout your restaurant.

Make sure your team has enough working headsets at the start of each shift and that the proper team members are wearing them. Make sure you have a backup plan if a headset goes down.

We recommend having the drive-thru order taker, cashier, manager-in-charge, and key line personnel use headsets to improve efficiency and communication.

Also, above-store leaders should build into their routine to be on a headset during store visits to monitor the quality of the transactions and guest interactions. Having the right people wearing working headsets can make sure orders are more accurate.

Preparation for service

When your team is well-prepared for a rush of guests, they can focus on providing quality food quickly and not worry about the time-intensive details that could slow down service.

Here are some simple ways to prepare for a rush of guests:

01 Make sure the production line is stocked with food and paper items necessary to complete the daypart sales.

02 Check to see that registers are loaded with change and are deployed.

03 Complete food prep, wash and put away dishes, and clean and stock the dining room and restrooms.

QUICK TIP

Make sure everyone is in their assigned position during peak – and especially non-peak – times. Plan and treat it like the next guest in the door is the start of the next rush and your team will be ready for revenue at all times.

Setting speed of service goals

To run an efficient operation, your team needs to know, and follow, set speed of service goals.

To keep your team focused, establish clear and concise goals for each daypart. One way to do this is to designate a "speed of service captain" who works with the manager-in-charge to keep the team informed and to challenge them to improve their speed of service.

Of course, goal setting is only effective if you track the outcomes and share the results with your employees. Can you imagine going through school, at any level, and doing the work, without getting any feedback, seeing the results, or receiving a grade?

Here are 3 common metrics to track:

01 **Sales and comparable transactions**

Tracking transactions and/or comparable transactions (against the previous year) could give you a different picture than simply measuring sales. For example, what if sales are up while transactions have actually gone down? Reasons might include menu positioning, marketing, prices, speed of service, and what your competitors are doing.

02 **Speed of service**

If your speed of service starts to slow down, ask yourself a few questions. Is the food good enough to be worth the wait? Is your speed of service resulting in fewer total transactions? Answering these questions can help you decide whether this slower speed of service is viable or if you need to speed up your operations.

03 **Voice of the customer**

You don't want to increase speed of service at the expense of guest experience! Rather, make sure that your speed of service is enhancing the guests' experience, rather than detracting from it. And running a voice of the customer program and carefully tracking the input can be very motivating. By taking this step, you'll keep yourself accountable and continually improve your operations.
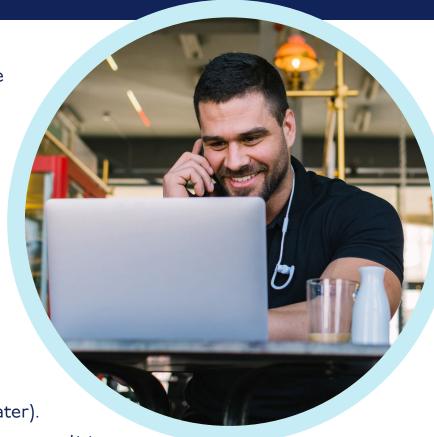
Above-store leader's impact

Since they have oversight over multiple restaurants while still being on the front lines, above-store leaders are uniquely positioned to look at data from multiple stores and share insights between them.

Here are a few examples:

01 Analyzing speed of service between stores at different points of the day.

02 Identifying the most productive employees, who can share their experience between stores (more on that later).

03 Comparing like stores to find commonalities.

04 Contrasting non-like stores to identify different approaches.

05 Understanding business trends, like peak hours or year-over-year fluctuations.

06 Sharing weekly summaries with store managers who can use that information to implement store-level improvements and motivate their employees.

Store managers can also analyze store data but have limited influence on other stores. Administrative and executive positions have a more holistic view of multiple stores but can lack the frontline experience to effectively implement those insights. Above-store leaders have the best of both worlds.

Approving schedules

By having visibility to schedules for multiple stores simultaneously, above-store leaders can approve schedules more efficiently than shift runners and store managers. The in-store leaders will still need to know the details about their schedules, especially when it comes to variance – but shifting the approvals to a more centralized role allows above-store leaders to give valuable time back to shift runners and store managers, who can use that time to focus on improving speed of service.

Ranking performance

You should already be making sure that the best team members are being recognized, which improves employee retention rates. Above-store leaders can take this a step further and implement competitions between stores, with rewards for speed and quality. Top performers in one store can then share their experience with other stores, which can create a snowball effect of employee best practices – with the best ideas in one store becoming common practice for all your stores. And perhaps most importantly, identifying top performers across stores is a great way to find potential future store leaders, who will continue to drive innovation and optimize speed of service in the future.

Contact Us