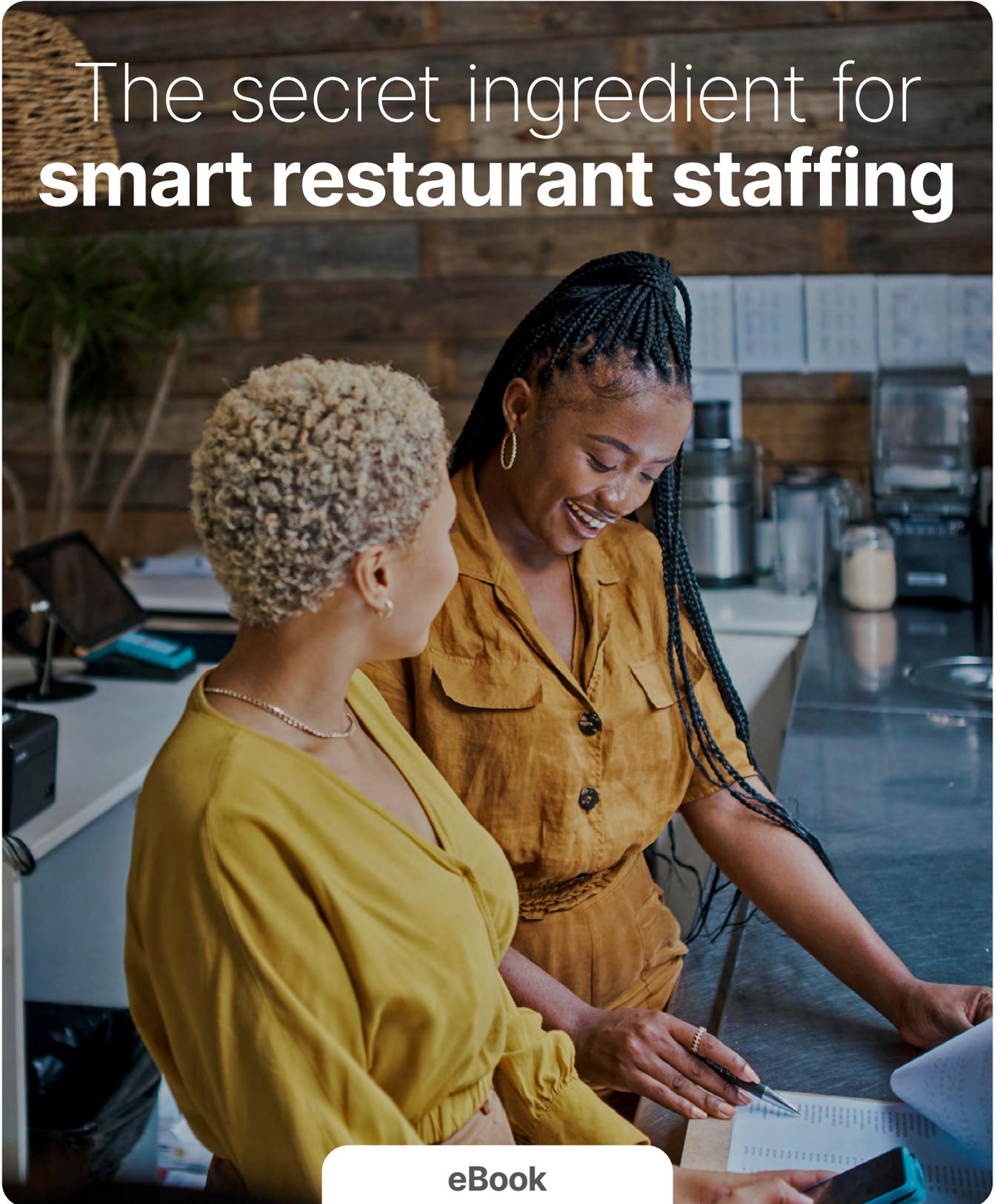


Heartland

# The secret ingredient for **smart restaurant staffing**



eBook

# Contents

---

<b>Restaurant owners have been facing the storm of the century</b> .....	<a href="#"><u>4</u></a>
<b>Plan processes around fewer employees with cloud-based technology</b> .....	<a href="#"><u>5</u></a>
<b>Reduce friction in ordering processes</b> .....	<a href="#"><u>6</u></a>
<b>Use data to make smarter decisions</b> .....	<a href="#"><u>8</u></a>
<b>Alleviate staffing concerns with menu updates</b> .....	<a href="#"><u>9</u></a>
<b>Turn employees' focus to customers</b> .....	<a href="#"><u>10</u></a>
<b>Avoid burnout and boost employee retention</b> .....	<a href="#"><u>11</u></a>
<b>Simplify back-office tasks</b> .....	<a href="#"><u>14</u></a>
<b>A note on hiring</b> .....	<a href="#"><u>16</u></a>
<b>Put a stop to staffing stress with purpose-built solutions</b> .....	<a href="#"><u>17</u></a>
<b>Traditional vs. modern solutions</b> .....	<a href="#"><u>18</u></a>

# Restaurant owners have been facing the storm of the century

---

You've weathered a [pandemic](#), [manufacturing crisis](#) and [inflation](#). You've had to keep up with [shifting consumer preferences](#) (and dwindling patience). A tight labor market likely did you no favors, either.

In fact, [74% of restaurant operators](#) say that recruiting employees is their top challenge.

Basically, **chaos is the new normal**. And for restaurant owners, it's never been more important to be agile, with operations and technology that let you pivot quickly.

In this ebook, we'll explore ways to approach staffing and operations to prepare your business for whatever happens next.





# Plan processes around fewer employees with cloud-based technology

---

In a restaurant – or any service business – can you actually replace people with devices and provide the same level of care and support? When done thoughtfully, yes: **tech can fill roles without affecting customer service.**

Don't worry – this isn't a call for robot waitstaff or machine assembly lines: We mean modern front-and-back-of-house technology that streamlines and speeds up the dining process, makes your staff more efficient and helps you do more with less. And though it sounds counterintuitive, having less staff could actually *improve* customer-employee interactions.

Ready to learn how? Let's look at where technology can step in.

# Reduce friction in ordering processes

Any of the following can help reduce the need for order-taking staff.

- ✓ **Scan to order:** Diners scan a QR code (often printed on a tabletop) without ever talking to a waiter.
- ✓ **Kiosks:** Customers order and pay using a self-order kiosk.
- ✓ **Order ahead:** Diners want to sit at your eatery but not wait? Online ordering platforms let them place orders from home. The system will generate an arrival time based on current demand, keeping kitchens balanced and waitstaff free.

Plus, what customer doesn't want faster, more accurate service? When they know that these features can provide such, they'll be quicker to embrace them.



 **65%** of customers say that they would visit a restaurant more often if there were self-service kiosks provided [Source](#)

Another way to think of this: reduce the number of steps waitstaff has to take while serving customers. A mobile POS device lets servers input orders and process payments at the table, instead of making multiple trips to the countertop POS.

Maybe your table-service restaurant can't totally replace a server with a tablet, but you can reduce the number of guest interactions and steps they have to take — giving them space to take on, and thus turn, more tables quicker. Additionally, this kind of order process tends to create more relaxed guest-to-server interactions, giving customers an all around better dining experience (but we'll dive into that in a bit).



### **Automate reservations**

Beyond reducing manual work, when team members aren't distracted by slow or disjointed tech, they can wear more hats. Consider hostesses at table-service restaurants. They spend every day taking reservations and making confirmation calls on top of managing the restaurant seating chart and interacting with guests in person. Reservation software can handle a significant chunk of that. Not only can it accept bookings, but also send automated email and text confirmations and reminders.

Now, with fewer duties on her plate, your hostess could take on things like organizing and dispatching pickup and delivery orders.

### **Manage tables efficiently**

POS systems can also speed up seating and simplify table management. Hosts and managers can see a map of all tables and their status. For example, table 4 has been seated but not yet placed an order. Or, table 6 ordered meals 30 minutes ago and is still waiting on them. This helps ensure customers are not accidentally left unattended.

### **Leverage order balancing**

Today's POS solutions sync all types of orders – from those taken in person to those placed online – into a single system that gives visibility to the front and back of house. This helps with order balancing, keeping your kitchen from getting overwhelmed and giving your customers more accurate pickup/delivery estimates.

### **Simplify delivery**

Speaking of delivery, when you work with third-party delivery services, you don't have to employ an in-house delivery team. The providers do take a cut of every order, but you may find that it sometimes costs less than paying your own delivery team (and keeping their gas tanks full). Plus, it's fewer staff for you to schedule and manage.

# Use data to make smarter decisions

---

**Data is king in the restaurant industry: The more you have, the more informed decisions you can make.**

Ultimately, it should be your go-to resource for first building your staff, then your daily schedules. POS reports can inform everything from how many employees you need to hire to how many you need on the floor at any given time, minimizing wasted resources and maximizing sales.

To accomplish this, go with a POS that lets you report on metrics like ticket quantity and order size by week, day, even hour. You'll have an easier time deciding how much coverage you need to ensure a great customer experience, but not so much that you have idle hands.

Now, as you analyze this data, it's important to keep any operations adjustments you've made in mind. Though you needed six waiters to match demand on this day last year, technology upgrades you've invested in may mean you'll manage with four this year. The more data you collect, the clearer picture you can paint.

Pay attention to dates versus days of the week, too. It's easy to fall into the trap of scheduling every Monday morning – for example – with the same amount of staff. But be aware of outliers and events that could inflate a day's traffic. If your coffee shop is on the route of a popular annual marathon this Monday, you're not going to want to treat it as any another Monday. If you aren't used to mid-week or off-season traffic spikes, you'll be short-staffed, overwhelming those who did show up, while turning off potential customers.



**Located near an event venue or sports arena?**

See if your point of sale has an integration with Ticketmaster: You'll get a heads up when events that may affect your restaurant traffic are in town.

# Alleviate staffing concerns with menu updates

---

If you're expecting high-traffic days and know you flat out will not have enough kitchen staff to meet demand, consider reducing menu options.

It's easier for cooks to focus on a small collection of dishes instead of juggling dozens from a massive menu. Also, be strategic about choosing dishes that need less prep and ingredients than others. This will keep the kitchen operating smoothly and orders up quicker.

Menu swaps are quick and easy with a modern POS that lets you make updates on any device, and then sync those updates across digital menus instantly. That's another selling point for QR code ordering: Diners see the most current menu in real time — no more getting excited about a dish on an outdated paper menu, only to learn it isn't available.

Plus, when a digital menu right in front of a customer is the point of truth, servers don't have to spend time memorizing what's available, what isn't, specials, dietary restrictions and any other hard-to-answer details. They have them at their fingertips in real time, and can easily add notes for the kitchen and bar.



# Turn employees' focus to customers

---

Despite the praises we sing for modern restaurant tech, your focus should be on your customers, not your screens. And when the latter works well, that's much easier to do.

**Let's picture a traditional table-service restaurant experience.**

**The server greets a table and distributes menus. Several back and forths occur:**

- Server takes drink order – by hand – and keys it into a countertop POS in the back
- Server delivers drinks and takes food order
- Server returns to POS to enter food order (with fingers crossed they heard every modification and dietary restriction correctly)
- Server returns to table with food
- Process repeats for coffee, dessert and any other add-on courses

**Time to start the lengthy payment process:**

- Guest asks for their check
- Server walks to POS to print the check, then back to deliver it
- Server returns to table to collect payment, then processes it at the POS
- Server delivers receipt
- Server returns to POS to enter tip and submit receipt

**Now let's revisit with a mobile point of sale in the scenario:**

one with the ability to take orders, print checks and process payments tableside. Imagine what a different experience a server could provide when not rushing back and forth between the POS and all their other tables (not to mention trying to keep all the parties straight). There'd be more time to ask about their favorites, share recommendations, upsell appetizers and desserts, talk about upcoming events or specials, introduce them to your loyalty program. When you can afford the time to really engage with your customers, that's a recipe for higher average checks — and a prime way to turn casual diners into regulars.



# Avoid burnout and boost employee retention

Even pre-pandemic, the average restaurant employee turnover rate was 66% (National Restaurant Association), and that number continues to head north. Many factors contribute, some unique to each establishment. But regardless of the circumstances, employee churn is expensive and disruptive.



## \$5,864

Approximate cost of replacing a single frontline restaurant employee

— Center for Hospitality Research at Cornell

of this amount:



## Reduce churn by focusing on retention from the start

And by start, we mean the hiring process. Clarity is critical, and making false or misleading promises to applicants will come back to bite you. Be forthcoming about pay, hours, overtime and time off policies, performance incentives, restaurant culture and your management style.

You would expect the same of your applicants: If someone was only looking for a summer gig, if they could never work nights or if they had a second job they had to coordinate with, you would want to know upfront. An honest two-way dialogue from day one is key.

Keep it up with great onboarding: [50% of employees](#) said more training would positively impact their work satisfaction, so invest in it to equip new them with the information and tools they need to do their job well. If they feel empowered, they're more likely to stay on for the long haul.

It's also important to personalize training. With dips in the labor pool, some hiring managers have had to target a new demographic that doesn't have restaurant experience. Be patient with them, and focus on things like customer interactions, safety and compliance.

But, if a new employee has years of experience in a similar style restaurant already, don't spend hours sludging through things they already know. Where you will want to focus your training, though, is on tech. With dozens of POS systems, payment terminals, online ordering and even reservation software on the market, it's likely that employees will need training on a new system(s), even if they're a seasoned restaurant worker already.

But, the more user-friendly the platforms, the smoother the training. And the good news is, modern POS systems like Heartland Restaurant boast powerful features that are also easy to learn, train and use — no need to sacrifice performance or functionality. So you'll save on training costs (remember: you're paying employees for training time, too), while giving them a comprehensive system that makes their lives easier.



### Team training agenda

- ✓ Distribute the employee handbook. You don't have to read through it word for word; instead offer the highlights and ask staff to read in depth on their own.
- ✓ Hold safety and compliance training
- ✓ Educate employees on your menu and hold a tasting
- ✓ Train them on your POS system, mobile devices and other equipment or systems
- ✓ Discuss how to process different payment forms
- ✓ Talk through what they should do when they encounter a problem customer
- ✓ Conduct mock interactions



### Keep morale high

Burnout is a major cause of employee attrition, but it's not a new sensation: **Even pre-pandemic, [studies showed](#) that 80% of hospitality workers experienced it.**

Though you have little control over what your employees are experiencing outside of your four walls, you have significant influence on the work environment you foster. And creating a safe and healthy one is vital to preventing that burnout.

Exhaustion is a major culprit, and many technologies we've already discussed can play a part in alleviating that — particularly mobile POS solutions that can literally reduce the number of steps your servers have to take. Plus, during the ordering process, a mobile POS really helps servers (especially new ones) get confident with menus, ingredients, modifiers and those extensive wine lists.

Order balancing is another feature that can make an incredible difference in your team's stress levels (particularly the kitchen staff). POS systems with automatic order balancing control the number of items your kitchen can prepare within timed intervals. This keeps kitchens operating efficiently and at a healthy, achievable pace that doesn't leave them constantly trying to catch their breath.

And of course, when you work in restaurants you know the pain of serving irritable, low-patience diners who inevitably make an appearance. But think about their top complaints: long waits, order mixups, inaccurate checks — you can address all these grievances with self-ordering technology and tableside ordering/payments.



### How to **keep burnout at bay**

- Enforce break time
- Praise publicly, correct privately
- Family shift meals or team gatherings
- Frequent check-ins
- Contests and reward incentives
- Minimum default tip on all checks

# Simplify back-office tasks

---

Whether you employ a back-office staff, leave it to your managers or end up doing it all yourself, the right tools can help pesky administrative tasks go quicker and smoother. You can even likely reduce the number of hands needed (or at least free you up to focus on other parts of the business). Plus, when back-office features are built in or integrate with your POS, that's fewer systems to juggle.

## Take the manual out of inventory management

Managing inventory is a delicate game: You've got to make sure you have enough ingredients to fulfill orders, but not so many that food and money go to waste. Keeping up with that is about as tedious as it gets — if you're using a manual system, that is. Choose a POS that tracks inventory by menu item in real time and prompts you to reorder when quantities are low.

## Optimize scheduling with cloud software

It's a traditionally time-sucking task, but scheduling software makes doing so much easier. Look for a solution that helps you schedule by skill set, forecast overtime costs, approve time off and message employees directly from the system.

Equally important, you're going to want cloud-based [time and attendance software](#) that's accessible on any device. You can update schedules on the go, see who's on the clock, who's running late and approve time sheets. This is especially helpful if you have multiple locations.

Your employees will appreciate an easy-to-use platform too, as they'll have a convenient way to request shift swaps or time off, view schedules and PTO balance from anywhere.





### Lean on automated marketing and loyalty

A single great experience isn't always enough to create a repeat customer. Sometimes, they need a little extra push in the form of marketing. But for busy restaurateurs, marketing is often pretty far down the to-do list. And hiring someone to handle it can be as challenging as filling any other traditional restaurant role.

Instead, look into automated marketing solutions that let you quickly design and send targeted marketing emails and texts. Integrated systems should also be smart enough to segment customers by things like last visit date. You can use that intel to send messages with an incentive – like a free dessert at your next visit – to lure them back in.

A loyalty program, too, might sound like a lot to manage, but they can essentially run themselves when built into your POS. Points are automatically tallied and tied to each customer's profile at every visit. No manual work needed.



**57%** of people say they would spend more on food at a restaurant if it had a loyalty program

[Source](#)

# A note on hiring

---

Even with technology stepping in to take pressure off your staff, you will of course need to hire *some* smiling faces.

Doing so shouldn't feel daunting. There are many ways to speed up and simplify the hiring process with – you guessed it – modern tech. While we'd all love to snap our fingers and see a slew of qualified candidates appear at our door, several steps go into recruiting. So the more you can automate, the faster the process.

Gone are the days of manually circulating job postings, multiple back and forths to schedule an interview and keeping everything organized on paper — or at best, a spreadsheet. Today, [HR and recruiting technology](#) makes it easy to:

- Create and distribute job postings to job boards and social media
- Collect applications, schedule interviews, track candidates and send offer letters from a single dashboard
- Screen candidates and initiate background checks

Plus, these systems benefit applicants too, and the easier you make it for them, the quicker the applications make it to your inbox.





# Put a stop to staffing stress with purpose-built solutions

---

By now, we hope you're more optimistic about staffing. While finding, hiring and developing good employees is important, identifying ways to get yourself out of the battle for talent is too. Innovative tech and the right strategies are key to doing so. How do we know? Because we built them specifically for small businesses with limited resources and big ambitions.

Heartland's POS solutions are designed for every size and type of eatery – from quick service to fine dining, and from locally-owned to national chains. We know that between your pain points, growth plans, budget and technology comfort level, every business is unique. So we have a product for every business — solutions that meet you where you are today and leave room for where you're going tomorrow. Now that's a recipe for success.

# Traditional vs. modern solutions

Need more proof that mobile POS systems create a better experience for employees and guests? Take a look at the impact they can have on an average dine-out excursion.

## Traditional dining experience:

**Restaurant servers take about 1,772 steps per hour<sup>1</sup>**

The average checkout experience requires **at least three separate visits to the POS**

**Slow service** is the number one complaint in **20%** of negative restaurant reviews<sup>2</sup>

**77%** say they will leave or consider leaving a restaurant **if they see a long line<sup>3</sup>**

## Mobile POS dining experience:

**Reduce miscommunication and kitchen errors** by inputting orders and modifications **tableside**

**61%** of diners agree that server handheld tablets **improve their guest experience<sup>4</sup>**

The bill is already in a server's hand when a guest asks for it, and **payment, signing and tip adjustment occur in one swift interaction**

Ingredient and allergen information are **at your fingertips: See when something is 86ed in real-time**

**Sources**

<sup>1</sup> Active, Jobs - The steps we take and the calories we burn; 2006 <<https://www.active.com/fitness/articles/jobs-the-steps-we-take-and-the-calories-we-burn>>  
<sup>2</sup> Feed It Back, Slow Service And Rude Staff – The Main Reasons Why Customers Leave Negative Reviews; October 10, 2018 <<https://feeditback.com/slow-service-and-rude-staff-the-main-reasons-why-customers-leave-negative-reviews>>  
<sup>3</sup> Nation's Restaurant News, Pandemic intensifies restaurant wait-time concerns, Bluedot survey finds; February 10, 2021 <<https://www.nrn.com/family-dining/pandemic-intensifies-restaurant-wait-time-concerns-bluedot-survey-finds>>  
<sup>4</sup> The National Restaurant Association, State of the Industry Report; 2018 <<https://mainstreetinc.net/pay-at-the-table-technology-from-your-customers-perspective>>

# Heartland

heartland.us

**Disclaimer:** The information provided in this document does not, and is not intended to constitute legal advice; instead, all information, content, and materials available are for general informational purposes only. Information provided may not constitute the most up-to-date legal or other information, and readers of this information should contact their attorney to obtain advice with respect to any particular legal matter, in the relevant jurisdiction. All liability with respect to actions taken or not taken based on the contents here are hereby expressly disclaimed.