

3 Things That Will Kill Your

Restaurant in 2023



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Introduction

As a local restaurant owner, we know you deal with many challenges daily. Some of them may be difficult to predict, and you'll have to tackle them as they come. For some challenges, however, you can prepare yourself in advance. Being ready and knowing what to do to overcome these challenges will save you time and money and ensure that 2023 will be the year where you'll see success and expansion for your business!

In this guide, you'll find out how to deal with these pressing issues:

- Supply Shortage
- Staffing Issues
- Inflation

Additionally, we'll let you in on our little secrets for setting up critical points for any independent business in 2023:

- · A budget-friendly marketing strategy
- · An ecommerce website

We know that as an independent business owner, you are super busy and might find it hard to make time to do research about the challenges to expect. That's why we created this helpful ebook with (easy and doable) tips for overcoming the challenges of 2023. Let's make your business thrive together!

What Awaits Local Restaurant Industry in 2023 (And Beyond)

This guide is all about problems, but we don't want to seem negative - so let us start with some good news. The restaurant industry in the US can expect to see growth in 2023 and beyond.

As research shows, the restaurant industry overall will grow and an increase in overall consumers spending will go up. As the world returns to the pre-pandemic normal, joined by a growing number of high-income earners and the number of people living in the urban areas, it's expected that more people will visit restaurants and spend more on eating out.

This is great news, but we have a few others you may not like as much: heavy competition from other food service operators such as Grubhub, Foodler, and UberEats will continue to threaten single-location restaurants. Moreover, the growing popularity of fast-casual restaurants will add to the competition. Additionally, another threat to industry operators comes from the consumer shift toward more healthy eating and sustainable practices – they are becoming more aware of health issues related to fatty food intake and food safety issues.

However, for independent restaurant owners, there's not too much to worry about, especially if you are well-prepared for the potential challenges the year may bring. Without further ado, let's get into the nitty gritty of 2023.



Beating Supply Shortage

After two years of pandemic-related supply and inventory shortages, we all hoped things would return back to normal in 2023 - unfortunately that won't be the case. How come, you might ask - since the pandemic is over? Well, here are some reasons:

- The pandemic aftermath Remember those difficult quarantine days you spent ordering your favorite food online? Well, millions of people across the country were doing the same thing, all while manufacturers were cutting supplies and retailers were stocking up inventory. These chains have become more flexible since, however, the road to full recovery is too bulky to be as quick as many hoped for.
- Infrastructural challenges Since the start of 2022, ships are stalled at ports for an average of seven days which is a 20% increase since 2020¹. Even with a \$550 billion federal investment into infrastructure², such huge structural changes will need multiple years to take effect, meaning that shippers will use outdated tracks for years to come.
- **Poor driver retention** The American Trucking Association³ showcased that the driver shortage is an all-time high in the industry, with a minus of 80,000 drivers. And, by 2030, there is a chance the shortage could surpass 160,000 drivers. Even with increased wages and working conditions for drivers, the chances are we will still see a shortage of workers needed for the supply chain to return to normal.

We, unfortunately, can't end this global crisis, we can help your small business withstand and pivot in these trying times. Here are our three most effective short- and long-term strategies to help you manage any future challenges with the most optimal results.

https://www.nytimes.com/2022/02/01/business/supply-chain-disruption.html

https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2021/07/28/fact-sheet-historic-bipartisan-infrastructure-deal/

https://www.trucking.org/news-insights/ata-chief-economist-pegs-driver-shortage-historic-high

#1 Diversify Shipment & Supply Options

According to National Restaurant Association, 96% of restaurant operators reported delays in supply in 2022. Problems of shipping and supply are huge structural issues all business owners will be experiencing in 2023, and because of their nature nipping them in the bud won't be easy. However, you can still turn things around, no matter whether the source of your problem is the shortages your supplier is experiencing, or it's the port congestion.

Either way, if you want to get your supplies in on time, you should start by diversifying your shipment and supply options. It's only natural that with just one single supplier or port of entry the chances of you experiencing a material deficit are on the rise. To shorten your delays considerably start by obtaining backup importers, turning to local suppliers, or even switching the Asian lanes for Mexican ones.

Turning to local suppliers can benefit your restaurant in more ways. With the increased demand towards local and sustainable food production, if you choose more local suppliers, you will respond to these changes in demand and stay competitive. Just remember to emphasize your turn-to-local (in your menu, or via social media advertising) so your customers will know and appreciate it.

#2 Influence Consumer Demand With Strategic Merchandising

The problem with inventory and supply shortages is that they create a palpable mismatch between the intensity of demand and the supply capacity of a business. To overcome this discrepancy, small businesses must swiftly neutralize increased consumer demand for unavailable products through advertising efforts - specifically by repurposing marketing spending.

By lowering ad expenses for meals and drinks you're unable to distribute, an opportunity arises to highlight other items instead. By shifting focus to available products, you'll increase sales overall, and ultimately balance out your revenue. The easiest and quickest way to do so is by utilizing social media platforms to put contests and giveaways into place and create buzz around the food and beverages you can provide.

#3 Stop-Gap Solutions Are Important: Focus on Customer Care

To withstand the current turbulence without losing your clientele, relying on long-term strategies only won't be enough. A stop-gap solution such as heightened customer care is crucial for managing the situation as it unfolds. In these turbulent times, transparent and responsive communication will go a long way in retaining customer loyalty and keeping your business afloat.

When handling unavailability, the worst thing a business can do is over promise to clients, keep them in the dark, or be overly optimistic when setting expectations. Rather than promising a product will be available in a week or a month only to push the date back again, opt to set realistic predictions instead. Use social media to keep customers in the loop about your food and drinks availability dates and quantities.

PROTIP Implement a "notify me" button for unavailable dishes on your website to keep customers engaged and get them back in your restaurant as soon as possible without impeding customer loyalty.

Shipping disruptions cannot be controlled, so as a small restaurant owner, you'll need to prepare for all scenarios and outcomes. While you can't influence what happens, you can regulate how you act. So try to be proactive, prepared, communicative, and always learning, and you'll manage anything the supply chain turmoil throws your way.

Overcoming Staffing Issues

You may have heard about The Great Resignation, the term many use to describe the labor shortage brought about by the pandemic. And even if you didn't, we're sure you are all too familiar with the problem. Let's take a closer look at what happened with the labor force, and how you, as a small restaurant owner, can best address this issue.

Data from August 2022 shows that with over 10 million job openings across industries, there are still around 6 million unemployed workers⁴. According to the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, here are the most important reasons people are not returning to the workforce:

- An increase in savings The enhanced unemployment benefits, which lasted until September 2021, stimulus checks, and the Lockdown imposed frugality added about \$4 trillion to the collective American savings accounts⁵.
- Early retirement In October 2021, over 50% of adults that are 55 and older have gone into early retirement due to the COVID-19 recession and gradual labor market⁶.
- Poor access to childcare Due to the pandemic, many childcare providers had to
 close or scale down, forcing around 370,600 people into unemployment⁷. The
 massive shutdowns created an endless loop to return to work, people require
 childcare, and at the same time, childcare providers were, and still are, facing
 challenges in their own industry.
- Increase in entrepreneurship Many who left the workforce used their savings to start new businesses. Since 2020, almost 10 million business applications have been put in place, and over 4 million new businesses opened⁸.

In this climate, you, as a business owner, are surely wondering what you can do to attract and retain more quality talent. First, take a look at the key findings from the U.S. Chamber of Commerce survey⁹ conducted among unemployed Americans.

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⁴ https://www.uschamber.com/workforce/understanding-americas-labor-shortage

⁵ https://www.cnbc.com/2021/08/03/most-of-americas-extra-pandemic-savings-are-going-to-the-wealthy-.html

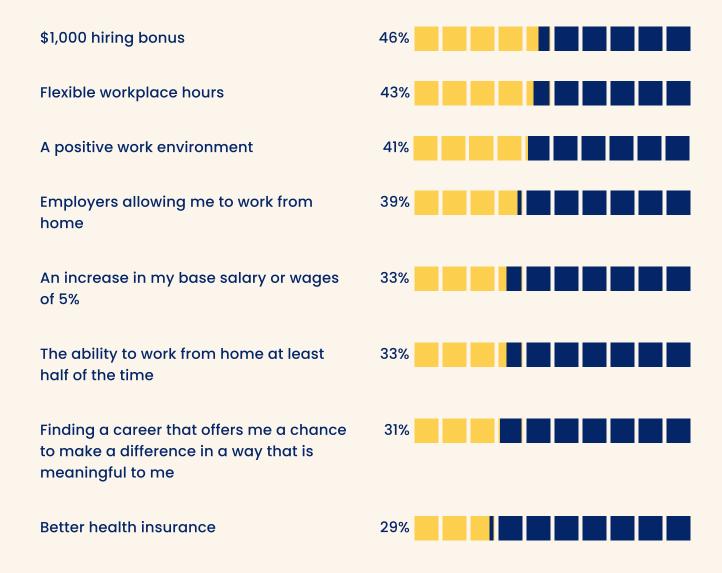
⁶ https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2021/11/04/amid-the-pandemic-a-rising-share-of-older-u-s-adults-are-now-retired/

⁷ https://nwlc.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/ChildCareWorkersFS.pdf

⁸ https://www.salesforce.com/blog/small-business-pandemic-entrepreneurs/

⁹ https://www.uschamber.com/workforce/new-updated-poll-the-covid-19-unemployed

Q: Which of the following would increase your urgency to return to full-time employment?



ource: U.S. Chamber of Commerce

Although many reasons why people aren't getting employed are of financial nature, there is still more to it than just finances. As a small business owner, you may not have the option to always increase wages or offer large bonuses, so it's important to make a plan for hiring and retaining staff that helps your workers feel valued and respected. Here are a few steps that will help make that happen.

#1 Close the Communication Gap

If you're looking to hire ambitious and dedicated staff that will stay with you for the long run, you need to show them the perks and opportunities of being employed at your business. This becomes much easier when employees feel like they have a say in how the business operates. After all, their day-to-day experience of working in your restaurant is a learning resource you should make the most of.

Close the communication gap by putting in place weekly or monthly meetings where employees are the ones doing the talking. Ask your best employees what, apart from money, would make their working conditions and experience better. Use these meetings to provide a clear explanation of pathways to promotions, and give your employees a clear and exciting idea of their future. By giving them the opportunity to contribute to the business culture, you'll make them feel appreciated and valued.

Additionally, take a chance to learn from employees leaving the business. Perform a departing interview with former employees and ask for their honest review of the working conditions, as well as for an in-depth explanation on work-related reasons why they are leaving.

Have your staff's back when they encounter difficulties or challenging situations with the customers. Of course, the golden rule is that the customer is always right, but you might want to hear from your employees too and let them know they are appreciated.

#2 Offer Schedule Control and Flexibility

Since it is highly unlikely to offer some kind of child care assistance at the restaurant, you may still give your employees the option to work with you in creating their own working schedule. After all, working with people often means considering their needs and looking for compromises, since these things not only improve the business culture, but the overall morale of the workers as well, helping them increase productivity.

A great way to put schedule control into place is by investing in a shared scheduling platform. This will give employees the opportunity to update and switch their shifts and schedules in real time, surpassing the usual problems of miscommunication and resentment in the collective. This will help your employees increase performance, since their minds won't be scattered and focused on personal issues, and it will ensure they feel respected and joyful at their place of work.

#3 Foster and Reward Employee Development

When it comes to everyday operational decisions, it's important your employees don't feel like their hands are tied. After all, since they are the ones engaging with customers on a daily basis, they need enough freedom to be able to do their job efficiently, as well as fulfill customer demands and have a positive employment experience overall.

Make sure your employees feel like they're trusted to handle a variety of decisions their line of work might throw their way. Of course, that requires that all employees are both aware of, and complying to the same business standards. Before providing workers with executive freedom, make sure the rules of the game are set. After that, the space within these standards will help your workers make necessary decisions, but even more so, to feel engaged and invested in their work.

Great employees are those who are motivated, and most people love working in a place where they can recognize and envision their ability to grow. Encourage ambitious employees by giving them the option to take on additional responsibilities, shifts, and even take a swing at a completely new role (under mentorship, of course). By giving them ways to expand their expertise and experience, you'll show you care for their goals and professional development. And once they feel invested, they'll share your mission.

PROTIP Is your restaurant a minority-/LGBTQI+/women-/veteran-owned? Did you know that by putting your values out there, you can recruit more long-term talent? Research shows that most ethnic, gender, sexual, and other minorities feel left out and unwanted at their workplace, especially when working for large companies¹⁰.

By making your mission and company values public, you may attract more potential workers who want to spend time and energy working for a business just like yours. The statistics show that people prefer working with employees who share their values. Shared values and a positive work environment tend to increase their performance overall.

https://globescan.com/2022/02/25/insight-of-the-week-most-minority-employees-have-felt-left-out-in-the-workplace/

[&]quot; https://www.spiceworks.com/hr/diversity-inclusion/news/51-job-seekers-inclined-to-work-for-minority-owned-company/

Adapting to Inflation

Inflation is, unfortunately, here to stay. However, in 2023 we can expect it to drop from the 2022's 8% rate to a 3.5%¹².

The Inflation Reduction Act¹³ and the resilience of small businesses we all saw during the pandemic shows that many local business owners are confident that they can overcome inflation. The seventh Small Business Recovery Report issued by Kabbage from American Express shows that over 80% of 550 surveyed local businesses believe they can withstand a recession.

Even if you're confident in your business, it doesn't hurt to consider a few practices that can help offset economic issues and support the growth and expansion of your enterprise. Here are the most successful practices, per the Small Business Recovery Report, that businesses like yours are using to not only adjust but thrive amidst inflation.

#1 Increasing Prices / Reducing Portion Sizes

In March 2022, we saw an average 21% increase in prices across industries, mainly because of increased costs from vendors (54%) and raw materials (45%). Restaurant owners reported they are dealing with the increased costs by increasing the meal prices or decreasing portion sizes while keeping the same prices. Some restaurant operators that chose to reduce their meal portions also say that they encountered negative customer reactions. Their customers are used to specific portion sizes, so they expected that standard when ordering. If you choose to reduce your portion sizes, be sure to emphasize that in your menu. Otherwise, customers may find it deceiving.

#2 Invest in Branding and Marketing

About 57% of larger and medium small businesses and 29% of the smallest ones cite branding as the primary way they put their business on the map. Most of them use social media and other digital advertising channels to differentiate themselves from the stiff competition.

https://www.kiplinger.com/economic-forecasts/inflation#:~:text=Inflation%20will%20end%202022%20at,the%20economy%20slows%20next%20year.

https://www.forbes.com/sites/rhettbuttle/2022/08/15/five-truths-about-how-the-inflation-reduction-act-will-help-small-business-and-working-families/?sh=4aba75185482

Predicted trends for 2023 say that the majority of marketing efforts in the restaurant industry will be through online channels. When searching for restaurant recommendations, consumers turn to online sources such as Google and social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter. You can build your brand awareness, engage with customers, and advertise your offer through your website and social media. The most efficient way to plan and organize your marketing efforts is through a digital growth strategy. To learn how to create a digital growth strategy easily, see the section below.

#3 Acquire Additional Funding

The inflation got many small businesses to rethink the ways they manage their cash flow. In order to avoid the potential situation of simply making ends meet, about 46% of local owners will be covering inflation costs with additional capital, acquired by applying for credit¹⁴. Here's a step by step guide to preparing a strong business case that will position your business as worthy of investment.

https://newsroom.kabbage.com/news/new-kabbage-survey-shows-80-of-u-s-small-businesses-are-confident-they-could-withstand-a-u-s-economic-recession/



1. Figure Out Your Funding Source

First things first - you have to choose the right source of your funding. No financial solution is a one-size-fits-all, but most businesses go for one of these three most common funding sources:

- Investors Most investors work either as individuals, also known as "angel investors,"
 or as venture capital firms. Whichever type of investment you decide on, make sure
 to do thorough background research on the firm to ensure you're turning to a
 reputable investor.
- **Crowdfunding** Need capital but don't want to give away a share of your business nor provide a financial return? Crowdfunding is the way to go all you'll have to provide is a one-time gift or store-credits (oh, and closely read the financial and legal obligations of obtaining crowdfunding).
- Loans A bank or credit union loan will get you capital, and you won't be giving away any control of your business. Pro tip: don't settle on a loan before getting a few offers and comparing them to choose the best one.

2. Make the Business Case

Every funding source you land on requires different types of documents and statements to make your case. However, most of the time you'll need a solid business case.

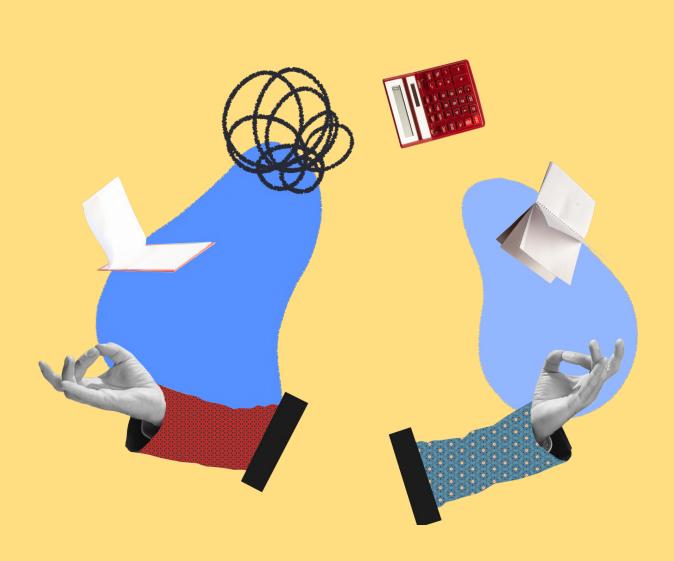
In this statement, discuss the reasons for requesting funding, and include the total amount you need. Showcase why this amount is required to provide assurance that the money won't be mishandled. For a more detailed look at how to write a business plan visit this <u>U.S. Small Business Administration guide</u>.

3. Collect Your Financial Statements

You should provide funding sources with all the relevant financial statements, including:

• Financial history statement - Reports of revenue, expenses, and profit over time show that your business is going in a solid. If you don't have proof of positive growth, collect your financial history and explain how additional funding will help you move on to bigger things.

- Business credit report An accurate business credit showcases you are financially responsible. Get your report form and score improvement indicators from <u>Dun &</u> <u>Bradstreet</u>.
- Business valuation There are many ways to determine how much your business is worth. The most popular methods are doing a self-valuation or contacting and selecting a qualified business appraiser.
- Business forecast Whatever the past of your business may be, it's the future that
 matters and a detailed forecast is the best way to predict it. Complete a
 quantitative of your business's revenue and expenses, and include the methodology
 of estimation for a strong forecast.





The Two Critical Needs of Any Independent Restaurant in 2023

No matter what problems or challenges the next year brings, there's something to be said about considering the critical needs of your business, no matter the context. There are two key points you should invest time in, and that's creating a marketing strategy and establishing an e-commerce website.

A **marketing strategy** will help you organize your efforts, plan ahead and avoid unnecessary strolling while making business decisions. It will point you in the right direction and give you the frame to follow.

Having a professional **ecommerce website with online ordering** is crucial for any contemporary business. Numbers show that more than 60% of people use online food ordering services. And the number of people purchasing online is increasing each year. Even when they don't order food online, people tend to search for the restaurant's website before deciding to visit it. Without a professional e-commerce website, you risk losing customers and thousands of dollars each month.

Creating a Budget-Friendly Marketing Strategy

Creating a marketing strategy means making a strategic plan for your business growth while focusing on marketing. As people nowadays spend a large portion of their time online, treating digital marketing as a side thing is no longer an option. Regarding digital marketing channels, the main ones for putting your restaurant on the map are – social media and emails.

Social Media

Social media is an excellent way to promote your restaurant and increase brand awareness. And it's also cost-effective! Creating genuine content will build relationships with your customers and put your business on the spot - making it both exciting and memorable. Based on your audience, choose the platform that covers all types of content you need. Statista shows that 77% of people aged 35-44 (who spend the most eating out) are on Facebook, while 48% are on Instagram. Facebook and Instagram are great online platforms for your everyday content, direct advertising, and promotion. Be sure to share content in creative and compelling ways and provide written and visual content.

Are you worried about the set-up and management cost of your social media profiles? Don't be. The set-up is free, and there are plenty of options and low-cost solutions to manage your social media presence. From hiring personal consultants and companies to college interns and part-time social media managers to your ranks.



Email Marketing

Another great way to embark on a digital marketing journey is through email marketing. It allows you to engage with your customers on a much more personal level and to deepen your customer relationship. And it's a channel of communication that is practically free, yet brings the highest return on investment of them all!

All you have to do is 1) build your email list and 2) plan the content and the frequency of your emails. Building your email list doesn't require any technical skills. It only takes adding a pop-up form to your website, which gives your customers a quick way to subscribe to your newsletter.

Considering that more than 40% of people report they like to receive personalized offers based on their dietary preferences, purchase history, and current location, this is an opportunity you don't want to miss. You can send exclusive and promotional offers, discounts, holiday wishes, or other relevant information about your food and offers.

Email marketing is a powerful tool for building customer loyalty and audience growth. However, it is important not to send emails too often. Otherwise, your customers will feel like you're spamming them. Also, you can set expectations with your customer base about the frequency and the type of content they will receive. If your customers know when and what to expect, it's more likely they will open your emails. Sending one email weekly is a good approach.

With email marketing, you can expect several significant benefits:

- · You will create advocates
- You will increase organic recommendations
- You will build repeat business

A solid marketing strategy will ensure you get a continuous stream of customers - both new and existing ones. Once you get their attention, all you need to do is direct them to your storefront - whether it's the dine-in restaurant or your ecommerce website. However, that requires you to have a well-created website that provides a smooth and memorable shopping experience. Let's get into it.

Establishing Your Ecommerce Website

A professional ecommerce website enables you to:

- Attract new customers. An ecommerce website that is SEO optimized will bring more customers and increase your revenue.
- Increase the credibility of your restaurant and grow brand awareness. Customers can visit your website for information about your restaurant and the offer. This makes your restaurant seem trustworthy and relevant, and your brand awareness will increase.
- **Highlight the unique values of your brand and offer.** Your website is perfect for telling your story, sharing information about your offer, and highlighting the unique quality.
- Be in charge of your online orders and delivery. A website allows you to offer online ordering and delivery while being in charge of it, without using third-party services.
- **Keep your customer information and grow a loyal customer base.** Since the website is yours, you will keep all your customer information. You can create a database to boost your further sales with this information.

How to do it?

The best two options for establishing your ecommerce website are: hiring a website designer or choosing a business platform to bring your restaurant online.

Option #1: Hire a website designer

The cost of hiring a website designer can be expensive. The prices range from a few thousand dollars to 10K or more - depending on the number of web pages, the complexity of the website, and the fee your chosen designer charges. Before approaching a website designer, prepare the approximate number of web pages so that they can give you an exact offer. Building the website this way can last up to three months or more, depending on the designer's schedule.

Option #2: Select a business platform to bring your business online

Solutions that offer building customized websites are a quick-and-easy way to go. These complete e-commerce platforms will also provide you with a package of tools for running and managing your back-office operations. Unlike a simple website, an ecommerce platform enables you to process orders and delivery, track customer information, and update and manage inventory. Be sure to look for an ecommerce platform that is simple to use while offering all the tools you need.

When deciding between these two options, think about what fits your business best and how to stay loyal to your brand and your brand's story. The design you choose should represent your business. You should use your logo and your brand colors. Be sure to upload high-quality, presentable, and professional-looking photos. If you're unsure how to achieve this, we advise hiring a photographer. After all, a picture is worth a thousand words. Your ecommerce website should be simple to use – for you and your customers. When your website is up and running, the following steps are setting up your online store and driving traffic to your website.

Setting Up Your Online Store

Setting up your online store is all about providing customers with a great shopping experience. Since people do everything on their mobile phones these days, you should first make sure your website is mobile-optimized. Just imagine how frustrating it would be if your website is not working correctly when people visit it from their phones. Your restaurant would lose credibility instantly, and many would decide not to order.

To create a great ordering experience, consider including features such as:

- A quick ordering and reordering system
- Simple payment processing
- Easy navigation
- Delivery scheduling
- Delivery tracking
- Product search

Another great thing is to provide upselling and cross-selling of your products. With this feature, your customers will be encouraged to add more relevant items to their shopping cart during checkout, increasing your average order value (AOV).

Driving Traffic to Your Website

Two simple ways to drive traffic to your website are SEO optimization, and social media & email marketing.

#1 SEO Optimization

Search Engine Optimization (SEO) will make your website a magnet for attracting visitors. SEO is a process to improve how high your website ranks on search results. For example, when someone searches for "pizza near me," if your website is optimized, your restaurant will appear at the top of the results. Seeing your restaurant at the top results will make your business seem trustworthy and increase the chances of customers choosing your brand over competitors. SEO optimization is a step you shouldn't skip when setting up your online store.

There are three essential aspects of website SEO:

- On-page optimization. To achieve on-page optimization, you should add keywords
 to your website and include all relevant information, accurate descriptions, and valid
 images. To discover which keywords are suitable for your business, you can try using
 free online tools such as Semrush Keyword Magic Tools, AnswearThePublic, and
 similar.
- Content optimization. Your content should answer consumers' needs and wants.
 When adding content to your website, avoid writing general phrases, and focus on producing short, relevant, authentic descriptions. Always add keywords.
- **Technical optimization.** Make your website user-friendly. Ensure that the security of your website is high while the load time is low. Mobile optimization is a must.

SEO optimization can be challenging if you are new to it. But, with the right information, you can do it smoothly. If you don't have time or will to deal with it by yourself, you can hire a company that provides the service of website optimization.

#2 Social Media & Email Marketing

Social media and email marketing are great ways to promote your brand and drive traffic to your website. At the same time, you can connect with your customers, build relationships, and send them to your website to order food. When creating social media content, you should post actively and post genuine content. Write captions from the heart, share your story, and be sincere and authentic. Some of your content should directly lead them to your website. You can add links to your website – on your posts and stories.

Another great way to drive traffic and connect with customers is email marketing. You can send monthly or weekly offers and purchase reminders. Consider sending your customers happy birthday emails with special offers as well. It will make them love you even more. Be sure to include the link to your website in all your emails.



Are you old school? Old schoolers are cool. We've got you covered.

Even if you're not prone to new technologies, that shouldn't stop you from having a professional e-commerce website. Today's modern platforms make the process quick and seamless. Companies do the work for you, and you have access to their customer support for issues.

Promenade for Restaurants is a complete ecommerce solution built from the ground up for local restaurants.

Services include:

- Custom branded website with online ordering & delivery
- Social media & email marketing services
- Back-office management

Book a demo

to see how we can help your business grow.

