



How to Issue a Digital Ordering RFP

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Has your restaurant business accelerated into the digital ordering fast lane? Many restaurant chains adopt a “wait and see” approach toward new technology. If this sounds familiar, it is time to recognize that online and mobile ordering is here to stay, says **orderTalk, Inc.** In fact, digital ordering is a dynamic consumer and business tool that is on the cusp of becoming indispensable for most multi-unit restaurants. According to *Hospitality Technology’s Restaurant Technology Study 2016 (HT)*, 68 percent of restaurants view integrated digital ordering as an important emerging technology and 28 percent listed it as a top R&D project for 2016.

Restaurants that were early digital ordering adopters, such as Domino’s and Papa John’s, continue to innovate and invest in this technology to make their customer experience more robust. For example, they’re implementing faster speeds, more payment choices such as Apple pay, increased options for order tracking and even the ability to voice order with a device like Alexa. Clearly, this technology brings an impactful return on investment to warrant the enterprise behind it.

With so many factors to consider, developing an online and mobile ordering platform can seem daunting. However, with thoughtful organization, planning and execution, a restaurant can build a strong off-premise revenue stream. One important element to consider as a restaurant begins the process is issuing a Request for Proposal (RFP), but in order to ask the right questions it often helps to get an industry insider’s perspective.

To launch a best-in-class digital ordering solution, RFPs should account for the complexities of multi-unit restaurant chains, both large and small. While each business is unique, here are some guidelines to consider:

- **Purpose**
A thorough comprehension of a business ensures a strong and personalized proposal based on a company’s needs. Include comprehensive company information and request the same of potential vendors.
- **Specifications**
Ask for specifics of how the company is going to help maximize customers’ online interaction with the restaurant’s brand.

- **Compatibility**

Take inventory of your company's technology, software and any upgrades that may be forthcoming. Do you have the right technological infrastructure to create the optimal digital ordering platform? If not, consider your willingness to make significant changes relatively quickly.

- **Integrations**

As digital ordering takes on speed, new integrations are introduced frequently that enhance the customer experience. Not all digital ordering providers are created equal and some may not have the flexibility to incorporate software programs that may be essential to your business.

While these points are essential items to consider, keep in mind that there are many others to contemplate including the collection, storage and accessing of consumer data for marketing purposes and data security.

Also, customer support can make or break a restaurant's digital ordering success as inaccurate menus, website malfunctions and program glitches will have a rapid and negative impact on customer satisfaction. Ask each vendor if they offer round-the-clock, in-house support, since this is not always the case. Finally, request a clear and concise overview of fees so that you can determine a sensible overall budget and avoid hidden costs.

A well-written and detailed RFP that incorporates these tips will offer your organization an invaluable insight into each vendor's approach to your digital ordering project. Target a list of vendors based upon word of mouth, but also be sure to tap industry-appropriate vendors who have a strong grasp of the complexities of the business.