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DRIVING UP QUALITY

Drive-thru improvements push
sales and customer satisfaction

Casual Gets
Faster

Heady
Headsets

Digital Has
Its Day

Casual Dining in Cars

Elevating the drive-thru experience to address new demands

Articles exploring the drive thru's rise are unavoidable, as are doom and gloom prophecies about the end of quick service as we know it. Fast casual is changing the game.

These hybrid, often personalization-focused models are getting a ton of ink, and an increasing piece of the market share.

As quick-service operations pivot to address changing consumer desires and work to elevate customer experience, the question of the future of the drive thru looms large.

Even legacy brands are altering dine-in experiences to differentiate from some of the more negative perceptions of fast food. These improvements are indeed proving to be effective in lifting up the brand image; however, there's still a huge portion of consumers who will rarely (if ever) see these internal improvements firsthand.

"For customers who only go through your drive thru, that's all they know," says Doug Watson, president and CEO of **The Howard Company**. "They never get to see your nice interior or clean dining space or well-dressed employees. The whole of their knowledge about your restaurant will be that lane, so we always push for an equal investment both indoor and outdoor."

With estimates that anywhere from 60 to 80 percent of quick-service business is through the drive thru, the quality of this experience can't be overlooked, especially for brands investigating new ways to up the ante and win customers back from fast-casual encroachment.

The drive thru might seem like an unlikely place to focus on the fight against restaurants touting health halos, convenient customization, and the food of finer dining brought to a more casual space.

However, the crux of the popularity of the Chipotles of the world can be summed up by the elevated dining experience they provide while maintaining speed of service.

Drive thru has a marked advantage in speed and convenience. Now, Watson says, brands are focusing on balancing convenience with a stepped-up aesthetic and experience in the drive thru.

The Howard Company helps restaurants achieve these goals by providing comprehensive drive-thru solutions—offering everything from canopies and confirmation boards to directional



signs and headsets, as well as complete menu systems.

In addition, the company's impressive variety of options allows it to deliver items with a custom-tailored feel without the lag time of from-scratch production.

By making drive-thru improvements manageable, Howard provides more than just a simple return on investment.

"It's not just ROI; it's return on the brand," Watson says. "And a drive-thru experience that makes customers comfortable is a must-have on the same level as heat and air conditioning."

With so many sales transactions happening at the window, **Ready-Access**, manufacturer of drive-thru windows and air curtains, focuses on making both the customer and operator experience a good one.

One of the company's most popular options is its manual open electronic release mode of operation, or MOER for short. This method takes advantage of a patented, easy-to-maintain self-close technology and combines it with a "smart beam" technology to hold the window open dur-

ing a customer interaction.

On the order-taking end, the windows promote safety and comfort with options for insulated glass, heated air curtains, fly fans, and impact-rated glass for hurricane zones.

Other operational benefits are found with the company's "Energy Saver" windows, which save an estimated 33 percent in energy costs over standard windows.

In keeping with increasing consumer and brand desire to incorporate sustainable solutions, Ready-Access made its windows 99 percent recyclable and is continually striving to develop a manufacturing process that protects the environment.

Awnex is another company focused on elevating the customer experience in the drive thru while helping increase sales.

The option for customers to stay in their cars to order during inclement weather has always been a business-driver for quick-service restaurants. Still, lanes without adequate weather protection can discourage sales.

Awnex's canopies and awnings are designed

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Anatomy of a Drive-Thru



Operators look to elevate the drive-thru experience to fight fast food stigma

with integrated gutters and LED lighting to redirect rainwater while providing the perfect level of visibility. Awnex's goal is to provide a drive-thru experience that is in parity with the dine-in experience.

These tangible additions make the experience markedly better for customers. They can also be leveraged to create an improved visual experience and overall brand perception as well.

As Awnex president Steven McLendon points out, fast casuals tend to have the more frequent re-imaging schedules in the industry, creating increased pressure on brands industry-wide to constantly improve and elevate their image.

In fact, most fast casuals have image-refresh plans based on a 3–5-year time scale, while the

typical quick-serve brand plans these turnarounds in approximately seven-year increments.

To keep up with this demand, Awnex works with its restaurant partners to add architectural elements that communicate distinct branding while providing flexibility for later re-imaging.

“We help brands achieve at-a-glance recognizability through architectural elements without garish signs,” McLendon says. “But just as easily as our products can be customized, they can be

changed, removed, and updated, so there's total flexibility to rebrand, which is great now that things are changing more quickly, and from a real estate value perspective.”

Beyond physical additions, Awnex's patented Fly Thru Drive Thru system provides a completely unique way to ensure top-notch speed of service and a positive, personalized experience for customers. Using the same RFID technology that allows drivers to go through tolls without stopping, Fly Thru Drive Thru uses an antenna to pick up a signal from a small sticker placed on the customer's car. This sticker carries information from their last drive-thru order.

The idea is that since customers place repeat orders 70 percent of the time, it makes much more sense from a place of efficiency and customer satisfaction to start the conversation with “would you like the usual?” instead of “what would you like today?”

Studies conducted by Awnex indicate use of this technology reduced drive-thru lane time by 20–40 percent, leading to a 5–10 percent sales increase.

The system plugs right into the POS terminal

much like a credit card reader and typically pays for itself (and then some) after only a few short months.

“Let's say you pull up to your favorite coffee shop and your regular is a tall latte,” McLendon says. “This system automatically delivers your order to the barista inside, so by the time you pull up to the order canopy, all that's required is a quick confirmation, with even quicker service.”

McLendon says the technology will be especially attractive to Millennial customers, who are often multitasking in the drive thru and less tolerant of wait times. Plus, he says, they're used to interacting with intuitive, speed-boosting technology.

Panasonic has been brainstorming how to make drive-thru technology better equipped to handle the changing landscape of on-the-go foodservice.

“The fast-casual brands really put a hit out on traditional quick serves,” says Jeff Pinc, Panasonic's director of foodservice. “So what we're seeing now is this next level of turning outdoor displays in the drive thru into a more interactive thing to mimic that experience better while maintaining the speed.”

Pinc says the future of drive thru might lie in touchscreen kiosks that replicate the experience of walking down the line and building a meal from the ground up. This method would enable quick serves, which have the home-court advantage in drive thru, to speedily serve up the customization customers are gravitating toward.

In addition, it would also allow fast-casual brands to expand experiments in the drive thru while maintaining the same personalized quality and elevated aesthetic.

By pushing both service models to improve customer satisfaction in new ways, new trends and technologies should soon yield a better drive-thru experience for everyone involved.

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Reading the Signs

Tips For Choosing the Right Outdoor Display For The Drive Thru

While customers move through the drive thru lane, marketing and up-selling opportunities are quite literally passing them by.

As outdoor signage continues to evolve, restaurants are seeking digital technology to engage this captive audience and capitalize on profit-maximizing and brand-elevating opportunities.

To get the most out of an investment in digital drive thru signage, there are three main factors any restaurant should consider.

Superior Visibility

A customer, rushing to make the most of a short lunch break, pulls into the drive thru for a grab-and-go meal. Once she pulls up the ordering station, however, she realizes that the glare of the sun is making it impossible to read the menu.

Frustrated, she orders some version of the usual, misses out on the special combo of the day, and vows to try the restaurant across the street next time. Outdoor digital displays have the ability to engage customers with compelling and relevant information—but only if that content can actually be seen.

One of the main concerns with early generation outdoor displays was the effect of brightness and glare on the readability of the content—something anyone who has ever tried to use a laptop outside can relate to.

As Young Cho, a senior product manager from Samsung specializing in outdoor displays says:

“The purpose of having the signage is to get the message through to the customer, so it’s important that the proper technology is implemented to make sure that any reflection is cancelled and people can actually see the content.”

This applies not only to the menu, but also to the order confirmation screen, since order accuracy is absolutely critical for customer satisfaction in the drive thru.

Most indoor LCD displays have a brightness of 300 to 350 “nit”—a measure of luminance. For an outdoor display to be equally vivid in intense sunlight, outdoor digital signage must have at least 700-nit brightness.

Samsung’s OHD Series SMART Outdoor Signage provides this level of readability with LED back-lighting, delivering vibrant content even in direct sunlight.



These displays measure in at more than 2,500 nit, paired with energy-saving Auto Brightness sensors and an easily customizable brightness range.

High brightness is not enough, as glare from the sun also impairs visibility.

Samsung’s outdoor signage is equipped with protective anti-reflection glass which reduces the total reflection to 0.5 percent and makes content clearly visible even under direct sunlight.

Plus, the high contrast ratio of 5,000:1 creates an optimum viewing experience in any light, during any time of day or night.

The displays are even equipped with circular polarizing technology, which means that customers wearing polarized sunglasses can view them without a problem.

Cost-Reducing Durability

With torrents of rain and wind swirling outside, your restaurant is empty. On days like this, you put your faith in the drive thru, where customers can grab a delicious meal without getting out of their cars and stepping into the pouring rain.

Only two customers in, however, you realize that the graphics and text have shorted out in the inclement weather.

The next day you wake up to a sunny sky and renewed hope, only to find that vandals have left a surprise message in bright yellow paint directly over your outdoor menuboard.

Now, instead of rejoicing over all of the sales you

plan to recoup that day, you have to worry about the cost to repair your outdoor signage, along with worries about what your customers will think.

By investing in outdoor digital signage with special tempered glass, you’re protecting against vandalism, spray paint, and hard impact—ensuring that promising mornings stay promising.

You also decide it’s time to invest in outdoor signage that remains clear and high-performing in any weather.

“Digital signage has to resist the summer heat, winter’s freezing temperatures, pouring rain, and dust, among other things,” Cho says. “On top of all of that, it has to be protected from vandalism, so there’s a lot to consider.”

Cho says that as a baseline, waterproof, IP-rated hardware is a must.

Samsung’s IP56-rated, waterproof and dustproof design extends protection to the fan, drain hole, and power outlets, as well as the main display, while a steady cooling system eliminates the risk of overheating.

In addition to handling tough blows from vandals, Samsung’s outdoor digital signage is designed to handle tough blows from moody weather as well, with a temperature range of negative 22 degrees to 122 degrees Fahrenheit.

By effectively protecting outdoor displays, owners can reduce repair costs and avoid risking lost sales opportunities resulting from inclement weather or environmental conditions.

Convenient Design

To make up for the past few days of lagging sales—and hopefully pay for the graffiti removal—the general manager has asked you, the IT manager, to immediately roll out a new LTO. He has also requested you update the calorie count for some of the menu items.

With the old static signage, you would have had to go through a long process of designing, printing, and distributing the new content.

With the new centralized content management system and digital outdoor displays, all of this work is simplified to a few clicks.

The ability to conveniently create, manage, and push out new content to outdoor digital displays is the final factor in building a successful outdoor display program.

It's particularly helpful if the same provider of the hardware can step in to provide this content-management software with a hard-to-beat, all-in-one system.

Samsung's MagicInfo content management platform allows users to create, schedule, and

deploy content to multiple displays in multiple locations.

MagicInfo comes with a suite of creative tools, enabling brands to design eye-catching digital signage, all the way up to complex, interactive multimedia displays.

The solution comes standard on Samsung SMART Signage products.

Furthermore, distribution of the created content can easily be distributed to the outdoor drive thru signage and managed in a centralized location due to an HDBaseT connection, which allows for smooth flow of content even over long distances.

Samsung signage also comes with the industry's first System-on-Chip (SoC) embedded media player—the Samsung SMART Signage Platform (SSSP)—which streamlines the process of uploading content and eliminates the need for external hardware to run digital content.

All of this is conveniently housed within a slim, stylish, compact design for easy installation. Measuring in at only 90.3 millimeters in depth, this signage includes an embedded media player, power box,

cooling system, and more.

With the clear benefits and increased selling power that outdoor digital displays bring, brands are looking for this trifecta of visibility, durability, and convenience to push their drive thru sales and accuracy to the next level.

Samsung continues to bring innovation to the next level with forward-thinking designs and capabilities, allowing restaurants to keep current customers happy while engaging the next generation.

"We continue to study the dynamics of quick serves and the drive thru in order to develop optimized and impactful displays," Cho says. "Our displays provide a unique business solution to fill the gap in the outdoor signage market by delivering industry-leading brightness and enhanced functionality, allowing business owners to create and deploy powerful and attractive messages easily."

By harnessing the ability to relay information in creative, easily readable, and easily updated ways, outdoor digital displays are adding customer engagement and operator ease into the drive thru equation. ●

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Resistance against spray paint, chemicals and hard impact



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3

Operational Excellence with Convenient Design



All-in-One Design

Conveniently embedded SSSP media player, HDBaseT and MagicInfo software



Slim Design

90.3mm depth including all-encompassing features for simple installation



Steady Cooling System

Filter-free, 30dB noiseless solution for minimized distraction

An End to Headset Headaches

Better sound and design clear up communication in the drive thru

When making initial purchases, headsets aren't the most costly item in a drive-thru program. After factoring in lost batteries, employee headaches, garbled audio, and frequent repairs, the costs begin to look a bit more substantial.

At **R.F. Technologies Inc.**, founder and CEO Bob Noorian says all-in-one headsets are shipped to the company for repairs more frequently than any other item.

Thankfully, headset design is nothing if not improving, and new models on the market are impressively durable, comfortable, and easy to use.

Despite dramatic improvements, headsets remain the most frequently damaged item.

"It's misuse and abuse of the system, like taking the headset off of your head with one hand instead of two," Noorian says. "Employees get bored and play with headset booms and put a lot of unnecessary torque on the hardware, so of course it's going to eventually break. Just taking 10 minutes to teach employees proper use would save operators a ton of money."

To aid in this, R.F. Technologies offers free training seminars to some of its largest franchise partners to ensure that rugged, modern headsets are avoiding undue abuse.

After the fact, if an accident does happen, the company is right there to provide a guaranteed 24-hour turnaround time and a four-month warranty on repairs.

Avoiding even this short period of downtime was what drove **3M** to produce an improved headset to address issues of durability, employee comfort, and repair costs. 3M conducted extensive research with brands and order-takers to determine the biggest pain points and frustrations associated with headsets before developing the company's latest model, the 3M Drive-Thru Headset G5.

The result was a product that delivers on convenience and reliability to improve the experience of order-takers and customers alike.

The G5 is the industry's first headset with a modular design that allows users to easily repair and replace individual components without compromising the entire headset. All power functions on the new design are contained in a patent-pending "control pod," which is attached to the "carrier." The carrier, which contains the mic boom and headband, can be easily removed from the



New headset models tackle reliability and comfort

pod, allowing for quick, in-store repairs.

Every G5 headset system comes with an extra carrier, so employees can swap out a damaged carrier and have a headset back in operation in seconds.

3M also took a hard look at employee comfort, and as a result, removed compressible buttons and reduced headset weight.

"Order-takers told us the constant pressing of buttons was giving them headaches," says Barb Larock, business development manager. "And if there's a piece of equipment that you're required to wear and utilize as part of your job, it's all about being comfortable in order to make you feel satisfied and happy about your job."

The updated buttons function like those on a smartphone, where the gentle placement of a finger will produce a small vibration for sensory confirmation, eliminating the pressure pushing of buttons in order to communicate with the consumer.

The G5 also comes with an integrated headset storage and charging station that allows the battery to be charged while still in the headset, lowering the risk of battery loss.

Panasonic also developed a headset built for rigorous daily use in quick-serve environments. The company's Attune II headset can withstand 1,100 pounds of direct pressure without fail-

ing, is entirely sealed against liquids and grease, and can bend in a remarkable 300,000 different points across the headband.

The boom—a prime point for breakage—is crafted with flexible wiring surrounded by a heavy-duty polymer, which withstood 20,000 rotations during testing.

In tandem with the physical resiliency of the product, Attune II employs dynamic noise suppression technology, which not only eliminates steady sounds, but also sounds that alternate in pitch and volume (think: sirens).

Attesting to the product's efficacy, director of foodservice Jeff Pinc says, "Our go-to-market strategy was to actually ask brands to give us their noisiest locations—by trains, airports, or highways—and let us prove the noise-reduction on site."

At **HM Electronics**, chief strategy officer Daren Haas says headset reliability has improved dramatically over previous generations.

The latest HME headsets eliminate the need for vulnerable wires running across the top and implement a solid-steel boom.

After easily conquering the question of reliability, HME moved on to sound and clarity improvements with the use of wide-band technology and aggressive noise filtering in its patent-pending HD system.

Wide-band technology captures the full range of the voice spectrum, as opposed to the more traditionally employed narrow band, which cuts off about 30–40 percent of this spectrum. By chopping off those frequencies, narrow-band has the tendency to obscure "f" and "s" sounds, which isn't ideal when a customer wants fries or a Sprite.

On top of the ability to capture a broader spectrum of sound, HME's HD sound system filters both incoming and outgoing noise in real-time, which keeps customers from hearing the ruckus in the kitchen while allowing employees to clearly hear orders, even in noisy areas near busy highways.

Because this filtering adapts quickly, the technology also eliminates the detrimental echo effects of previous generations of noise reductions.

"Now that we've moved past reliability, the new frontier is sound quality and accuracy," Haas says. "We're using the high-definition technology to bring total clarity to operations so everyone's more satisfied with the experience."

With vast improvements in both physical functionality and software feature-sets, modern headsets are finally more of a help than a headache.

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Driving Toward Digital

Digital signage has waited its turn in the drive-thru lane. Now, its order is up

For the first time in recent memory, Brian McClimans saw that his 13-year-old daughter was actually impressed and excited by a piece of technology that he also found interesting. The vice president of global business development for **Peerless-AV** says the same digital menuboards that caught the eye of his daughter were of particular interest to him as well.

"I'd gone into McDonald's with a whole group of kids right at 10:25, and couple of them wanted lunch, while some still wanted breakfast," he says. As they waited, he and the kids watched the menuboards in the store switch so that some displays were dedicated to lunch, some to breakfast, and some featured a blend of offerings from both dayparts.

"It was fun just to have about a dozen people there staring and waiting for the digital menuboards to switch and see what items were available," he says. "To be honest, it was probably the first time my daughter and her friends thought I was cool! It's very hard to impress the tech-driven Millennials, and they actually were having fun watching the switch, too."

A lot has changed in the outdoor service and tech scene over the past five years.

Now the quick-service industry stands at the brink of a whole new way to connect with customers at the drive thru.

The way of the future lies in digital, but unfortunately, it comes at a cost.

Starbucks is providing an example for others in the industry for how early implementation can come with sizable payoffs.

"They've been disruptive in the industry by leading the charge, and I think that's a really smart move," McClimans says.

Starbucks has, in essence, blended static and digital signage by keeping constant items on a more traditional display while highlighting special offers based on the season or even the weather to encourage impulse buying and up-selling.

Still, despite the recognition Starbucks and some other brands are receiving from their tech-forward approach—and despite the sales increases that have come as a result—many are hesitant to swallow the initial cost for the update.

When McClimans discusses Peerless-AV's



durable, customizable, and visually appealing Xtreme Outdoor Digital Menu Board Kiosks, he encourages management to look not only at start-up costs (which can run two to three times that of traditional menuboards), but also at the long-term benefits that outweigh the upfront costs.

"Instead of getting stuck at that first point, they really need to break down the barriers of silos within their organization to understand the true benefit," he says. "We tell them to truly look at the operational efficiencies that they'll save once they actually fully implement digital into their business, and how that will impact their speed and ability to beat competition."

For instance, while it might take a number of months to finally launch a new menu item and get product to stores, additional months are required to update, design, and release new static menuboard designs to accommodate every single addition. With digital, that change could happen stress-free overnight, easing menu roll outs and increasing both efficiency and efficacy of marketing efforts.

Ease and stress relief are two focal points

within **NCR** Vitalcast software, which envelops a complete drive-thru solution, not a patchwork of hard-to-integrate products.

NCR's one-stop shop allows system-wide changes to be made at any time in mere seconds.

Digital menuboards, pre-sell boards, order confirmation boards, and more can be managed from a single location to provide consistent brand messaging. Improved communication and consistency doesn't stop there—NCR recognizes that customers no longer have much tolerance for late-stage order correction or mistakes, so each of the products are meant to not only speed up service, but also increase accuracy and customer-employee communication throughout the process.

In addition to measurable speed increases, Brian Gray, general manager of NCR Texas Digital, says that digital pre-sell boards and menuboards with animations reduce perceived wait times as well.

"The waiting customer now has their mind active with 'oh that looks good,' or 'maybe I should try that,' instead of sitting there focused on trying to move one step up in the queue."

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- Minimizes service related issues with wired loops

Everbrite is searching for the optimum balance between promoting the speed of drive thrus and the implementation of new technology.

"We're at a turning point in the industry right now," says Jay Jensen, vice president of sales and marketing. "One of the opportunities is that a lot of quick serves in the marketplace have been working to change their image to much more of a casual, upscale environment and much less of a fast-food atmosphere."

Everbrite is doing its fair share of research to determine the most effective ways to leverage digital signage for elevating brand image. The company is the only signage and menuboard company in the U.S. that has its own dedicated technology center devoted to developing new, effective, and cost-efficient forms and uses of dig-

gate the shifting tide toward digital signage.

For Techknow, this next frontier provides exciting opportunities to elevate marketing strategies and integrate displays with pre-existing systems to provide more insightful analytics.

As a first step, the company began looking into how restaurants could better use order confirmation screens for marketing and up-selling opportunities.

Order confirmation screens have traditionally measured at around 15 inches, providing just enough space to list back-order contents. Far exceeding that standard, Techknow introduced the industry's first 32-inch and 46-inch order confirmation system.

With this product, the company is able to split the screen between order confirmation text and

to use the space.

Elliott says the company is in the process of enhancing its analytical software package to provide feedback on effectiveness of limited-time promotions.

This is another area where the digital aspect of the technology works to help restaurants: providing analytics to deliver better marketing campaigns.

Delphi Display Systems' Insight Verify software solution does just that. The solution, which is designed to work with Delphi's Endura line of order confirmation systems, pushes out specific upsell messages based on items ordered.

The system is easily managed with web-based tools, allowing brands to create custom order confirmation layouts as well as pre-sell and upsell slide shows. The software's marketing capabilities are enhanced by the ability to pair text with high-resolution imagery.

Additionally, the Verify software provides detailed reports to analyze the effectiveness of marketing campaigns in the drive thru.

"Now that operators have more space to advertise, and more information about how to best place those advertisements, marketing in the drive thru is becoming more sophisticated and more effective," says Mark DiCamillo, vice president of product management.

As a veteran in the background music industry, **Mood Media** considers curating the perfect customer experience its specialty. Mood offers a complete, end-to-end digital signage solution complete with system design, software, hardware, content, service, and support. This comprehensive approach allows brands to take complete control of the customer experience in a dynamic way.

With Mood's custom TV option, which allows brands to create unique television "channels" to run on digital displays, customers are engaged within the restaurant in entirely new ways.

"People spend so much time considering the lighting, the color on the wall, the type of tables in their store," says Dave Van Epps, global chief product officer. "This part of the visual experience is just as important."

Whereas questions of cost associated with digital signage are an area of concern for many operators, Mood's custom solutions often cost less than a subscription to cable or satellite TV, but with a much larger impact on promotion and engagement.

"There are so many small dials that any restaurant has to turn to build something great," Van Epps says. "But whatever restaurant it is, experience is always going to be the biggest thing, and there are subtle things that can really make or break that experience."



ital signage. The tech center also provides a space for Everbrite to work with brands to understand exactly what they hope to get out of signage and drive-thru initiatives, as well as what franchisees might be incurring in terms of costs.

Jensen is certain that digital drive-thru tech is merely in its infancy, and that big leaps are on the horizon. For instance, simply using digital as a moving version of static signage has shown to be an effective marketing technique with plenty of time-saving operational benefits, but it's quite possible that the digital drive thru of the future will look less like a menuboard and much more like a host panel to interface with mobile apps.

Techknow is another company on the scene providing thought leadership as restaurants navi-

product promotion.

"We've seen that a larger display gives brands more room to not only give a better description of the product being ordered, but also turn their drive thru into a digital merchandising platform, since up to 70 percent of quick serves' revenue is generated in those lanes," says Techknow president Richard Elliott.

Techknow uses its patent on these larger screens to improve order accuracy by pairing more detailed item descriptions with images of the ordered meals, making mistakes even easier to catch.

Of course, simply having a larger screen doesn't guarantee improved service or marketing if brands aren't aware of the most effective ways

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Consumer engagement with tech in the drive thru is driving marketing in less direct ways as well, and **HyperActive Tech** is one company investigating how to best use the dynamic abilities of digital signage to drive consumer interest.

“We think that the way you go through the drive thru in the coming years is going to be substantially different,” says Scott Marentay, chief operating officer. “The idea of engaging people with a digital strategy is going to be huge.”

Marentay says he sees social media playing a greater role in the future of digital signage. For instance, additional screen space could be used to run a Twitter feed or show people enjoying the latest LTO on Instagram.

Especially for socially savvy, tech-connected Millennials, seeing friends on the screen—along with the prospect of seeing themselves—could work as a powerful marketing message.

Of course, this would have to be used strategically so customers don’t linger. Ideally, however, leveraging social media in the drive thru would create an exciting, connecting experience, which would promote repeat visits and LTO purchases.

NEC Display, a leading projector and display manufacturer, aims to balance display efficiency and effective advertising in the drive-thru space.

“What we’re seeing are brands looking for different ways to push impulse buys without breaking up the flow of traffic,” says Richard Ventura, vice president of product marketing and solutions. “To do that, there’s been a lot of experimentation and requests for integration of new data points into the menuboard system, like integration of social media or mobile ordering apps.”

While software specialists continue to explore the best ways to use beacon and RFID technology to streamline customer orders, some simple tech tweaks are having immediate effects on sales in the drive thru.

This is especially the case for LTO marketing. Because digital signage allows for easy updates, LTOs can be marketed by daypart or according to inventory. In fact, Ventura says he has seen some restaurants test out LTOs that are exclusive to the drive thru, giving customers an added reason to pull the trigger on an impulse purchase.

Special drive-thru LTOs also provide easy-to-prepare and easy-to-repeat orders, allowing employees to move people through the line even more quickly.



Recognizing the need to protect valuable digital signage from the elements, **ITSENCLOSURES** creates environments to ensure sensitive hardware works in any situation—come sleet, dust, or searing sunlight.

The switch to In Plane Switching (IPS) panels outdoors has given the company the ability to broaden the temperature range in which digital menuboards can be used. The company’s ViewStation enclosures support an impressive range of temperatures, from -40 F to a steamy 120. This switch to IPS, coupled with LED backlighting, reduces power consumption and allows enclosures to use fan-only cooling solutions versus compressor-based systems.

Together, this confluence of improvements drastically reduces lifecycle costs while increasing reliability.

ITSENCLOSURES is able to enclose a wide variety of dimensions and set-ups.

While these digital signage investments need to be protected from the elements, it’s also crucial that these protective measures not obscure the information on the menuboard.

ITSENCLOSURES products come with museum-quality antireflective laminated safety glass for top-notch outdoor visibility. The LCD lighting features automatic dimming capabilities

that soften the look in lower light conditions. In addition, the company’s proprietary glass combination allows 99 percent light transmission and UV protection and is completely serviceable in the field.

These types of savvy precautions are what have made the company successful for 30 years in protecting what is becoming an increasingly valuable and expensive investment for restaurants.

“We are often called upon to clean up after ‘signage’ companies who think an enclosure system is just another ‘light box,’” says Jennifer Bissell, director of sales and marketing. “ITSENCLOSURES has a reputation for doing it right the first time with unparalleled customer support, both pre- and post-installation.”

By locating a vendor that understands restaurants’ expectations and goals for digital signage, brands can confidently take the leap toward new technology in the drive thru. As more restaurants make the move, it remains to be seen just how much higher these improvements can push convenience and commerce in such a high-impact aspect of the quick-service industry.



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Breaking the Speed Limit

Drive-thru timers get smarter; wait times get shorter

While manufacturers and restaurants look for the next big thing in drive thru, there is one core standard any new technology or process absolutely must live up to: time efficiency.

Quick-service operators are veterans in the speed-of-service battle, but they don't have to fight without backups.

Thankfully, new products and services are entering the market to help restaurants move cars through the line more quickly than ever before.

Setting goals for speed begins as any goal does: by establishing the baseline.

At **Summit Innovations**, the team believes that the more restaurants can understand exactly what's happening in their drive thru, the greater the opportunity for improvement.

Summit's dual-screen drive-thru timer provides an intuitive method of data gathering that informs operators and employees in real-time.

The first screen is effectively a visualization of the drive thru, with the time taken at each target point recorded and measured against the ideal time.

The second a time goes outside of the target, the screen turns orange. Beyond a certain threshold, it goes red and sounds an alarm in the store.

"It helps shine light on each part of the drive-thru process, measures performance, and addresses any of the issues that come up along the way," says Kim Redstall, director of corporate development and strategy.

The interactive, multimedia-based solution pinpoints problem areas within drive-thru operations, allowing managers to focus resources on the most-needed areas.

For instance, if the timer shows that order-taking times are slower than ideal, managers can investigate if there's a problem with the headset, a new employee needs more training, or there's something else holding up the line.

All of this information is made available in real time, allowing managers to adjust for optimal service instead of simply seeing in later reports where the team might have fallen short.

One of Summit's employees—who also happens to be a former NFL linebacker—describes it as being able to hear the coach's instructions through headsets on the field and turning the game around, instead of reading about the loss in the paper the next day.



DELPHI DISPLAY SYSTEMS

Drive-thru timers shed light on operational inefficiencies

Summit's method of representing the drive thru to scale with times associated with each point—order, payment, and pickup—means that times between stores can be compared accurately, even with different lane-lengths or business volume.

This ability to compare is the cornerstone of Summit's second (or "ranking") screen, where different locations can compete and be incentivized for improving drive-thru times.

Redstall says that as a result of these features, stores that implement Summit's timer system see an up to 30-second improvement on speed-of-service times, even if they have an existing timer installed.

At **HyperActive Tech**, the company's QTimer system was the first on the market to integrate real-time POS transactions with cars

going through the drive thru.

And POS integration is just the beginning—HyperActive is exploring building its analytics base in the future by integrating camera information and loyalty programs with its timing system as well.

The QTimer attaches orders to specific cars, adjusting the goal for an individual car based on the size of the order and creating a more even playing field for comparison between order times. By gathering this information, HyperActive is able to deliver above-store reports to stay informed and promote improvements.

The ability to collect this data is important, but the ability to use it in meaningful ways is absolutely crucial.

"What we're hearing from a lot of operators is that all of the data is great, but they're awash in data and have more than they know what to do with," says Mark DiCamillo, vice president of product management from **Delphi Display Systems**. "The winning play is to use information to help restaurants make smart decisions in real time."

To ensure just that, Delphi employs its Focus

Leading-Edge Drive-Thru Innovations

Endura 15X: The 1st Dual-Mode Order Confirmation System



- Dual mode: Networked-Ethernet or Video-Over-IP
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- Extreme temperature range from -40°F to +155°F
- Integrated beacon / BLE 4.0 technology
- Fully-Sealed, weather-proof NEMA4x / IP65
- 100,000 hour MTTH operation with standard 5 year advanced exchange warranty

Delphi's new Endura® 15X Order Confirmation System is the first platform that can switch between either interfacing over a network with the POS system (embedded), or stream and display video content directly from systems inside the restaurant (video)*. The Endura 15X display is less than 2 inches thick at the front, and is designed for reliable operation in extreme hot and cold climates. The LED backlight is rated for 100,000 hours, or over eight years of continuous operation. The 15X system includes built in beacon technology for customer identification and loyalty programs.

** Requires Video Encoder sold separately*

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A seven second improvement in speed of service results in 1-3% improvement in market share.** The Fast Track SA™ Stand Alone timing solution delivers high performance at an exceptional value, and provides real-time visibility into drive-thru operations. The solution delivers an instantaneous view into critical performance metrics and bottlenecks so the crew can maximize labor-efficiency, improve throughput and increase profitability in the drive-thru. With the application, users can quickly and easily generate sophisticated reports by any date and time range.

*** Reference: "How much is a reduction of your customers' wait worth?" Kellogg, Columbia and Harvard Business*

DELPHI
DISPLAY SYSTEMS

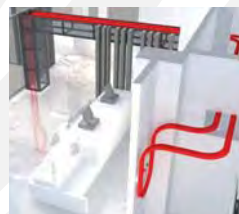
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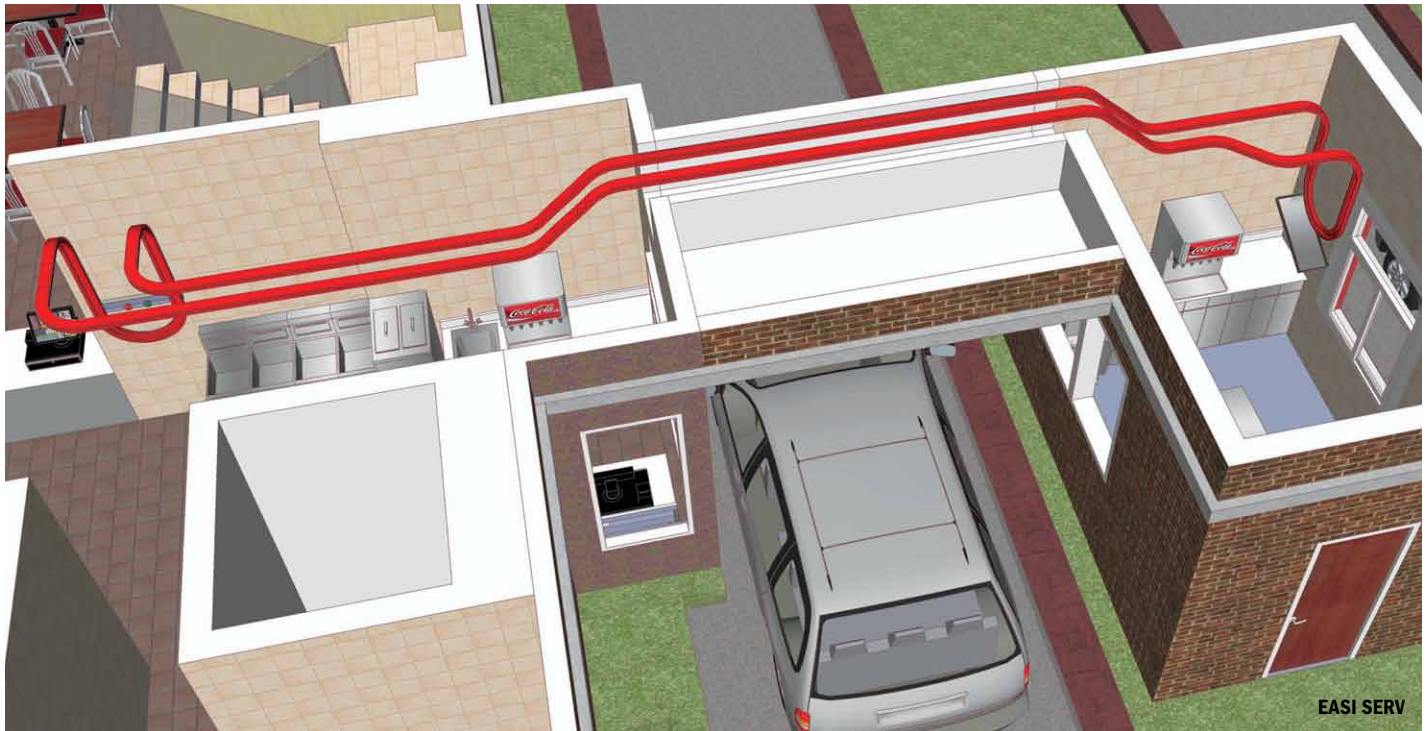
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On feature included in its Insight Track Vehicle Timer Solution to zero in on operational areas that need immediate attention. The platform provides flexible, enhanced performance metrics, tracking data points such as speed of service and sales per hour. The Focus On feature allows managers to quickly locate the slowest segments of their drive-thru operation and either add resources or provide additional training in those areas.

To motivate team members, restaurants are given grades based on their speed-of-service performance against established company time goals. Delphi's Insight Score application allows for competition between multiple restaurants, either by daypart, shift, or past hour to encourage friendly competition. Delphi's experience has shown that having restaurants compete hourly is the best motivator because the teams get a new chance to win each hour.

Timers encourage employees and managers to streamline the drive-thru process, but there are also technologies to speed up service that are almost entirely automated.

Enter **Easi Serv's** Transporter.

"On the surface, it's a simple food carrying conveyor system," says marketing coordinator Brian Hanson. "But what it enables restaurants to do with their layouts is its even greater value, and it's really pretty impressive when you think about it!"

Hanson is referring specifically to the challenges many brands face with real estate develop-

ment and being able to locate the perfect space in competitive markets.

Using the Transporter conveyor system makes a broader variety of layouts suitable for service by allowing restaurants to place additional POS systems or customer service counters completely apart from kitchens—even on different floors of the building—without compromising speed or employees' legs.

The Transporter works to cut down the time it takes to get from the kitchen to the window while creating opportunities to expand the drive-thru operation to a second lane.

This creative use of space affects the bottom line in three areas—improved access to customers with additional drive-thru lanes, increased flexibility of restaurant layout, and saved labor costs by eliminating the need for food runners.

As an added benefit, the highly customizable Transporters take a mere two to five days to be formatted for unique spaces and can be fully operational in a matter of weeks.

"Many of the leading quick-serve chains keep the Transporter top-of-mind for their list of upcoming locations so they can have an agile solution prepared to fit their restaurants into difficult site locations," Hanson says.

By installing the Transporter, multiple levels of savings are made available: from initial real estate savings and flexibility to time savings in getting each order from the kitchen to the cars waiting outside.

Even right at the drive thru POS, there is time

to be saved. **Crane Payment Innovations** (CPI) has delivered a simple and enormously effective method for shaving seconds off of drive-thru transactions with its T-Flex Coin Dispenser.

The T-Flex automatically calculates and dispenses the correct change based on information from the POS, eliminating cashier error. By only requiring a simple USB cable to the POS system, the T-Flex is easily incorporated into the normal cash management process.

While there are immediate time savings and accuracy improvements during each individual transaction, there are even greater savings to be realized at the management level by using the system.

Instead of counting out multiple drawers of change a few times a day, managers simply have to glance at the calibration strips on the product's canister to gauge how much change is in the system.

By addressing these small but ultimately significant service slow spots, the T-Flex increases throughput in the drive thru in a noticeable way.

With new technology, the drive thru is becoming even better at delivering its most valuable services: speed and convenience. And because of the data-gathering and sales-driving nature of the products, this new technology comes as a money-saving opportunity, not a resource drain. In the end, with customers getting better, faster service, and brands improving sales and repeat visits, improved technology represents a win on all fronts for the industry.

Key Players

3M Commercial Solutions

3M Center, 220-12E-04
St. Paul, MN 55144-1000
800-328-0033
www.3m.com/G5



3M continues to be a trusted brand in foodservice communications. The 3M Drive-Thru Headset G5 System is the industry's first wireless headset that allows users to perform in-store service and repairs. The device features new "Haptics Vibration" and battery technologies to increase operational efficiencies and performance, making it extremely durable, reliable, and comfortable. 3M is clearly the Sound Decision.

Awnex

260 Valley Street, Suite 100
Ball Ground, GA 30107
770-704-7140
awnexinc.com



Awnex manufactures and installs awnings, canopies, signs, and other bolt-on architectural elements, which provide both branding and protection. The company is dedicated to the pursuit of perfection in the quality of our organization and the products and services it provides. Awnex operates under three main principles: product quality, giving the customer exactly what is expected, and customer service.

Crane Payment Innovations

1 Executive Park Drive, Suite 202
Bedford, NH 03110
800-225-0580
cranePI.com



Increase profits and reduce shortages with the T-Flex Coin Dispensers from Crane Payment Innovations. The company's T-Flex Coin Dispenser improves speed-of-service, reduces shrink, minimizes cashier errors, and provides efficient cash management. The result is faster transactions for improved customer satisfaction and increased profits. CPI is the leading supplier of a full suite of automated money handling solutions.

Delphi Display Systems

3160 Pullman Street
Costa Mesa, CA 92626
714-825-3400
delphidisplay.com



Delphi strives to be the highest quality provider and thought leader of visual engagement technologies to the restaurant and retail marketplace, with adaptive content delivery systems and business performance tools that optimize and influence customer purchase behavior. Delphi's technol-

ogy solutions enable its customers to Engage, Influence, and Optimize its consumers with creative and profitable strategies. Interesting and unique content displayed on high-quality screens with optimal business intelligence systems provide the best platform for customers.

Easi-Serv

Unit 302, Building D
6741 Cariboo Road
Burnaby, BC
Canada V3N 4A3
1-888-591-0106
easi-serv.com



Easi-Serv was founded in 1987 and designs and manufactures unique conveyor systems that transport restaurant food orders from the preparation area to a remote point of sale, speeding customer service and saving labor. The food order transporter systems have gained notice in Europe and Asia, where the technology makes restaurant development possible in urban centers.

Everbrite

PO Box 20020
Greenfield, WI 53220
414-529-3500
everbrite.com



For more than 85 years, Everbrite has been providing innovative visual identification and LED lighting solutions to leading companies throughout the world. Everbrite is one of the largest full-service visual identification companies in the U.S. Headquartered in Greenfield, Wisconsin, Everbrite has seven sales and manufacturing facilities strategically located throughout the U.S. and abroad. Everbrite's state-of-the-art Technology Center, adjacent to our Corporate Headquarters, is dedicated to the development of new products and processes.

HM Electronics

14110 Stowe Drive
Poway, CA 92064
858-535-6000
hme.com



HM Electronics is an innovative technology company focused on enhancing productivity and customer service. Restaurants worldwide depend on HME for clear, reliable, and scalable communication solutions and robust software solutions. HME's technological leadership results from the breadth and expertise of its engineering staff, and a dedication to ongoing research. HME's R&D efforts are focused on the design and integration of communication, wireless, and software solutions.

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STATION BURGERS

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topped with lettuce, tomato, onion, pickles and cheese
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Black Bean Burger Combo
choose two sides
\$8.50 600-875 cal

Seven Burger Combo
with fruit cup or fries
\$7.25 800/950 cal

Sides
French Fries \$1.00 250 cal
Onion Rings \$3.00 375 cal
Fruit Cup \$1.00 100 cal
Side Salad \$2.50 150 cal

Toppings
Cheese - american, swiss, cheddar, pepper-jack \$1.25 50-75 cal
Guacamole \$1.00 150 cal
Bacon \$2.00 300 cal
Onion Rings \$2.00 300 cal

ADD A DRINK
Regular 16oz soft drink 0-200 cal
\$1.00

2,000 calories a day is used for general nutrition advice, but calorie needs may vary. Written nutrition information available upon request.

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Key Players

HyperActive Technologies

5490 Campbells Run Road
Pittsburgh, PA 15205
877-334-9737
gohyper.com



HyperActive is committed to creating the leading innovations that help restaurant partners achieve greater throughput and profitability at the lowest cost of ownership. HyperActive works to be a company of firsts, delivering technological solutions such as Power over Ethernet for its leading Order Confirmation Displays and cloud-computing drive-thru management systems that continue to move the market. For more than a decade, innovation has been the hallmark of HyperActive Technologies' rapid growth, reflecting a culture of shared objectives and technological focus.

ITSENCLUSURES

271 Westech Drive
Mt. Pleasant, PA 15666
1-800-423-9911
itsenclosures.com



ITSENCLUSURES designs and builds durable computer, electronic, and display enclosures solutions. Since 1985, ITSENCLUSURES has been helping companies protect their technology investments and realize the maximum life cycle of equipment. Its NEMA-rated enclosures are ideal for any environment where dust, dirt, and exposure to liquids or corrosives threaten the performance of restaurant equipment.

Mood Media

3318 Lakemont Blvd
Fort Mill, SC 29708
800-331-3340
moodmedia.com



From personalized digital signage templates to custom content, digital promo boards, and virtual displays, Visual Solutions from Mood transform the way customers see restaurants. With more than 80 years of experience working with a wide variety of businesses, Mood has built a reputation off of attention to detail and rigorous focus on delivering a consistent brand promise.

NEC

500 Park Blvd, Suite 1100
Itasca, IL 60143
necdisplay.com
630-467-3000



NEC is a leading technology integrator providing solutions that improve the way people work and communicate. NEC delivers integrated solutions for

society that are aligned with its customers' priorities to create new value for people, businesses, and society, with a special focus on safety, security, and efficiency. NEC delivers one of the industry's strongest and most innovative portfolios of communications, analytics, security, biometrics, and technology solutions that unleash customers' productivity potential. Through these solutions, NEC combines its best-in-class solutions and technology, and leverages a robust partner ecosystem to solve today's most complex business problems.

NCR Corporation

1-877-794-7237
ncr.com



NCR runs everyday transactions that make people's lives easier. QSR customers use a wide range of NCR products, including the Accuvue Order Confirmation Board, and Vitalicast Digital Menu Boards to drive revenue and enhance the customer experience. NCR is committed to driving exceptional business results while remaining creative and curious, embracing the power of new ideas and perspectives.

Panasonic

2 Riverfront Plaza
Newark, NJ 07102
877-803-8492
panasonic.com/foodservices



Panasonic custom designs the best integrated foodservice solutions in the industry, ranging from fixed and mobile POS workstations and digital signage to surveillance, wireless headsets, handheld order-taking devices, and more. Improved operational efficiencies, better customer service, analytics, targeted promotions and reduced losses are just a few ways Panasonic is engineering a better world.

Peerless-AV

2300 White Oak Circle
Aurora, IL 60502
800-865-2112
peerless-av.com



Peerless-AV focuses on total solutions, not just products. The company manufactures and tests all of its products in its U.S.-based facility. Peerless is a voting member of the leading industry standards organizations, giving it a full understanding of new standards and compliance issues—knowledge that it infuses in its products and passes on to its clients. Peerless also helps its clients stay at the forefront of their industries, offering expertise in their specific markets to ensure that they stay on the cutting edge.

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MOOD:

Key Players

Ready-Access

1815 Arthur Drive
Chicago, IL
800-621-5045
ready-access.com



For more than 30 years, Ready-Access has been an innovator and leader in the manufacturing and distribution of pass-thru window systems. In 1977, Ready-Access developed the original bump-out style window to introduce quickness and efficiency of a drive-thru system for one of the country's largest fast-food restaurant chains. Since then, Ready-Access continues to grow with increased demand and remains a leader in the industry.

R.F. Technologies Inc.

330 Lexington Drive
Buffalo Grove, IL 60089
800-598-2370
rftechno.com



Since 1989, RFT has been providing the quick-service industry with guaranteed drive-thru solutions. Products and services include complete drive-thru system sales, drive-thru replacement parts, drive-thru repairs, digital surveillance, display systems, and Sirius/XM Radio. RFT is an authorized nationwide distributor for many industry-leading brands. As one of the most experienced independent service centers, RFT customers can always expect excellent customer service with same-day service on repairs along with free shipping.

Samsung

105 Challenger Rd Fl 3
Ridgefield Park, NJ 07660
201-229-4000
samsung.com/us



For more than 70 years, Samsung has been dedicated to making a better world through diverse businesses. Its flagship company, Samsung Electronics, leads the global market in high-tech electronics manufacturing and digital media. Through innovative, reliable products and services; talented people; a responsible approach to business and global citizenship; and collaboration with its partners and customers, Samsung is taking the world in imaginative new directions.

Summit Innovations

18 Keysborough Close,
Fiveways Business Centre
Keysborough, Victoria, Australia 3173
300-478-664
summitinnovations.com



Summit offers solutions to optimize the end-user environment, speed of service, improve staff productivity, and increase customer satisfaction. Summit is a company with a team of highly experienced professionals from the electronic communication and technology industry. The company provides drive-thru timing solutions with a breadth of features and unparalleled accuracy and reliability to quick-service restaurant brands across the globe.

Techknow Inc.

393 Mayfield Road.
Duncan, SC 29334
800-427-1166
goteknow.com



Techknow designs and manufactures drive-thru order confirmation systems and drive-thru timer systems for the quick-service restaurant industry. It's Techknow's priority to improve communications between clients and their customers. The sole purpose of this company is to generate a profit by providing quality products and impeccable services that enhance millions of personal experiences, one at a time. Techknow's strategy is to listen better, innovate further, and implement faster than its competition.

The Howard Company

1375 North Barker Road
Brookfield, WI 53045
800-782-6222
howardcompany.com



The Howard Company, founded in 1950, is an employee-owned point-of-purchase display manufacturer. The company specializes in menuboards and foodservice products as well as permanent and semi-permanent retail merchandising displays. The Howard Company prides itself on supplier stability, quality menuboards or displays, competitive pricing, and a dependable customer service department.