

Boar's Head Deli Makes the Most of Self-Order Kiosks

Technology from NEXTEP SYSTEMS helps one restaurant increase ticket averages.

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The players

NEXTEP SYSTEMS, based in Troy, Mich., is a leading provider of self-service solutions for restaurants, casinos, airports, sporting venues, grocery stores and other high-volume food-service and entertainment venues. NEXTEP's core business revolves around self-service kiosks, online ordering and digital menu boards.

Concessions International LLC, based in Atlanta, is a leading food-service concessionaire with operations in eight airports around the country. The family-owned company operates five restaurants, including a Boar's Head Deli, in the newly opened Edward H. McNamara terminal at the Detroit Metro Airport.

The challenge

Boar's Head Deli offers a wide assortment of sandwiches, salads, soups and sides using only the finest-quality ingredients. Sandwiches are made to order on a choice of freshly baked breads.

When Boar's Head Deli opened its first airport location in the John F. Kennedy Airport in New York, it partnered with

NEXTEP SYSTEMS to deploy self-order kiosks. The company was so pleased with the results that it insists on including kiosks in every new airport location it opens.

When Boar's Head Deli, in partnership with Concessions International, began developing a new location near Gate A-72 in the McNamara Terminal of the Detroit Metro Airport, the company asked NEXTEP SYSTEMS to develop and install self-order kiosks and digital menu boards for the restaurant.



The Boar's Head Deli in the Detroit Metro Airport needed a way to offer speedy, accurate service to travelers. Kiosks and digital menu boards from NEXTEP SYSTEMS offered a solution.

“Boar’s Head officials made it clear that from their experience when they used self-order kiosks, they sold more sandwiches, toppings and sides,” said Tommy Woycik, president of NEXTEP SYSTEMS. “They were adamant that kiosks would be a part of this project.”

The solution

Boar’s Head Deli opened in the McNamara Terminal in April 2009. The deployment posed some challenges, however.

“Because I’m in a union environment and all of my employees are union employees, there was a lot of concern that the kiosk would eliminate jobs,” said Rhonda Kraleman, general manager of Concessions Michigan, the Concessions International subsidiary that operates the restaurants at the Detroit Metro Airport.

Kraleman explained to her employees that because the kiosk automatically upsells as the customer places an order, ticket averages would be higher and use of the kiosk would actually create more jobs. Further, kiosk ordering typically shortens lines, which attracts more travelers to the concept, requiring additional staff in fulfillment related functions.

Although they reluctantly accepted Kraleman’s reasoning, employees weren’t entirely convinced. As a compromise, Concessions Michigan installed a single free-standing kiosk in front of and to the left of the restaurant counter.

Unfortunately, that location proved to be somewhat less than a success.

“It was there for several months, but the kiosk was not being used at all in the location where it was,” Kraleman

The kiosk automatically upsells as the customer places an order, leading to higher ticket averages. Further, kiosk ordering typically shortens lines, which attracts more travelers to the concept.

said. “That’s when Tommy Woycik and (NEXTEP SYSTEMS’ director of customer service) Ryan McWhirter came back out and we revisited everything.”

At NEXTEP SYSTEMS’ recommendation, the company replaced the free-standing kiosk with a single counter kiosk, alongside the restaurant’s two cash registers. Usage immediately increased more than tenfold and Kraleman soon added a second counter kiosk as well as eliminated one of the cash registers.

The results

Concessions Michigan and NEXTEP SYSTEMS continued working together to maximize the effectiveness of the self-order kiosks.

During the brief period where the restaurant operated with a single kiosk and two cash registers, customers automatically gravitated to the cashier. When the partners removed the second cash register, they re-organized the layout of the counter so customers would reach the register only after they had used the kiosks.

“Usage of the kiosks has gone up to about 60 or 70 percent of all our transactions,” Kraleman said. “There are still customers who insist on ordering at the cashier station, but my employees are getting used to handling those situations and helping the guest use the kiosk.”

And although the free-standing kiosk offered customers the ability to pay with a credit card, that function was moved to the cash register, resulting in a faster ordering process on the kiosks.

“We wanted every single customer to have some contact with a real person,” Kralemann said. “That’s why ultimately we decided to just use the kiosks as order takers.”

Despite the somewhat rocky start, Kralemann ultimately became a believer in self-order kiosks. Not only are ticket averages for orders placed at the kiosk higher than those of orders placed at the register, but employees can offer better customer service. Because the kiosks handle mundane functions, employees can spend more time doing important tasks such as talking with customers, helping to prepare food and making sure facilities are clean and well stocked.

“Although the kiosk might displace a live person, it displaces them into a higher value position where they can better serve the customer,” Woycik said. “Ultimately, that provides a better experience for travelers. When travelers have a good experience at your concept, they keep coming back.”

Today, the Boar's Head Deli in the McNamara Terminal serves as a prototype



Approximately 60 to 70 percent of customers are using the kiosks, leading to higher ticket averages and better customer service.

for other Boar's Head locations under development. The restaurant often plays host to restaurant officials who want to see how self-order kiosks can be used effectively, Kralemann says.

***About the sponsor:** NEXTEP SYSTEMS, based in Troy, Mich., is a leading provider of self-service solutions for restaurants, casinos, airports, stadiums, arenas, delicatessens and other high-volume food-service venues. NEXTEP's core business revolves around self-service kiosks, online ordering and digital menu boards.*