

Repairs & Maintenance

Mike Byrd

Cool Comfort

How commercial window film can improve customer experience

To be successful in the restaurant business, good food isn't enough. Providing an environment that complements the cuisine and suits the customers also plays a big role. In many cases, commercial window film can help enhance the overall customer experience in several ways.

Comfort

Windows are a major asset to a restaurant. They can provide stunning views and create a comfortable atmosphere. However, they can also cause glare and temperature-control issues. Professionally installed window film can help. Film blocks the sun's glare and allows patrons and staff to stay comfortable. Window film rejects up to 99 percent of the sun's harmful UV rays. This comfort also translates into more control over HVAC bills.

Darryl Benge is the General Manager of the Amalie Arena in Tampa, Fla., home to the Tampa Bay Lightning and Firestick Grill. The west side of the restaurant features a 200-foot-long wall of glass windows that offer impressive views of the Tampa skyline. The afternoon sun can be brutal, causing customers to complain about the heat and glare, and often request to be re-seated. Re-seating is difficult because the restaurant is often at maximum capacity before a game or concert. In addition, the restaurant's cooling costs were high.

"You could really feel it during the summer months," Benge said. "You can feel the heat coming through the glass, and customers would ask us to turn down the air conditioning."

The solution to this problem was simple: Install window film.

Film was applied to 4,600 square feet of glass, reducing the sun's glare and increasing the restaurant's energy efficiency. Customers and employees immediately noticed the difference. Customers were thrilled with how comfortable their dining experience had become, even during the hottest Florida days. Film also provided a great solution without affecting the beautiful skyline view.

Solar-control window film, such as the product used for the Firestick Grill, blocks 99 percent of UV rays, regardless of their visible light transmittance (VLT), also referred to as shade. Window film VLTs can range from 20 to 70 percent. The higher the VLT, the more light is allowed into the space. For large buildings, property managers should consider the surrounding glass and select a film that will best match the existing glass to maintain a cohesive look for the building.

While most professional solar-control film provides excellent UV protection, darker window film generally blocks more heat. However, today's technology has advanced to a point that many medium and light window films can provide an impressive reduction of solar heat gain. Comfort situations vary; therefore, it's best to have a professional window film dealer assess the particular situation and concerns. Addressing the solar issue with the correct product will provide the best solution, as it did at Fire stick Grill.

"You can still see the sun—it's nice and bright—but we're not feeling the solar radiation coming through the windows," Benge said. "The window film has made a tremendous difference."

In addition, because of the window film's ability to block up to 80 percent of the sun's heat, the temperature of the restaurant was easier to control. Fire stick Grill also partnered with its energy provider to receive a \$1,500 rebate for installing the window film. Florida is one of many states that offer rebates for professionally installed window film. To find out what rebates your state offers, visit <http://easyenergysavingtips.com/energy-efficiency-rebates-incentives-home>.

Safety

Window film adds a layer of safety and protection by helping to keep the glass intact. Should an intruder try to break through the window, the glass will not easily shatter, which can delay and deter an intruder. Window film also protects the building in the event of a natural disaster. Film will help hold the glass together, keeping dangerous glass shards out of the restaurant.

Protection from Graffiti and Vandalism

Some types of film offer a layer of protection against vandalism, a big benefit for restaurants in well-trafficked areas or cities with a busy night life. Graffiti removal and replacement of windows and doors due to vandalism can be costly. Graffiti film can protect windows, doors, bathroom mirrors and elevators.

Protection of Furnishings

Window film also can protect valuable furnishings, fabrics, flooring and art work from the damaging effects of the sun. Restaurants may also have retail displays in front of the windows, offering higher-end or specialized products that could be damaged and even destroyed by the sun's heat. In the case of The Whalley Wine Shop in England, several bottles of wine heated up so much that the corks actually popped off.

Since its inception in 2010, the shop always struggled with the sun's heat coming through the large store front windows, resulting in overheated and spoiled wines. Wine connoisseurs are persnickety, so the company knew they had to do something to keep their customers happy.

The solution, again, was window film. A premium solar-control window film was applied to the large windows at the front of the store. The film rejects large levels of solar heat, yet allows high levels of visible light through the windows, offering a clear view.

Do it Right

To get the most out of your window film investment, the film needs to be professionally installed. The best option is to contact a local dealer and explain your unique needs and challenges. From there, they can provide a quote and schedule the installation. Prices for professionally installed window film can vary greatly, but restaurant owners can expect the investment to be in the \$10 to \$30 per square foot range, depending on the thickness of film installed, as well as possible attachment systems that may be used. The difficulty of the installation also plays a role in determining costs.

Remember, customer experience is everything in the restaurant industry. Without full buy-in from the patrons and staff, a restaurant will not be successful. If the sun's glare and harmful rays are causing headaches for guests and staff, it's time to explore how window film can improve customer satisfaction and comfort.

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