

Quick Fixes For Kitchen Inefficiencies

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How to remove 3 hurdles impacting your facility and bottom line

It's 6 a.m., and a pipe in one of your kitchens bursts. At 6:02 a.m., the fire inspector calls you to announce a surprise visit at one of your other restaurant locations.

From managing remodels and new equipment roll outs to maintaining operational efficiency and cleanliness, restaurant facility managers have a lot on their plates. They move from crisis to crisis, leaving little to no time to strategize a long-term solution for various kitchen inefficiencies.

Thanks to many recent advancements, technology can drastically reduce the strain in the commercial kitchen, making it easier to manage and maintain in the long run. Here are the top three hurdles interfering with optimal kitchen operations and how they can be tackled to improve your facility as a whole.

Numerous Service Providers

Managing and scheduling multiple vendors to service your facility's kitchens can be overwhelming. Not only do your teams have to work around each vendor's schedule, you also aren't guaranteed a job well done and often end up guesstimating service costs. In the end, using numerous service providers increases operating costs and disrupts service.

For example, the accumulation of grease in your hoods, flues and fans as a result of using cooking oil is inevitable and poses a significant risk of igniting into flames. Traditionally, a cleaning crew comes in on a quarterly basis, shuts down operations to scrape away grease build up with harsh chemicals and leaves behind a mess or damaged equipment. Imagine the possibilities of a single solution that automates the entire process, cleaning your hood, flue and fan every day to prevent hazardous grease build up. If you can find a single-source provider with a national footprint that can service all of your locations around the country, you can better anticipate service costs and reduce the number of services you use. It will make a world of difference in your operations, reducing property damage and stabilizing costs, and ultimately contributing to the customer experience in your facility.

Inefficient Appliances

There's nothing worse than inefficient appliances continually demanding your attention and keeping hungry customers waiting. Moreover, multiple wash cycles and appliances that haven't been calibrated lead to higher utility costs and poor time management. As a facility manager, you are responsible for keeping equipment and appliances in prime working condition for extended performance and premium food quality.

Smart appliances are great. New internet of things (IoT) platforms that track these appliances on a single platform, are even better. They make it easier for facility managers to connect equipment, monitor operations in real time and analyze equipment performance to reach a sustainable solution. While upfront costs can be high, numerous options are available to consider and research. There are even smarter appliances that feature online portals to track daily usage and production 24/7.

It's crucial to take time to formalize a preventive maintenance program to maximize the life of your tools. Help your managers train back-of-house employees to perform routine maintenance checks to keep everything working safely. This approach can help reduce downtime and the total cost of ownership for your restaurant locations.

Dirty Jobs

From frequent oil spills to unsightly rendering tanks attracting pests, the manual process of managing fryer oil is messy, demanding and dangerous for restaurant employees, placing a sizable burden on the facility. The old way of handling oil significantly wears on equipment, increasing the number of repairs needed, and creates frequent messes, requiring power-washing to remove oil stains from concrete, unclogging drains and much more.

There is a better way to manage cooking oil in your facilities that can cut back the number of equipment repairs needed and keep your facility consistently clean. Implement an automated system that completely eliminates the need for employees to manually handle oil at any point in the oil life cycle. Partner with the right vendor for this technology to increase the control you have over your operations and reduce costs by reallocating labor to more productive tasks. Automated systems not only replace tasks that your team routinely executes, but also enables you to anticipate service costs and avoid unforeseen expenses and potential issues.

The Bottom Line

Modernizing facility kitchens does not have to be a scary, all-at-once venture. There are small steps restaurant facility managers can take today to create a smarter back of the house and enable their teams to function at optimal operational efficiency. Think about the research as your starting point, know what your options are when it comes to updated technologies and create your long-term plan. Remember, technology can be your best friend in ensuring a clean and cost-effective facility year over year.

Tina Swanson joined Restaurant Technologies in 2012 and currently leads the customer experience, account management and sales teams in order to maximize oil management and handling at each restaurant facility.