

Organizational Restructuring in the Restaurant Industry Post COVID-19

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In the 2 to 3 years it could take for the economy to get back on its feet, restaurants have an opportunity to restructure their venues to match the “new normal.” Here are some of the changes I believe we will see as the world reopens for business.

Customer Expectations

It seems obvious that customer expectations will change in the aftermath of Covid-19. Both hotel guests and restaurant diners will be more particular when it comes to safety, cleanliness and overall quality. This will heighten scrutiny into every hospitality venue, as well as the venue’s suppliers and partners.

Customers will also expect venues to rely less on imported goods and use more locally-produced items. Restaurants will make more of their ingredients inhouse, and higher standards will prevail for cooking and preparation.

Changes in Hiring Requirements

The changes in customer expectations and higher levels of scrutiny will open up a number of new positions in hospitality. Venues will need oversight staff in quality control and inspection roles, with the appropriate training and experience to be held accountable for company reputations.

Cleanliness and sterilization will be achieved through a combination of expanded cleaning teams and technology, which workers will need to understand thoroughly. Ultra-violet sterilization techniques, for example, may be used to ensure linens, cutlery and other equipment are sterile. These methods require careful operation to be effective and safe.

After the push towards working from home that we’ve seen during the pandemic, it’s likely many administrative personnel will lobby to continue the practice. Over the long-term, this will reduce the requirement for office space. Restaurant chains will either benefit by saving on premises or be able to adapt the space for profitable purposes.

How Food Service Will Change

With the transformation of many full-service restaurants to include a take-out and delivery model, this is a trend that’s likely to remain popular. Venues will be under pressure to provide quality service within these parameters. They will need to find ways to differentiate themselves, which could lead to interesting and innovative developments.

Restaurants serving food and beverages on the premises will experience an increased demand for positions like sous chefs, who can prepare more of their basic ingredients onsite. Seating plans will need to change to accommodate social distancing, and it’s anybody’s guess whether human servers with face masks will be acceptable or another method will need to be found. Self-service is potentially acceptable because it mostly puts the onus on the customer for personal safety, but it will be interesting to see how this could be applied in fine dining establishments.

Summary

In an ideal world, the restaurant industry would reopen after the Covid-19 pandemic to hordes of diners hungry to make up for lost time. The reality, however, is that a large percentage of former customers simply won’t have money to spend dining out.

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A Chance to Re-Group

For companies in the restaurant industry, this will be a good chance to re-group. It's unlikely many organizations, except perhaps the large chains, actually have policies in place that could deal with a situation like the pandemic. So if you want to create new positions to improve efficiencies, now is the time.

Some laid-off and furloughed staff will return to work after it's over. Others will have decided to move on. At least a percentage of existing positions will be replaced by technology, while some roles could be consolidated under new job descriptions.

The Final Analysis

Covid-19 has opened up a new world for us and it's unlikely we'll ever go back to the old one 100%. Hospitality has always been at the forefront of innovation, and the end of the pandemic will be no exception.

How are you planning to approach the new normal, and what will you require from your employees to achieve your goals?

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About Court Williams



Court Williams is Chief Executive Officer of HVS Executive Search based in New York and has over 30+ years of retained Hospitality Executive Search experience within the Hotel, Restaurant, and Travel/Leisure industries. He began his career in the restaurant industry after graduating from Cornell's Hotel School gaining operational experience prior to launching a career track in Human Resources with an international restaurant company. Having gained experience in executive recruitment from the brand side, the desire to work with a broader range of hospitality clients led Court to a career in retained executive search beginning in 1990. Court has expertise in leading senior hospitality executive searches across all functional areas including Board Director, CEO, Operations, Human Resources, Marketing, Finance, Development, Culinary and Supply Chain. His client base includes private equity firms, hotel management companies, restaurant companies, travel technology brands and leisure venues. Court also leads the global growth strategy for HVS Executive Search and is on the Advisory Board of Shift One. He remains an active Cornell alumnus and is a student coach with Cornell University's Hospitality Leadership Development Institute, as well as The Samuel Curtis Johnson School of Management's MBA Marketing program. Court earned his Bachelor of Science degree in Hotel Administration from Cornell University. For more information contact Court at .

