

A group of people are seated at a long wooden table in a restaurant, engaged in conversation. The scene is dimly lit, with warm ambient lighting. In the foreground, a man in a light-colored shirt is looking towards the right. Behind him, a woman in a yellow top is smiling and looking towards the right. Further down the table, a man in a grey shirt is looking towards the right. In the foreground on the right, a woman with her hands clasped is looking towards the left. The background shows a window and a framed picture on the wall.

How to Manage a Restaurant in Today's Competitive Environment

 toast

If you're reading this ebook, congratulations!

Chances are you've risen through the ranks and gotten yourself in a position to lead a restaurant. Maybe you've worked your way up from a front- or back-of-the-house position you took up years ago, where you first found a passion for working in a restaurant. Maybe you've been a part of a family business, and it's always been the plan for you to take the reigns. Maybe you just bought a restaurant, or are so successful that you're opening up a new one.

No matter what the case, there's one thing to remember: you've earned this position. You're in this industry and it's your job to make a difference.

However, as a wise uncle of a superhero once said, "with great power comes great responsibility." Managing a restaurant is a great job to have, but requires a lot of work if you want to do it successfully.

Whether you're an established restaurant manager or a fresh one, you experienced a defining moment when you officially became a manager. All those years of looking up to great managers and looking down on the worst ones (we've all been there) finally came to fruition in that second. But now, you realize that you had never imagined how different the role would be from your expectations. This is because restaurants now operate in a competitive environment that at one point did not exist. All that time spent observing other managers somehow seems useless because they managed in a different time.

Here at Toast, we fully understand the difficulties of managing a restaurant today, and we strive to ease that job with innovative technology. But there's more to management than reliable technology (which we'll get to later). Restaurant management revolves around human interactions, both interpersonal and intrapersonal.

The first and last thing you must manage is essential - and that is yourself. Once you are in a place where you can manage yourself, you have taken the first step towards becoming a great manager for others.



The other main areas that you should focus your management efforts on are

- **Your staff**, who act as the face of your restaurant and a representation of your management.
- **Your money**, so you don't let your doors close due to financial problems.
- **Your food and inventory**, so you can keep customers coming back for consistently great food that never disappoints.
- **Your technology**, so you can truly learn how to be a modern restaurant manager.

Naturally, every single other aspect of your restaurant can be managed as well. However, here lies the risk of micromanaging - a task that makes your staff, your customers, and yourself more stressed out. Instead, we'll group these aspects of your job together as "everything else," and give you some advice on how to put systems in place to avoid becoming overwhelmed with these tasks.

Once you finish this book, we think you'll have a more solid grasp on how to be an effective restaurant manager in a world where it's becoming increasingly difficult to be a successful restaurateur. This book covers a lot of ground in the restaurant industry, and so we believe its contents will be most beneficial to more seasoned restaurant managers and owners. However, even if you're relatively new at this job, we encourage you to read on! Many of these points will come up in your daily interactions during the shifts you manage.

Hopefully, with a little clarity, guidance, and advice, you'll see more satisfaction and sanity - both in your personal and professional life.

Let's get started!





Table of Contents

1. Managing Yourself

- Getting Organized ...2
- Admitting Your Flaws ...3
- Owning Your Strengths ...5

2. Managing Your Team

- Hiring ...7
- Enforcing ...8
- Adjusting ...8

3. Managing Your Money

- Employees ...11
- Menu & Pricing ...12
- Accounting ...12
- Finding a Balance ...13

4. Managing Your Food & Supplies

- Pre-Deliver ...15
- Delivery ...15
- Post-Deliver ...16
- Supply Management ...16


5. Managing Your Technology

6. Managing Everything Else

- Atmosphere ...20
- Customer Experience ...21
- Safety ...22
- Appearance ...22
- Brand ...23

Conclusion

Chapter 1: Managing Yourself



Good leadership and culture starts at the top. As a restaurant owner, it's your job to set expectations for your restaurant, as well as for each position at your restaurant. This starts with a great leader - and in this case, that's you!

Getting Organized

When everyone is rallied around a certain goal and buys into the culture of your restaurant (both of which are set by you), amazing service will come easier.

While management is very much a state of mind, there must be a framework. For example, there are certain things that must be in writing.

- **Business Plan:** This is the foundation of your restaurant. Even if you never wrote one when starting your restaurant, you can still draft up a business plan to understand the past, present, and future of your company. [You can use this template to get started.](#)
- **Mission Statement:** This is a one-paragraph explanation of what the purpose of your restaurant is. Is it your mission to provide local food to the masses? Improve restaurant service? Act as a community resource?
- **Company History:** Understanding the past is the key to a successful future. Jot down a quick overview of how and why the restaurant began, including co-founders and others involved.
- **Financial Goals:** You may have already highlighted these in a restaurant business plan, but things change in this industry! Keep this document updated with long- and short-term financial goals for restaurant sales, profit & loss, and more based on how you are performing financially.
- **Positioning Statement:** Who are you targeting? What makes your restaurant special? [Draft a formal positioning statement](#) (different from the mission statement) to figure out what your - you guessed it - position is in your competitive environment.

If you don't have these written down, get started on them immediately. According to [this study](#), people who wrote down their goals accomplished 33% more than those who did not write down their goals. They also checked on these goals weekly, staying accountable with reminders from a friend. If you don't have restaurant goals, or if it's been a while since you've looked at these, give them a refresher and ask yourself the following questions:

- Are these still my goals?
- Do these fit the culture I have in mind for my restaurant?
- Are these words in line with how I see my business?

If you're not happy with the answers to those questions, it may be time to reorganize your thoughts so your restaurant can move forward.

Admitting Your Flaws

This job isn't easy. Restaurant managers can work up to [15 hours each day](#). This can take a toll on your management, because let's face it - you are not Super(wo)man. When the hours add up, you can get tired and lose focus during the dinner rush. Take time to manage your time. When you get burned out, your performance as a manager will suffer.

The frustrating fact of this role is that your job is never really over. Any time not spent discovering ways to better your restaurant - such as staying in tune with industry trends, studying your market, reviewing your numbers, and contemplating strategies for growth - is an opportunity cost. All successes - and failures - will likely fall on you.

Think back on that euphoric feeling when you've had an awesome night. The place was packed, but the customers didn't seem to care. The staff was smiling the whole time through, the food that came out looked perfect, and you hear your employees complimenting each others, saying "good job." That's a moment you can take pride in. But then there are nights where your best people are just...off. Your chefs make four or five mistakes in a row, a server drops a plate, and you have at least two tables requesting to speak with you. Those are the nights that stick with you. Those are the nights that probably pushed you into downloading this ebook.

It's times like these when you need to admit to yourself that you are not perfect. Accepting this fact - not ignoring it - is what makes a great manager. When things don't go the way you planned, look to improve in these areas:

- **Patience:** Because acting rashly can lead to bigger and worse problems. Be patient! Understand that there will occasionally be holdups and delays, and when there's a glaring issue, make a note of it and give yourself and your team a set time frame toward fixing it so it isn't a problem in the future.
- **Ask for help:** Again, you are not flawless. Remember, your team is composed of those who do their jobs on a daily basis. They know how to help out in the areas that you may not. If you hire correctly (which we'll revisit in the next section), you'll have a team of individuals who will be happy to lend themselves where needed. This empowers your staff and lets them know you - as their manager - look to them when they are needed.
- **Pitch in:** It's easy to stand on the sidelines complaining and criticizing. Is there a backlog of food ready to be brought to the tables? Don't yell at your servers, pick up a plate and bring it to where it belongs. Is the busser overwhelmed with an influx of dirty tops? Don't tell them to go faster - grab a cloth and get to work.

When things go exactly as you had planned, be selfless and humble. Modern managers know the value of a team and always give credit where credit is due.

These practices will help you serve as someone your employees can emulate. Ask yourself - would you rather have your staff base their behaviors off a humble manager with integrity, or of someone who is too afraid to admit to their flaws?



Owning Your Strengths

Managing a restaurant involves more than planning inventory, telling others what to do, and making decisions for the restaurant's future.

It may sound corny, but it takes a certain personality to be a restaurant manager. You can't expect to see your restaurant succeed just by being a figurehead - you need to take action and capitalize on your strengths.

Here are four characteristics you should adopt if you want to strengthen your management style.

- **Passion:** "I have a passion for restaurants. This is where it all comes together...I love the restaurant industry!"
- [Donald Burns](#), The Restaurant Coach.

First and foremost, you should always be passionate in this role. If you've managed a restaurant for some time now, you know how thankless this job can be. Sometimes, the thing that gets you through that shift is your passion for this role. Seeing guests leave with a smile or overhearing them at the table mention how much they enjoyed their meal can be your biggest reward. Maintaining this passion in all that you do is what will make you stand out from the restaurant managers who are fine with their restaurant being "just okay."

- **Self-control:** This industry is incredibly fast-paced. It's easy to lose your head and make a rash decision that could come back to bite you. Remember to be level-headed and have self-control in all of your dealings and decisions. Think everything through, be methodical, and have a reason for all that you do.
- **Willing to take risks:** This may seem contradictory from the last point, but it's not. Being a great restaurateur means making your restaurant stand out in a positive way. To accomplish this, plan and take calculated risks to see a payoff. Add that new menu item. Try a new system in your restaurant. Be innovative! If you don't evolve, neither will your restaurant.
- **Proactivity:** "We all need help at some point or other; offer it, before someone has to ask for it."
- [Chris Hill](#), Chef and Entrepreneur.

It's so easy to be reactive as a manager. Waiting for a situation to arise and then responding to it seems like the natural course of action. But what if you formulate a response to a problem before it even arises? Wouldn't it alleviate so much stress if you had a process in place for when your credit card processor goes down, if there's a conflict with customers, or if your supplier mixes up delivery dates? Proactivity allows you to stay ahead of any problems by being prepared.

Chapter 2: Managing Others

Now that you understand how to confidently and effectively manage yourself, it's time to pass off some of the work to others. The service your staff provides will either be the root of your success or the cause of your restaurant's downfall.

Staff management can be broken down into three areas: hiring, enforcing, and adjusting.

Hiring calls on you to carefully bring a worker on board who matches your communication style, will work well on a team, and will have a positive attitude towards the industry, your restaurant, and of course, your guests.

Enforcing requires you to manage your employees just the right amount to ensure consistent performance from your staff.

Adjusting means recognizing the need to fix or enhance the performance of your staff, and the way you manage employees through this process can make all the difference in staff retention and satisfaction.

Hiring

“You can lead a horse to water, but you can’t make it drink.” There’s a reason this saying has stood the test of time, and it’s because it still makes sense - especially in the context of your restaurant’s employees. A great team is determined by who you bring onto your staff. They are the ones who will prepare food, interact with customers, and serve as the face of your business.

Your restaurant will not be able to run on its own if your employees aren’t as passionate about it as you are. Therefore, you should be giving a lot of thought to every employee you hire. Have a list of questions you ask when interviewing. Here are a few to get you thinking:

- Why do you want to work in this industry?
- What does “hospitality” mean to you?
- Tell me about your most memorable hospitality experience.
- Tell me about a conflict you’ve had to deal with involving your co-workers, and how you handled it.
- Why would you make a good addition to this team?
- [Find more restaurant interview questions here](#)

It’s essential to gain more from an interview than answers to these questions. Gauge whether or not you can really manage these people. Employee management is about sharing a mission and empowering your personnel to be a reflection of the restaurant and an extension of yourself. If the best chef in the world doesn’t match your idea of a manageable employee, even they might not work well in your restaurant.

As a rule of thumb, it may be wise not to hire these people:

- Those who have bad references.
- Those who dodge your questions.
- Those who don’t seem passionate about the industry or the work.
- Those who appear confrontational or disrespectful in the interview.



Enforcing

Once you hire the best people, it's your job to hold them to the standards they were hired on.

Managing your staff is tough. You typically have a group of completely different workers at any given time, all of whom will require a different level and style of management. By getting to know your staff as individuals, you will be better equipped to match their communication style and manage them in the best way possible.

Manage too little and you run the risk of a slacking staff. Manage too much and you're seen as overly controlling. Every individual staff member and every team will require different management, which requires you to understand the best ways to interact with everybody in your staff. This is why communication is key between employer and employee, and should be noted during the interview process.

Management - whether it be in an office, in a restaurant, on a movie set, or on a construction site - is not a "one size fits all" mentality. If you can't read people as individuals, you will not be able to motivate them or manage them properly.

At the end of the day, your staff are people, not puppets or army soldiers. They work together as a team and that means they want a leader they can respect and that would approach a problem with a level-headed mentality. As The Restaurant Coach Donald Burns [writes](#), "If you describe yourself as tough, business minded, direct, no-nonsense, or a hardass manager, let's face it... you're probably a jerk."

If you simply look at your employees as "my favorite waiter," "the new part-time cook," or "the hostess who is only here for the summer," you'll struggle to connect with them. This will impede on successful management and will rob you of the opportunity to personally empower your staff.

Adjusting

When you do notice an area of improvement for an employee, you'll need to address it immediately. Letting problems linger for too long creates two major issues. First, it allows the employee to become set in their ways and think the behavior isn't a problem. Second, if the behavior impacts customers, it could negatively affect your business.



When speaking with an employee about a behavior change, it's important to remember what we went over in the previous section. Some people communicate indirectly, and will be turned off or even offended by direct instructions, seeing it as an insult. Others prefer direct, clear instructions so they misunderstand nothing. Mixing these communication patterns can lead to confusion and frustration for both you and your staff.

Once you speak with the employee, allow for a brief adjustment period, pending on the severity of the situation. Whenever you see a slip-up, give a gentle but clear reminder of what you discussed. If the behavior does continue, have another talk. Be clear and leave little to no room for interpretation.

If the behavior continues past that, explain to them they have one final chance to prove that they understand what you spoke about. However, do not let this behavior carry over to your interactions with your better-performing employees.

Let me paint a picture for you. It's a crazy Saturday, and one of your employees (for the twentieth time) unprofessionally confronts their coworker about something. They're yelling, making a scene, and the staff and even some customers notice it. You've explained to this employee that if they react this way again, they will be let go. So it's your natural instinct to go right up to them and fire them on the spot.

Bad idea. It's likely they'll make an even bigger scene which will disrupt everything even further. You'll then be in a worse mood, which could be detrimental to your interactions with good employees. Instead, calmly but firmly approach them and break up whatever conflict has arisen. Then, following the shift's end, pull them aside and tell them you've decided to let them go since they didn't come through on their promise to act more professionally. That way, you avoid creating a bigger conflict that would potentially impact the rest of your staff, and by extension, your customers.

When terminating employees, always give a reason. It would also be a smart idea to check your local laws to see what cause is needed - if any - to let employees go.

At the end of the day, you want your employees to be productive, committed, and happy. If you notice even one of these three characteristics missing from your staff, take a close look at how you are managing your team to ensure you have the best possible workforce from the group you have assembled. As hard of a pill as it is to swallow, sometimes it isn't them that's the problem. Refer back to the first section of this ebook to really rethink your management style.

Finally - don't forget to treat your staff well! Give them discounted meals (free if you can afford them) and talk to them before and after shifts to get to know them. Over time, interpersonal communication will come easier and more naturally so you can manage staff easier and better. If you give even a little to your staff when they don't expect it, you'll see an enormous return on performance, morale, and retention.



Chapter 3: Managing Your Money

In every business, money is an essential factor to consider in your management decisions. For example, poor staff management leads to higher turnover, which costs money (in some cases, upwards of [\\$5,000 per employee](#)). Improper management in the kitchen leads to more wrong orders, which costs money. Setting prices at an inaccurate amount leads to less profit, which costs money. When not enough money comes through the door, soon enough you'll be closing your door.

Employees

No staff = no profits.

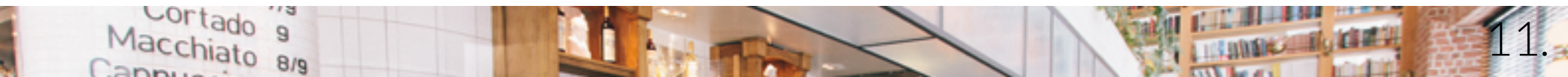
Investing in a reliable staff is key to your financial survival. But at what moment are you spending too much money on your staff, to the point where you are unnecessarily losing profits?

Wages, meal comps, uniforms, and all other periodic expenses should be designated in advance. You should know going into each week how much your staff is going to cost you. Proper scheduling is the best way to do this.

Make sure you account for the condensed lunch rush and the consistent pace of dinner in your planning so that you always have just enough people scheduled for each shift. That way, you won't lose money from customers too frustrated to wait because you won't be understaffed. You also won't lose money from overstaffing workers who won't contribute as much during that hour.

Most restaurant managers have the schedule set at least a week or two in advance, which is made easier through [scheduling integration tools](#). Try to keep employee costs as similar as possible during each period. Naturally, this will take some adjusting during holidays and busy seasons, but don't worry! That extra business should offset the wages.

Unfortunately, there's not much you can [charge your employees for](#). Keep a watchful eye for discounts and voids, frequent waste or mismanagement of food, or offputting interactions with customers. If you spot employees who just seem to bleed profits whenever they are working, it might be time for a tough talk.



Menu & Pricing

Your menu is your selling point. As a restaurateur at heart and in practice, you've carefully selected each menu category, its offerings, the ingredients, and your signature dishes. But have you put that much effort into calculating your prices?

Prices typically cover the cost of the food in full, plus a markup to cover the rest of your expenses. But are all of your markups the same, or do they differ?

If the numbers aren't as positive as you'd like, consider repricing your menu items. Naturally, you've figured in such expenses as operating costs, rent, and workers' wages. But have you taken everything else into consideration, like covering wrong orders, credit card fees, and money for emergency repairs? All of these expenses affect your restaurant's bottom line.

If you are in dire need of a new menu setup - whether it be prices, design, or offerings - you can download [Toast's Menu Engineering Course](#), which will give you all the info you need for a complete menu redesign.

Accounting

Okay, time for a quick crash course in accounting.

As tedious as it may seem, you should always keep track of your expenses and revenue in full.

It's not enough to just know that you spend \$112 on yesterday's produce delivery. You should have a complete record in one concise location to keep track of your profits and losses at any time.

If this seems overwhelming, we've got you covered. Toast also offers a [Profit and Loss Template](#) you can use for your restaurant. Just plug in all your info and you'll be good to go!



Finding a Balance

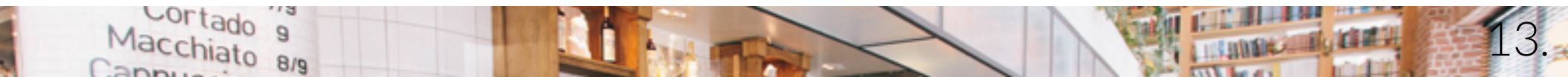
Managing your money in a restaurant requires a delicate balance. You can't splurge, but you can't be stingy. You can't be too risky with your money, but you should take some risks.

To find a good place to start, set aside a certain percentage of your revenue every month to use for investing in new ideas for your restaurant. You never know if you'll want to try out a menu redesign, get some updated furniture, or add a new item to the kitchen.

From there, you can adjust your spending based on your profits and the results of your investments. If they're going well - awesome! Why not try pushing your limits and see what else you can accomplish? If you find you're spending too much, cut back and see if you get better results.

Managing a restaurant is first and foremost a business! Take advantage of industrial innovations that will improve your operations. Sometimes you have to spend money to make money.

One of the biggest assets a modern restaurant manager can use in their financial planning is the reporting function on a POS system. This will give you all the data you need to break down your sales and make the right decisions for your business.



Chapter 4: Managing Your Food and Supplies

“Supply chain management” is a term that usually comes up in discussion about large distributors like Wal-Mart, but supply chains play a role in every business, including restaurants. It’s true - taking control of your inventory can threaten to overwhelm, but it must be done to ensure smooth operations in your restaurant.

Managing the food and supplies in your restaurant can be broken up into three different sections - pre-delivery, delivery, and post-delivery.

Pre-Delivery

If you want to secure a consistent and streamlined delivery system, take note of a few strategies.

First, limit your suppliers. While the company that supplies your vegetables may not be the company that supplies your takeout boxes, there is still plenty of overlap in this industry. Some restaurants utilize many different suppliers for the same deliverables, which can result in a slew of inconsistencies. This can negatively affect the perception of your brand.

Customers - especially your regulars - come to expect certain results from you. How do you think they will perceive your restaurant if the box their pizza comes in changes every week, or if the cheese on their sandwich seems to taste different every time? Limiting your suppliers eliminates this risk of inconsistencies in your restaurant so things are the same for your customers.

Second, dealing with excessive suppliers can cause problems with your supply chain. Delivery dates can get mixed up and you can end up with too much of one provision and not enough of another. Keep things simple!

Finally, be sure to order enough inventory to get you through your next delivery date and then some. Holidays, service interruptions, and delays happen. This can leave you without the ingredients for your signature offering. Always have a reserve emergency supply for “just in case” scenarios. Space permitting, feel free to stock up on bags, packaging material, and cleaning supplies. For food, limit the size of your emergency stash to prevent waste, and be sure to replace that emergency supply with each new delivery so that the earlier delivered food goes first.

Delivery

It's best to have your deliveries arrive on a regular schedule. Make sure your staff knows the procedure for when deliveries arrive, or else you may face confusion. For example, some people should work on bringing items to the correct stations, others should work on unpacking and properly storing those items, others should handle cleanup, and others should be totally dedicated to fulfilling orders. This way, there won't be an issue of too many hands organizing the newly arrived items and not enough staff fulfilling orders.

Do your best to schedule supply deliveries during the slower times of the day, like earlier in the morning or in between your two busiest shifts. You could also ask a few trusted employees to handle deliveries before the restaurant opens.

Food safety is another concern to address. Every item should be inspected upon or immediately after delivery. Take note of things such as spoiled produce, poor product packaging, and expiration dates if applicable. If something isn't right, waste no time telling your provider so that you can either replace or receive reimbursement for the bad product and get it out of your kitchen. This ensures your restaurant will have fresh food and will minimize the chances of food poisoning.

Post-Delivery

Inventory control requires you to organize your food and supplies properly.

Next time you're in your restaurant, take a look around. Are there places that are so stuffed with supplies that you can barely move? Have you lost track of where you kept a certain item? Have you ever received complaints from employees about the lack of structure in your back of house? If the answer to any of these questions is "yes," take the initiative to redesign your inventory space.

Make sure there's a place for everything, and make sure everything is in its place. No longer will you be fumbling around for that misplaced shipment of salt packets. You'll reduce wasted time and put your time and your staff's efforts toward more valuable tasks.

For your food, freshness is key. The best way to ensure freshness is through preservation. Simple differences in refrigeration temperatures can affect freshness. Defrosting too much meat or slicing up too many vegetables that go unused for too long are on you, so make sure your staff knows not to prep too much. It's essential to be prepared, but not at the expense of your food or money. Based on the performance of similar days, engage in some predictive forecasting to make safe estimates of how much food you should have ready before a shift.

Supply Management

When dealing with these logistics, it's important to be organized above all. This is a prime example of how managing a restaurant involves wearing many hats. Masterful management will require you to be involved with the logistical side of operations even though your daily interactions with staff and guests may call on you to be a little less precise and a bit more personal.

Chapter 5: Managing Your Technology

There are many factors that make restaurant management far more difficult than it once was. It seems like more power is in the customers' hands - they have more information, buying power, and locations where they can eat out. Operating costs are rising, while customers want lower prices. Staff turnover is [causing your employees to head out the door, never to return.](#)

Luckily, there are many advantages of restaurant management that exist today that were not feasible or even possible decades ago, and these come from technology. For instance, the POS system that you use can unlock data that allow you to make purposeful, intentional, and logical decisions about how to manage your restaurant.

Take a look at the list below of the technological advancements that have helped to shape the modern restaurant industry. Many or all of these can make your job easier, allow you to connect with customers, and manage your restaurant operations better.

- **[Interactive Data Reports](#)**: collected from your POS system to give real statistics and data so you won't have to guess anymore.
- **[Handheld Tablets](#)**: for servers to take orders at the table, decrease delays, and increase the number of customers served in a given time.
- **[Online Ordering](#)**: to clear up your phone lines, reach a tech-savvy demographic, and ensure order accuracy.
- **[Loyalty Programs](#)**: to engage your guests and turn them into happy returning customers.
- **[Self-Ordering Kiosk Stations](#)**: to speed up the ordering process and give customers a restaurant experience that they can control.
- **[Kitchen Display Screens](#)**: to keep your back-of-the-house staff organized and working efficiently.

All this restaurant technology can seem difficult and overwhelming to manage, but it becomes easier when you adopt an all-in-one restaurant management system for your restaurant. It can be used by customers to order online and manage their loyalty accounts. It can be used by your staff to place orders and close checks. It can be used as a software for the terminals, kiosks, and equipment you employ in your restaurant.

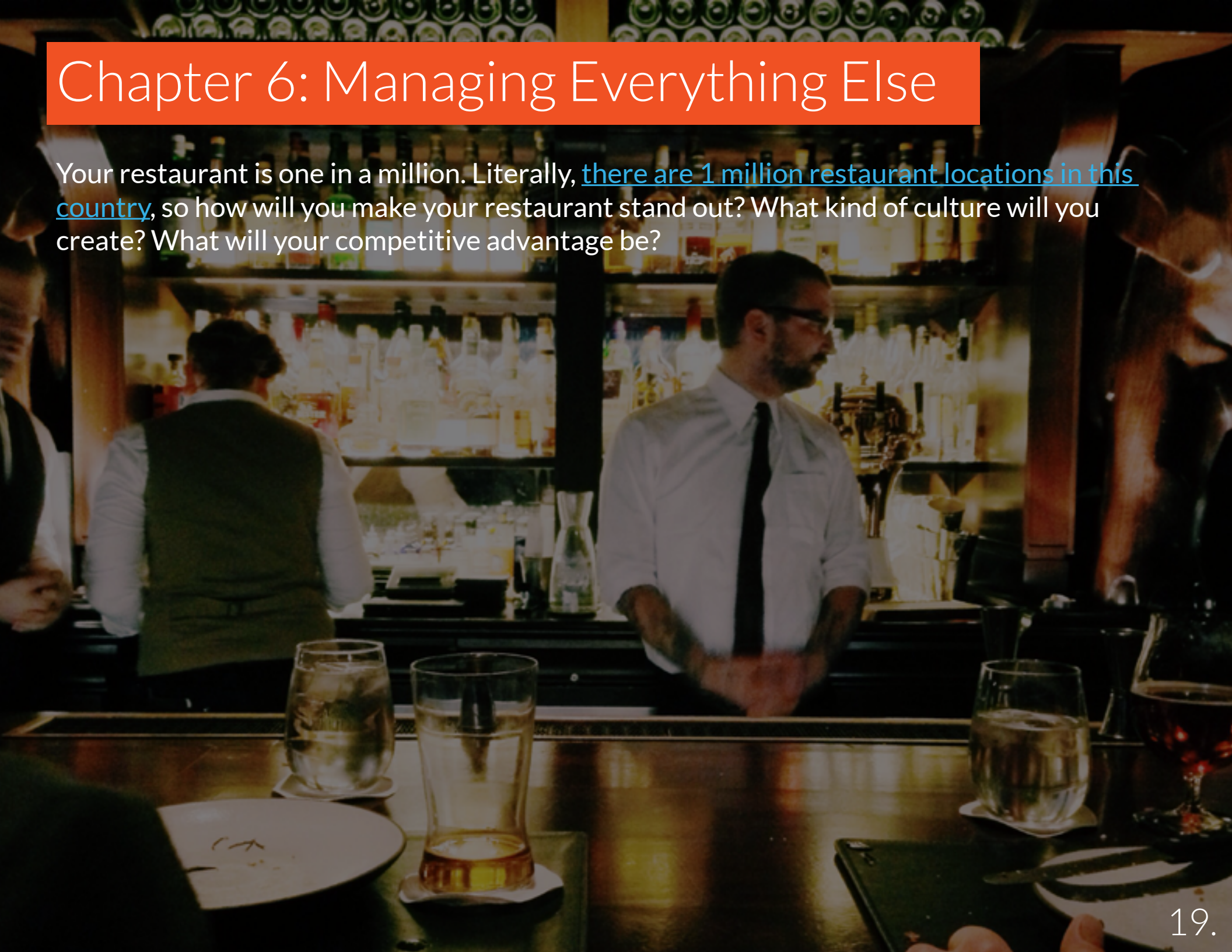
And of course, it can be used by you to change the menu effortlessly, manage scheduling and inventory, and check your restaurant data. Ditching that [legacy POS for a cloud-based model](#) means you can manage your restaurant from anywhere, at any time. Checking your reports doesn't need to be onsite anymore, and there's no need to call support if you want to add a menu item. Managing your restaurant technology is simple today - just take advantage of streamlined technology and you'll be less stressed in no time.

Remember, in today's competitive environment, other restaurants will be making data-driven decisions based off of their reports as well. Savvy managers will also be using integrated technology to streamline their operations and gain valuable insight in order to make better decisions, achieve higher profits, and create a better customer experience. If you want to match that, you must invest in manageable technology for your restaurant.



Chapter 6: Managing Everything Else

Your restaurant is one in a million. Literally, [there are 1 million restaurant locations in this country](#), so how will you make your restaurant stand out? What kind of culture will you create? What will your competitive advantage be?



As important as everything we just covered is, words can't express the importance of these areas in your restaurant that need your input as manager. Here are a few you might want to take a closer look at.

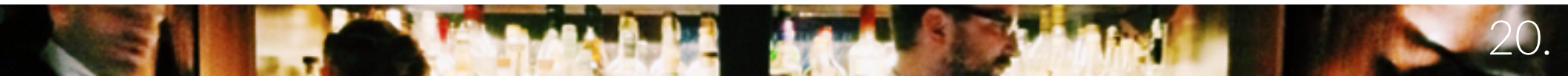
Managing Your Atmosphere

Even if you're a one-of-a-kind fusion restaurant or a specialty eatery, there's no guarantee customers will just flock to your restaurant. Diners have countless choices when it comes to going out to eat. Besides the food you sell, how else can you set your restaurant apart?

Start thinking about all the things that define your atmosphere. These can be physical items like the furniture and plates you use, intangible assets like your design and music played, or interpersonal factors such as the way staff will interact with guests. Everything in your restaurant - everything - will determine how you are perceived by customers. What kind of restaurant do you want to be?

One way to narrow down what you want to be is narrowing down what you do not want to be. This is called a trade-off. By acting on decisions that define what kind of restaurant you are not, you give off the message that you know what kind of restaurant you are. Guests will come in knowing exactly what to expect, which will create loyal customers who appreciate what you offer.

Let's look at Chipotle for an example. Chipotle has made it clear that they are not a "food factory." The company takes pride in being a sustainable food business, refusing to taint their ingredients with GMOs. Sometimes, making it clear who you are not gives customers a great idea of who you are.



Managing Your Customer Experience

Almost every restaurant's main goal is to provide remarkable service to guests. But what does that mean? While everyone has a different opinion, there is one group whose opinion you cannot ignore - your customers.

It doesn't matter how established your restaurant is. You can always benefit from customer feedback. Leave out comment cards on the table, or give them to all servers to hand to customers at the end of the meal. Offer an incentive - like entry into a drawing, a free dessert, or a small amount off their next meal - in exchange for filling out comments.

Some great questions to ask on these comment cards are:

- **Server name:** To address the specific server if they deserve praise or need to explain a problem they faced.
- **Item ordered / feedback on the food:** To figure out which meals should be scrapped from the menu, or if a certain cook isn't sending out the best possible plate.
- **Date and time of visit:** To narrow down who was in the back-of-the-house if it was an issue with food or presentation. It may also help explain comments on wait time or other comments not related to the server.
- **Likelihood to return:** To share with the staff if the likelihood is particularly good or notably bad.
- **Email address (optional):** To sign up customers for [loyalty programs](#) or [newsletters](#) and create repeat visitors.

These cards are an amazing source of feedback for both qualitative and quantitative information. They will let you know why you have customers who are or are not coming back so that you can stop guessing and get all the facts. Gaining feedback on specific dishes and servers can tell you who or what you should be managing, and to what extent.

If you use a POS with a [CRM function](#), it's even possible to match up feedback with specific customer profiles. That way, when you see a customer comment and cross-reference your CRM, you may notice it's a complaint from one of your frequent guests who comes in every week with their family and usually places a big order. At that point, you'd know to reach out to them and personally make them aware you're working to amend the issue for their next visit.

Other answers, such as from an "any additional comments" section on the card, give you insight on the little things you never thought to look into. Restaurant customers can comment on the lighting, the table setup, or even restaurant design. Now you can dedicate your time to improving service and customer satisfaction. Your time spent micromanaging the things that don't matter will cease, and you'll be a more efficient restaurant manager with customer feedback.

Managing Your Safety

Safety and security problems only complicate your operations and seem to happen at the least desirable time. Take the time to address these crucial threats to your business that will do nothing but disrupt the flow of your management.

- **Data/credit card breach safety:** Hold the payment information of your customers in high regard. If that trust is gone, your restaurant will always be questioned for its safety. Make sure your credit card processor is PCI compliant to ensure secure transactions.
- **Emergency procedures:** Detail what to do in an accident, choking situation, or robbery.
- Security policies and procedures. Make it clear that it is illegal to steal money or inventory from the restaurant or to communicate or transmit a former employer's confidential or proprietary information.
- **Safety rules:** Outline basic guidelines such as “never try to catch a falling knife” and “don't put hot food or plates in front of small children.” This may seem like common sense, but it's better to be safe than sorry.
- **Fire protection:** Outline where the fire extinguisher is in the restaurant, as well as how to notify the fire department in the case of an emergency. Show where the nearest fire exit is out of the building.
- **First aid and medical care:** Managers are responsible for CPR and first aid. Make it clear who on the team knows this, and give others the option to learn important first aid procedures.

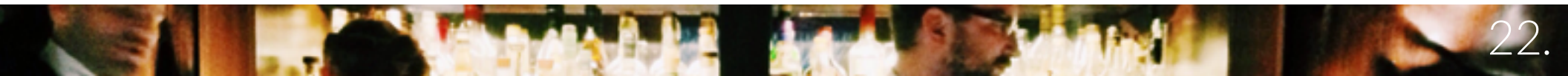
Managing Your Appearance

If you walked into a restaurant with delicious food, but the floor needed to be swept, the counter was messy, your table hadn't been bussed properly, and the restrooms were...unappealing, would you be likely to return?

Cleanliness in your restaurant cannot be overlooked. Ensure all hands of your staff know that when they have a free second for side work, they should be looking around for something to clean. If they notice it, chances are one of your customers already has as well.

For the bigger projects like windows, bathrooms, kitchen equipment, and storage places, responsibilities should be divvied up so that everyone does their fair share. Set up a system/schedule so that at least once every set period of time, stations are cleaned. Refer to that guide often, so cleaning never gets overlooked!

To pitch in, it may be a good idea to throw yourself on that schedule as well, to understand your employees' tasks and hold your staff and yourself to higher standards.



Managing Your Brand

Countless people will see your restaurant and the food you serve before they even come to your establishment. You may be asking how that's possible. Two words: social media.

Customers love to engage their followers with their exploits at local restaurants, posting on Instagram, Snapchat, and Twitter. Why let your customers control your brand for you? Create social media accounts for your restaurant, and designate a few social media gurus on your staff to run and post frequently on the page. Encourage customers to tag or mention your official page in their posts so you can see what's being said about you.

Today, taking the first step to managing your brand is as simple as picking up your smartphone. People want to see great food, not just read about it. So publish photos of signature dishes or your special of the day! See for yourself some [awesome examples](#) of restaurants that have set the bar for social media.

If the very thought of social media throws you for a loop, using a tool like [Hootsuite](#) or [Buffer](#) to keep things organized may be a great place to start engaging with your customers!



Conclusion


While managing a restaurant today can be stressful and at times difficult, it's exciting, rewarding, and fun with the right mindset and management skills. Make no mistake - there is one person who decides if a restaurant will be a good place to work or a bad place to work. That one person will determine if a restaurant will sink or swim. That one person is the one who manages the restaurant. That person is you. You call the shots for your restaurant. So, what kind of decisions will you make?

When in doubt, look at your numbers! Making data-driven decisions results in real improvements to your restaurant. Now you can truly see what your best selling item is, what time of the day is best for business, which employees get the best tips, and if that lunch shift you just survived really was the busiest one you've ever had. How can you get this kind of data - data that will give you insight into your customers, inventory, menu, scheduling, employees, and finances? A modern, efficient, and reliable POS system is a great place to start.

Toast Restaurant POS is made for restaurant managers. Toast exists to make your job and your life easier by offering up-to-date technology and software integrated into your restaurant's operations. At no additional cost to you, 24/7 US-based customer support is provided, along with regular software updates to enhance performance and improve security, protecting your restaurant and your customers. You'll also be introduced to the vast world of restaurant data through user-friendly back-end reports. Since Toast is a cloud-based system, you can access this data whenever and wherever you want. No more late nights in your back office crunching numbers - check things on your own time and make more reasonable decisions at your convenience.

Ready to introduce your restaurant to the modern world of management? Your life is about to get a whole lot easier.

Check out a free live demo of Toast with one of our industry professionals! We look forward to hearing from you soon.



Improve Operations & Make
Guests Happy with **toast**

Ready for a Quote?