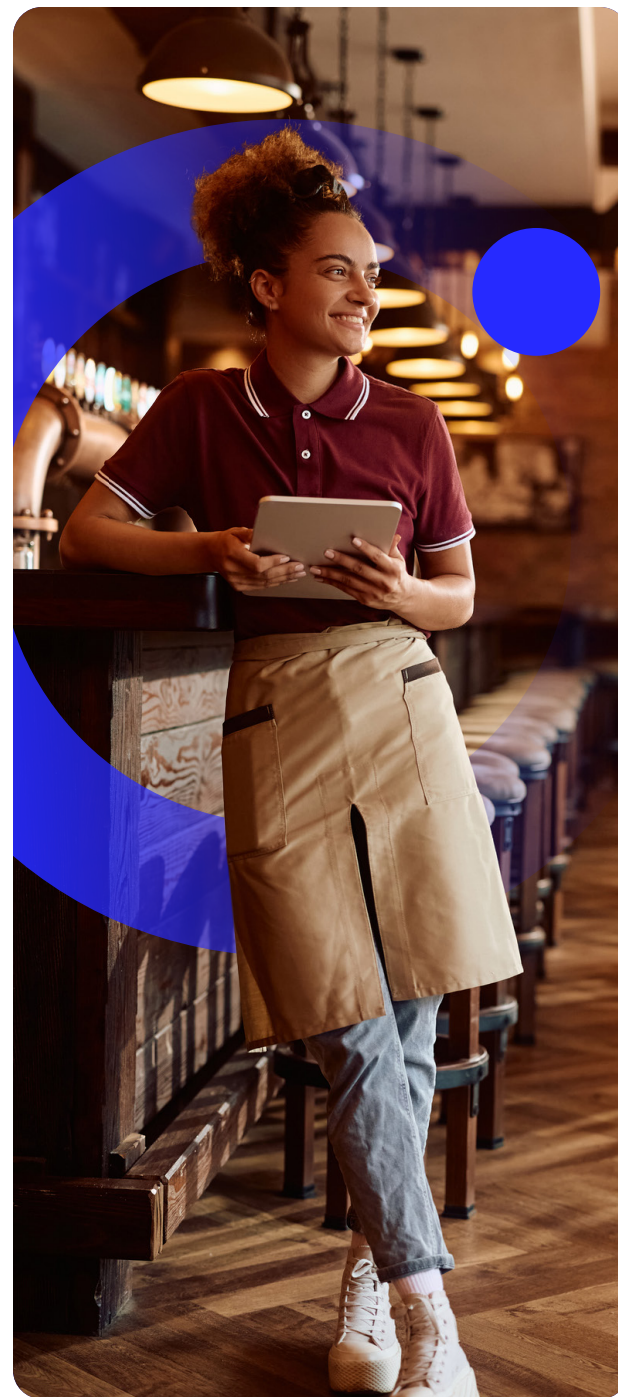




What's cooking:

Why back-of-house restaurant tech is more important than ever



Restaurant operators are facing rising labor and food costs, along with increasing guest expectations for speed, convenience and value. To successfully navigate these pressures, back-of-house efficiencies are more important than ever.

From disconnected systems that create blind spots and kitchen workflows that can't anticipate demand to tools that surface data too late to act and outdated technology that leaves money on the table, these are the challenges many restaurant operators face every day.

The good news is it doesn't have to be this way.

This playbook examines some of the key challenges today's QSR and restaurant operators are facing — including demand visibility, operational silos and data fragmentation. It explores how modern, integrated back-of-house (BOH) technology can help operators overcome these hurdles, driving valuable savings while maintaining a high-quality guest experience.



Hot in the kitchen: **The rising pressures facing today's operators**

Over the past several years, macroeconomic factors have left restaurant operators feeling the squeeze. In the National Restaurant Association's latest annual state of the industry report, more than nine in 10 operators cited significant cost challenges, with food, labor, insurance and energy among the key drivers. Most operators have already raised menu prices significantly and have limited flexibility left to pass additional cost increases on to guests.

Amid these rising costs, as well as ever-increasing guest expectations for speed and convenience, modernized BOH systems have emerged as a powerful lever to drive both savings and service improvements. Industrywide, awareness of these tools is growing, according to **Tom Cheek, a restaurant technology expert at Global Payments with more than 35 years of restaurant sector experience.** Cheek describes most operators as falling into one of three categories along the tech learning curve: awareness, control and power users.

"The first is somewhat of an awareness stage," said Cheek. "They're asking themselves, 'I wonder what my food cost should be?' They know they need to make improvements but aren't quite sure how to do it."

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From there, operators move to the control stage, where they begin leveraging technology to address the lowest-hanging fruit of improvement opportunities. Finally, they reach what Cheek called the “power user” stage: analyzing and adjusting details and configurations for marginal efficiency gains on an ongoing basis.

“They’ve started off where they needed to make a 4% change,” Cheek said of operators who’ve progressed along this adoption path. “Now they’re probably just trying to improve their food costs to get that last quarter or tenth of a percent.”

At all stages of the adoption curve, modern BOH tech tools offer operators powerful efficiency and process improvement opportunities that are increasingly critical in today’s market.



Three areas where BOH technology is helping operators successfully navigate challenges for a resilient business, whatever the future brings.

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Seeing what’s coming:
Demand visibility for
kitchen readiness

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Breaking down silos:
Connected operations
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Data-driven decisions:
Real-time visibility to
guide strategy



No. 01

Seeing what's coming: **Demand visibility for kitchen readiness**



For much of the restaurant industry's history, forecasting volume was an educated guess made by a general manager, typically days or weeks in advance, but sometimes even longer out. That approach may work to a point, but it can break down the moment something unexpected happens.

"A manager may make perfectly accurate projections and be right on the money," Cheek said. "But then they get a large catering order for tomorrow and that changes everything: How much food needs to be prepared, and how much needs to be ordered for next week."

Modern BOH technology changes the equation. Planning shifts from a static, best-guess projection based on historical data, to a dynamic, real-time process that can quickly respond on the fly. A large catering order once would have required a manager to manually recalculate prep lists, adjust vendor orders and reschedule staff. But with BOH tech, that all happens automatically. Through integrations with catering platforms, orders flow directly into the back office, triggering adjustments to prep requirements and inventory in real time, before the manager even has to think about it.

Efficiencies can scale quickly at the enterprise level. Cheek noted that managers still play an important role in fine-tuning details. He reported having conversations with chain CFOs interested in the ability to set demand projections company-wide, then allow individual general managers to layer in location-specific context, like a community event or local weather conditions.

“If you have a better starting point and then make accurate adjustments, you end up with the best possible projection.”

The downstream benefits of this improved demand projection can be significant: faster prep cycles, fewer mid-rush scrambles, more accurate staffing decisions and less food waste from over-prepping. For operators facing today’s cost pressures, these efficiencies can make a significant difference to their bottom line.

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No. 02

Breaking down silos: **Connected operations across platforms**

A decade ago, operators managed just a few different order destinations: dine in, takeout and, for QSRs, drive thru. That model was already complex enough. Today, with the rise of delivery apps and services that have boomed post-Covid, that complexity has increased exponentially.

“There are dozens of destinations because of all the delivery service providers,” Cheek said. “And not only are there more destinations, there are many more order sources: ordering on the brand’s app, through delivery aggregators, through a catering website or a party planning website.”

Each of those channels generates its own data, which can present a significant challenge for operators when those streams are siloed in different systems that must be manually reconciled.

Modern integrated platforms consolidate order sources, including dine in, takeout, delivery and catering, into a single management view. This connected framework enables orders to be routed intelligently, balancing loads across stations and giving staff visibility into what’s coming and when.

“Bringing together all those channels is critical, because when you do it right, the whole operation starts to move as one.”

Unified systems also transform reporting. Rather than reconciling data from multiple disconnected systems, each with its own reporting format and logic, operators obtain a single, consistent view across all service areas and locations. That means faster access to accurate numbers and less time spent manually assembling reports.



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“If an operator has initiated an operational change, such as a POS upgrade, menu change or even a wage rate change, it is important that the operator has reporting that shows normalized data before, during and after the change so they can measure the impact of the change,” Cheek noted.

Connected platforms eliminate friction on the labor side as well. For instance, Genius back-office solutions integrate with hiring platforms so that new employee records flow directly into the POS, eliminating manual re-entry.

Unifying critical BOH systems gives operators a strong foundation that helps keep every part of the restaurant working cooperatively, seamlessly and intelligently to ultimately deliver a better experience for guests at a lower cost for operators.



No. 03

Data-driven decisions: **Real-time visibility to guide strategy**

For operators managing multiple locations, staying on top of what's happening across the business has historically required significant time spent running reports, reviewing printouts and making phone calls. Modern back-office technology has fundamentally changed that dynamic, giving operators and district managers real-time visibility into sales, labor and inventory data from anywhere, at any time.

"A DM can see all of their restaurants and how they're doing right now with one glance," Cheek said. "And that actually keeps managers more active out in the dining room. They don't have to go to their office to run a report or print pieces of paper."

Real-time inventory visibility means managers can see when an ingredient is running low and re-order quickly and easily. Applied to labor, the same capability enables managers to see immediately when hours are tracking above what was scheduled or budgeted and make scheduling adjustments while there's still time. And when it comes to key financial data, a granular view broken out by location, time of day, service type and other factors gives operators highly actionable insights on menu pricing, marketing spend and other key decisions.



Meanwhile, artificial intelligence is supporting data-informed decision making. Key AI functionalities already available include detecting an upcoming volume spike and automatically generating a shift in the team portal for an employee to claim, while simultaneously making automatic vendor order adjustments to match the updated forecast.

“The system sees what’s coming, makes a plan in response, and then carries out the key steps of that plan, without a manager having to do everything manually,” Cheek said. “That’s a very powerful and transformative capability.”

However, he noted that there’s a clear distinction between true adaptive AI and what he describes as just a “math equation with a new label.” He cautioned that many back-office tools market “AI capabilities” that are simple rule-based logic, rather than systems that learn from patterns over time and make decisions on their own.

Given the high bar of guest expectations in dining — particularly amid rising menu prices and household economic pressures — it’s critical that any decision AI makes is the right one.

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What to look for in a tech partner

For operators who know they need to modernize BOH tech but aren't sure where to start, Cheek recommended targeting the highest-impact items first, including areas where cost overruns are most frequent or visibility is most limited, such as inventory management and labor scheduling.

“Take the simplest approach at the store level that you possibly can. Give managers something that’s easy to learn and easy to use and lets them clearly see the benefits.”

Once these early applications have proven their value to managers, then it’s time to explore expanding to additional use cases.

When evaluating potential vendors, Cheek has a few guiding principles. Integration depth is a must, and a single-platform approach that connects POS, kitchen management, labor, inventory and reporting through one vendor relationship generally is preferable to a patchwork of point solutions. This simplifies integrations, reduces support burden, improves scaling and ensures data consistency across the business.

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When it comes to data, reliability is critical. Operators must be able to trust that the numbers any systems produce are accurate, as incorrect data not only creates operational headaches but risks losing the manager buy-in that's essential to modernization efforts.

"That trust has to be the foundation," Cheek said. "If the numbers aren't right, you've lost the managers, and if you've lost the managers, you've lost everything."

Modern BOH technology offers restaurant operators a clear path to addressing some of their most pressing business and operational challenges. By making the decision to invest in these tools now and choosing the right partner to help guide the way, operators can reap meaningful improvements that not only help solve today's issues, but offer the adaptability needed to help ensure continued success in the long run.

**Contact Global Payments to
learn more about modernizing
your restaurant's back-of-
house technology.**





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With 27,000 team members across 38 countries, we have the scale and expertise to help businesses grow with confidence. Headquartered in Georgia, Global Payments is a Fortune 500® company and a member of the S&P 500.

Genius is designed to power large, complex restaurant operations. From QSRs to stadiums and multi-site campuses, Genius helps leading brands deliver seamless guest experiences while streamlining operations across front-of-house, middle-of-house, and back-of-house. Trusted by top enterprises across 60+ countries, our modular, scalable platform simplifies ordering, payments, kitchen operations, drive-thru, management, and reporting - so the teams can stay focused on strategic growth.

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