



**ED BURCHER**

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## 3 Seconds Can Change Your Business

**H**ow do you gather and respond to guest feedback on your store, execution or food quality? Is it a process you can monitor daily? And what happens with the information that will make a difference? There are almost too many ways and sources to look at: Facebook, Twitter, Yelp, Urban Spoon, guest call-in numbers and surveys, and Google reviews. Where does a store or company look to see how it's doing?

On a recent visit to the U.K., I saw a simple system in the Dublin and Heathrow airports. It was one question: "How was your experience today?" There were four possible answers, from a green smiley face to a red frown face. I was intrigued. In Dublin, I snapped and sent a picture to someone I worked with at A&W Restaurants Canada because I knew the company was working on a similar system. But more on that later.

An airport is probably one of the most impersonal places in the world. Getting feedback from travelers would seem very general, especially from a kiosk in the middle of the concourse. What were they measuring? Was my plane delayed, canceled or oversold? Were there weather delays? Did I miss my connection?

I encountered this same type of kiosk a week later at Heathrow's security screening. That line was one of the worst experiences I have ever had in security—ever. I pressed the red frown face multiple times.

But to what end? Heathrow, one of the busiest airports in the world, is not going to change its rigorous security procedures because we don't like it. I wonder how many green smiley faces the airport gets from the more than 165,000 daily passengers. One or two?

### Instant Feedback

Now back to A&W and what brought this together for me. Almost two years ago, when I worked at Petro-Canada, A&W's vice president of new restaurant expansion was very excited about a pilot



program that would give its restaurants immediate feedback. Last week, when I stopped at an A&W in Ontario for lunch, I saw it "live and in color," asking me to take 3 seconds to tell the restaurant how it did.

It seems the company has successfully piloted the program and is now rolling out the system. It asks the guest leaving the restaurant for feedback on three simple questions:

- ▶ Was your food hot and tasty?
- ▶ Was the service fast and friendly?
- ▶ Was the restaurant clean?

And the feedback mechanism? An iPad kiosk using a simple thumbs up or thumbs down.

These questions at A&W are specific and actionable and provide real-time feedback to the restaurant. The

results are posted; employees can see how many thumbs up and down they received. Think about the positive reinforcement this can provide (and motivation to do a good job).

Also, the drive-thru and take-out guest is offered a QR code, which appears to use your GPS to offer up the store closest to you. Pretty clever. There is also a comment section on the company's app.

I believe there something that we can learn from this and apply in our stores. You may not have access today to the system described above, but you should think about how you will incorporate this type of feedback into your digital strategy when possible. Is there something you can or should do now?

Imagine having your guests receive a brief survey on their food and experience, to complete immediately after eating. It would link back to the store, the time they bought it and maybe even the sandwich they ate and who made it. Think of the possibilities. I am excited about how this type of technology can help stores, and it is not years away from reality. It will depend on retailers embracing new technology and integrating it into their digital strategy.

I am not a futurist or technology guru, but the application of simple feedback to the store in real time is brilliant. When this is an app and is "pushed" to a guest's phone because he or she is a member of your loyalty program, it will be easier to use. Combined with "beaconing" to know more about the guest and transaction, it can be a game changer for your food program. Are you ready for that 3 seconds of feedback? ■