Case study

the Mystery Dining company

La Tasca
spanish tapas bar & kitchen

"The Mystery Dining Company has demonstrated that, in addition to understanding the mood and requirements of the hospitality industry, it can also be very responsive to the needs of individual businesses. TMDC is always looking for ways to improve the services it offers and for La Tasca it has created a system which has strong ties with our brand, enabling us to use it as an engagement tool with both customers and staff and most importantly offers a reporting system which is visual and alerts our team when action is needed."

David Pepper, People Director, La Tasca

Case study

Client - La Tasca

La Tasca is the UK's best known Spanish-themed restaurant chain. With more than 70 branches across the country as well as a handful overseas it prides itself on connecting with its guests and delivering an excellent all round experience that people will come back for.

A decision to improve the way the business engages with people - both its guests and team members alike - resulted in La Tasca's management working in partnership with The Mystery Dining Company to develop a bespoke feedback system to help implement a radical shift in the way the customer experience is measured.

With a focus on engagement, an online feedback system was created, fully integrated with the brand identity, encouraging guests to share feedback on the dining out experience quickly and easily.

Crucial to the success of this system was the combination of a reporting ability that would make monitoring customer feedback simple and accessible for all staff, and a design for the customer that reflects an interest in people rather than just collecting data.

The Mystery Dining Company has worked closely with La Tasca's management to deliver a customisable and effective system. In depth consideration was given to the way performance, at both individual branch level and company-wide, could be tracked to identify potential issues as well as highlight staff excellence. This was done with a view to how team members' behaviour and motivation could be influenced to create the best experiences. The best comments are fed into the La Tasca website and to suitable social media. Where things have not gone so well, managers get an instant alert, giving them the opportunity to recover the situation with the guest.

Challenges

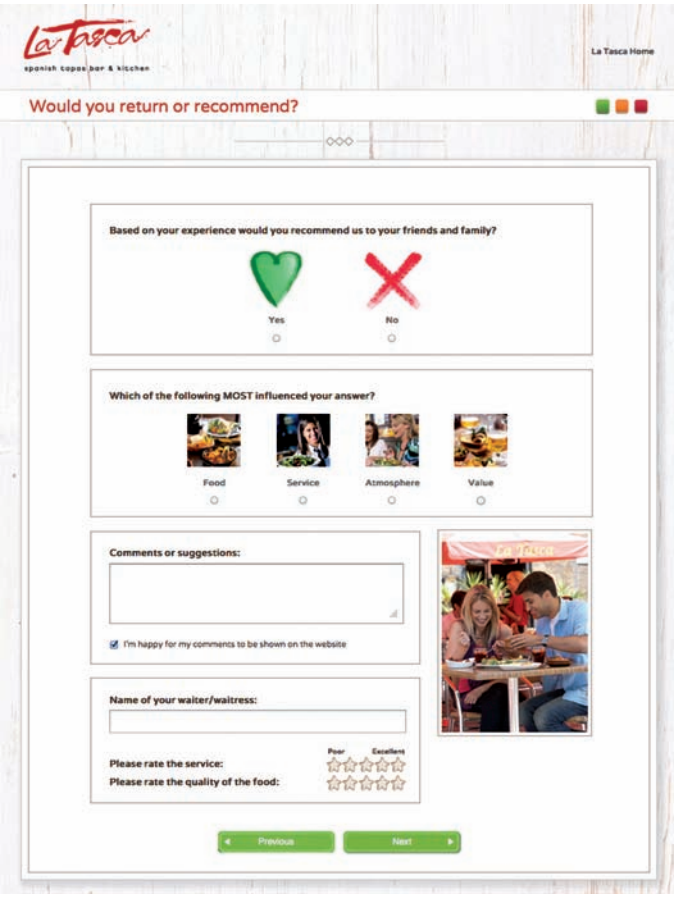
- The need to ensure that any system is seen as an extension of the La Tasca brand by guests while also being a constructive operating platform for management and team members
- The way the system analyses and presents feedback and triggers relevant alerts for managers to action
- Ensuring a smooth transition from evaluating operational excellence to assessing the guest's emotional reaction to the brand and gaining support from the whole La Tasca team for the processes involved
- Building an adaptable feedback management programme that can be used to monitor on-going customer perceptions of a growing business across different channels

Benefits

- Creates a system where genuine La Tasca guests can engage with the company and have their opinions counted
- Provides team members with a workable interface that can, at a glance, convey performance and trends
- Integrated alerts to ensure all potential issues are identified quickly to provide the best opportunity to rectify guest perceptions
- Channels to promote positive experiences to a wider audience
- Ensures that feedback is strongly aligned with internal training and rewards programmes

About the online feedback system

The Mystery Dining Company adapted its reporting system specifically for La Tasca taking into account a number of key considerations, including:



- **Ensuring that data can be broken down and used in a number of different ways, such as populating a database of customers who are happy to be contacted.**
- **Integrating with a range of social advocacy options enabling customers who have had a positive experience - to easily feed comments into various social media outlets.**
- **Customising the design to engage with customers in a similar way to the main La Tasca website, as well as being quick and easy to use, rather than appearing like a data collection tool.**
- **Creating a dashboard-style homepage for staff to access reports which provides clear indication of trend data, identifies and alerts staff to less than positive feedback, and tracks performance of individual sites.**
- **Regular provision of TMDC support and evaluation to ensure the online feedback programme is delivering worthy feedback which benefits the business.**

Results

David Pepper, La Tasca's People Director, explains why the company decided to focus on emotions and how this approach has helped the restaurant chain to raise its game and inspire increased loyalty.

"Emotional response is what drives any decision making process, so therefore the two most important questions for us to ask our guests are firstly, would they recommend us to others, and secondly would they themselves return to La Tasca?"

"Everyone responds to things in a different way but ultimately it comes down to the personal experience, the interaction they had and the quality of the product. This is one of the main reasons La Tasca changed from its established mystery visitor programme, which was useful in checking operational standards, to an online feedback system which has helped us to better understand our guests' emotional responses by ensuring that the right prompts are in place to follow up directly with them. If someone says they wouldn't come back to one of our restaurants then that's the time to ask "what is the reason behind this and what can we do to improve?"

Fast action - David Pepper, People Director, La Tasca

"One of the biggest advantages is that we now have a way to track guest feedback and a procedure for responding. The results are received and reviewed on a daily basis which means that our team can act upon feedback immediately. If we have a guest who indicates their experience is not as good as we would have hoped to deliver we will talk to them about why they were disappointed and how they feel any element, such as the service or food, can be improved. We sometimes invite them back for a complimentary meal so we have the opportunity to prove that we can perform better. This helps us to convert something negative into a positive and build customer loyalty."

"In the first six months of using this feedback system we have lifted our "recommend to a friend" rate from an average of 60% per week to above 90%. This demonstrates that focusing on giving guests a positive experience can be effective and reward a business. It also gives our team a target to work towards."

Presentation - David Pepper, People Director, La Tasca

"The way that feedback is presented is really important, especially as many managers will access it from their mobile phones, and The Mystery Dining Company has successfully created a very visual system which highlights a range of trends and analyses the feedback in a way that they can use. It also brings specific feedback to their immediate attention so that it can be reviewed as a priority."

Teamwork - David Pepper, People Director, La Tasca

"Because we have been able to align this feedback system with our team training programme we are able to better monitor, acknowledge and reward individuals, including our kitchen staff, who are identified by our customers for providing consistently good service. And of course, due to the nature of our business there will be an element of competitiveness between La Tasca restaurants but this all helps to produce a better end product for our customers."

"The Mystery Dining Company has demonstrated that in addition to understanding the mood and requirements of the hospitality industry; it can also be very responsive to the needs of individual businesses. TMDC is always looking for ways to improve the services it offers and for La Tasca it has created a system which has strong ties with our brand, enabling us to use it as an engagement tool with both customers and staff and most importantly offers a reporting system which is visual and alerts our team when action is needed."

"The hospitality industry in an ever changing environment however, for a business like La Tasca, getting a large volume of feedback directly from our guests - often before they've even left the table - gives us the best indication of how the brand is performing and it helps to keep service levels high by continually ensuring that we have the knowledge needed to exceed customer expectations."

Sally Whelan, director at The Mystery Dining Company:

"La Tasca's management is passionate about understanding the finer details of the experience they provide their guests and engaging with staff to ensure a high level of service is reflected across all of its restaurants. David and his team recognised the need for a highly customised feedback system which could analyse and use data in specific ways as well as offer integration with social media channels and staff training programmes. TMDC was able to offer not only its technical expertise to create La Tasca's online feedback system, but also the in-depth understanding of the hospitality sector that we have gained through analysing the customer experience for more than 10 years."

The Mystery Dining Company helps hospitality businesses to improve service to customers through detailed assessor reports, customer feedback channels, performance analysis and learning management. Established in 2003, we have developed a reliable network of assessors in 20 countries and are proud to work with a wide range of well-known restaurants, hotels, pubs and contract caterers.

T: +44 (0)1225 470 281

E: contact@mysterydining.com

The Mystery Dining Company Ltd
56 Southgate, Bath. BA1 1TG

twitter
@mysterydining

www.mysterydining.com