Enhance dining room services using real time feedback from students

University of Virginia Dining services reacts to issues in real time and improves overall visibility into areas for improvement

UVa Dining provides all dining services at the University of Virginia in Charlottesville, Virginia. With a student population of over 22,000, UVa ranks amongst the ten largest universities in the USA. UVa Dining is part of the Aramark corporation - the largest provider of food services in North America.

Providing the highest standards of food quality and service is a core objective of UVa Dining. In order to obtain feedback and suggestions from students about their dining experience, UVa has used comment cards for many years. These cards were collected on a daily basis, manually entered into a spreadsheet, distributed to the relevant dining room managers who would assess the comments, note their response and take corrective action when required. The student comments and manager responses are then posted on notice boards for students to read.

This manual system provided valuable feedback but was labor intensive, time consuming and lacked the ability to quickly respond to issues as they surfaced.

As part of its ongoing initiatives to improve service levels and streamline operations, Aramark is constantly looking for innovative solutions suited to its student demographic.

Touchwork is a leading provider of Enterprise Feedback Management solutions with significant experience in real time guest feedback and service recovery solutions using text messaging.

After being introduced to TxtandTell, one of the Touchwork Enterprise Feedback Management solutions, the forward looking UVa Dining management team realized the potential of the system to instantly capture and provide real time guest feedback using cell phones and SMS text messaging. As the student demographic are avid users of text messaging, it was felt this channel would be ideal for instant interaction and readily accepted by students.

The system also would enable dining room managers to immediately act on negative feedback and address guest concerns. UVa Dining realized that this would resolve many of the shortcomings of comment cards and enable it to even better serve its guests.

"The Touchwork system has enabled us to instantly react to dissatisfied guests and address their issues. This has greatly assisted our customer satisfaction initiatives."

- Brent Beringer
Director: UVa Dining

The TxtandTell system was launched in Aug 2009 in four dining rooms. The success achieved has resulted in it being extended to three additional dining locations and food courts. The system now forms an important part of UVa Dining's customer satisfaction initiatives.

How it works

Using posters and table tents, students are prompted to rate the food quality, service and cleanliness on a 1 (very poor) to 5 (excellent) scale as well as to provide any comments and suggestions. They provide this feedback by following some simple instructions and sending a single text message to a short code. As an incentive, they can win $15 Plus Dollars based on a monthly drawing. Students receive an immediate reply text message acknowledging their feedback. All responses are captured and displayed on a secure web portal in real time. Alerts are sent to dining room managers via email.

Using the web portal, moderators can view each comment, enter an appropriate response and immediately publish both to public screens mounted in the dining locations. This provides a great tool for student interaction - not only do they see comments posted by other students, they also get immediate feedback on how the dining room is responding to any issues. Moderators can also send appropriate messages back to a student's cell phone.

Results are displayed graphically in the portal and include a composite Customer

Satisfaction Index (CSI) that can be tracked over time and be used to compare one location with another. A comment tagging function enables comments to be categorized based on a number of defined tags - this facilitates the analysis of comments.

An extensive range of management reports are produced on the fly and can be viewed on the secure web portal, including:

Response counts by location and overall

CSI scores by location and overall

Individual question ratings

Negative feedback by location and time

Text comment summaries

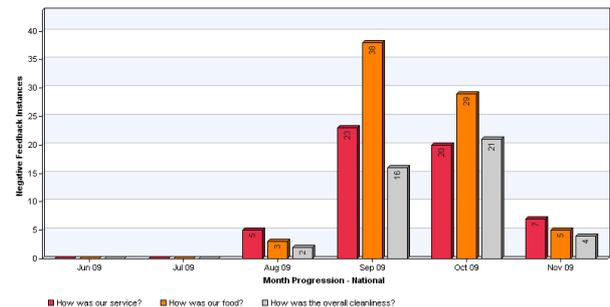All responses can also be downloaded as a CSV file for further analysis using Excel or similar tools.

Figure 1: Graph showing negative responses by question over time

Benefits & Results

- The system has proven to be very effective and cost efficient for interacting with students and obtaining instant feedback.

- Over 500 responses are typically received per month.

- As the system is fully automated, it has greatly reduced the response times and labour costs associated with processing manual comment cards.

- A major benefit is the ability to immediately respond to dissatisfied students and address their concerns thereby improving satisfaction levels.

- Immediate notification of dining room management ensures full visibility of guest issues – not possible to 'hide' from negative feedback by frontline staff.

- Quantitative results are obtained for customer satisfaction measurements and can be used for KPI measures and staff incentives.

- Areas for improvement are highlighted.

- Dining room managers can compare their performance with that of the other locations in an objective manner and identify areas for improvement.

- The overhead display screens provide a great tool for providing rapid feedback to students as well as for publishing other information.

About Touchwork

Touchwork is a global leader in mobile actionable intelligence solutions that help organisations worldwide capture, analyse, and act on information in real-time – anytime, anywhere. Touchwork's enterprise solution puts the right information in the right hands at the right time. In doing so, organisations can achieve first class customer experience and field service performance; reduce costs and liability; and generate revenue and gain a competitive advantage.

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