



# Drive-Thru Guide

Introduction	2
Key Terms	3
Drive-Thru Considerations	4
Ways to Increase Capacity	5
Looking to the Future	6

# Steps to Modernize Your Drive-Thru Set-Up



Go Digital



Use AI



Create Dual Lanes



Add Drive-Thru Only Units





## Introduction

The demand for convenience has continued to rise over the years as consumers are so often in a hurry. Adding in the safety precautions and restrictions of the COVID-19 pandemic, expectations of safe and efficient delivery methods for retail products and services have increased exponentially.

**Quick service restaurants (QSRs)** need to ensure fast, effective and safe delivery methods are in place for the current state and long term, as many of these trends are expected to continue. Driven by time constraints and the demand for convenience, consumer behavior has shifted, so quick service restaurants need to adjust their delivery methods to be fast and effective.

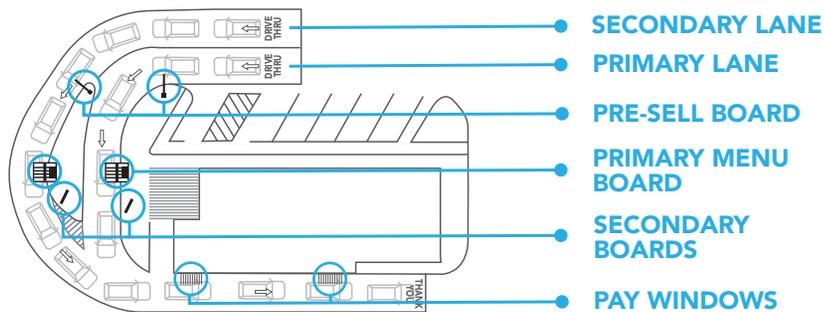
The customer-driven change in dining habits has accelerated the need for digital menu boards, artificial intelligence (AI), expansion into dual traffic lanes, and adding drive-thru-only units when possible.

Recent statistical evidence has shown that during the second quarter of 2020, drive-thru restaurant visits increased by 26% and represented 42% of all nationwide restaurant visits. This upward trend continued during the third and fourth quarter when drive-thru visits increased by 13%, according to [NPD's daily tracking of U.S. consumers' use of restaurants and other food service outlets](#).

Sevan has provided multi-site solutions in the QSR sector for over a decade and has managed the expansion of drive-thru development for internationally recognized brands. We have compiled a comprehensive set of guidelines to help your restaurant expand service offerings in the rapidly changing environment of food delivery.

# Key Terms

Multiple integrations are needed for a drive-thru to operate successfully.



## The Entrance

Designing a functional space for the customer begins with the entrance of the drive-thru. It is critical to create a safe and clear path for the customer to follow on the purchase journey in order to provide prompt service. Assist the customer in identifying the path by installing a gateway or height indicator, which serves a secondary purpose of marking the drive-thru entrance. Install a canopy to identify the order point and to provide weather protection.

## Drive-Thru Lane

If you have a dual lane drive-thru, the interior lane acts as the **primary drive-thru lane**, and the exterior lane acts as the secondary drive-thru lane. Once the customer enters an ordering lane, the layout of the menu boards is the next critical step to assess.



## Menu Boards

The menu boards should start with a **pre-sell** reflecting the current limited time offers (LTOs), a **primary menu board** with the top sales items listed, and a **secondary menu board** reflecting add-on items or promotions. Having an interactive menu board showing the **customer order display (COD)** ensures accuracy and allows for an enhanced customer experience with the front-of-house staff member who is using an integrated **point of sale headset** and watching the display from **canopy cameras** to ensure proper time management and order recognition at the present window.

## Journey Through the Queue

As the customer navigates through the queue after placing their order, **directional signage**, **merge points**, and **island dividers** serve as directional barriers. These elements seamlessly guide vehicles to the **pay window**, which can also double as the **present window**. The exit strategy of the drive-thru is critical for traffic management and safe integration of vehicles into the restaurant parking lot or surrounding streets.

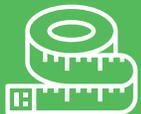
# Drive-Thru Considerations

In the development phase of analyzing the best operating procedures for your QSR drive-thru, the following are six main components to consider:



## Operating Windows

Dual-operating windows provide a critical step in the end-to-end drive-thru process. Dual windows can be used to separate payment collection and product delivery, which will increase operational efficiency.



## Average Car Length

Drive-thru spacing is critical to overall customer flow and ease of use. Consider vehicle spacing in the drive-thru layout to ensure the queue is properly maintained and customers are not placed into a "dead zone" that impedes other customers from ordering, paying, or receiving their order.



## POS Interface

Point-of-sale systems should allow front-end workers to easily take orders and quickly identify those orders when multiple order points are used. Equip staff with headsets for clear and concise communication and install canopy cameras to monitor the influx of drive-thru orders to allow for a fluid transaction.



## Menu Boards

Determining the most effective menu board for your QSR is a vital step in the drive-thru process. Menu boards should reflect a clear integrated customer order display for accuracy and include a built-in speaker for seamless employee-to-customer contact. Digital menu boards with touchscreens also allows for efficient ordering and offers a customized and personalized experience for users.



## Queuing Time

Understand the average preparation time per order for a clear evaluation of the time necessary for stacking and forward movement of customers through the lane.



## Approach Layout

The use of directional signage and asphalt markings is an important variable in drive-thru layout development. If you are building out a drive-thru that does not have an exterior wall or barrier, directional signage is necessary to create a safe environment and keep the traffic flowing.

# Tips to Increase Capacity, Sales and Customer Satisfaction

The QSR industry continues to revolutionize the development of fast, efficient and accurate product delivery to customers through technological advances and the shifting in real estate development strategies. Here are seven ways to maximize drive-thru capacity, sales and customer satisfaction:

- 1 Separate Pay and Present Windows**  
Provide a fluid pattern for customers to be greeted and place their order, pay, and receive their product. This results in operational efficiencies and a positive customer experience, while preventing orders from backing up.
- 2 Add a Second Order Point**  
Greatly increase the quantity of orders that can be taken during peak period by utilizing a secondary order point with a portable device, such as a tablet. The mobile ordering tablets allow flexibility of payment collection and a modern interaction for the customer moving through the queue.
- 3 Tandem or Side-by-Side Drive-Thru Addition**  
If the current property has the real estate to expand into a side-by-side drive-thru, this unique installation provides a dynamic customer experience while expanding the

restaurant's capabilities. Staff can take orders and send them through the designated queue, which breaks down the traditional traffic delays that single-lane options present.

- 4 Use Multiple Signs to Minimize Confusion, Direct Traffic, and Promote Limited Time Offers (LTOs)**  
The 'Quick' in Quick Service Restaurant is the primary reason customers use the drive-thru lane. Develop a clear, concise traffic pattern to help the process flow even when drive-thru traffic increases. A designated priority drive-thru lane for mobile orders and parking spots for curbside pickup enhance the fluidity of the process and allows you to efficiently accommodate more customers.
- 5 Invest in Menu Design**  
Investing in digital menu boards can offer predictive sales and better gauge consumer behavior. Digital menu boards provide restaurants with flexibility and increased data collection of customers' ordering behaviors. This data insight gives your restaurant the upper hand in development and delivery over your competitors.
- 6 Improve Order Accuracy**  
Revitalization of internal procedures will boost your team's accuracy. By defining the drive-thru team's roles, your staff can be singularly focused on their step in the drive-thru process as opposed to juggling multiple tasks for different customers simultaneously. Less distraction will allow for better focus on order accuracy and execution.
- 7 Partner with QSR Vendors**  
Working with an experienced vendor partner who understands the depth of the QSR landscape will help you transform your current space to meet the increased needs of limited direct customer contact. Sevan has successfully designed drive-thru programs for several internationally recognized brands, managed digital menu board installations across thousands of facilities, and delivered these services without impeding day-to-day operations.

# Looking to the Future

Drive-thru and other off-premises operations will be a major part of the U.S. restaurant industry's future.

In the case of one major client, two-thirds of their digital orders from the fourth quarter of 2020 came through order-ahead and pickup options. Developing current real estate to meet the rising demand for these options provides a more customer-friendly channel than relying on third-party delivery. The customer's desire for convenience and frictionless experiences is here to stay. Looking ahead to relocating and remodeling units with capital assessments will set your company up for long term success.

While we often associate drive-thru with speed, top-notch customer service remains the forefront of the drive-thru experience. Providing an exceptional experience for your customers remains a circular opportunity with just as much importance as traditional dine-in service. A check-point system keeps the customer journey flowing from greeting to ordering to paying and then pickup. Integrated digital menu boards, AI recognition software, and contactless payment options allow restaurants to provide both speed and ease of delivery with exceptional end-to-end customer service.



## Looking to the Future *(continued)*

When assessing your next move to diversify your QSR delivery methods, consider the following options for your integration:

### **Separate Order-Ahead and Live Order Flows**

The QSR industry has traditionally operated with single lane access. To accommodate the increased usage of online ordering and mobile pickup, focus pickup customers through one lane, and offer a separate lane for on-site customers.

### **Mobile Locations**

This concept allows for expansion and division of traffic through order-ahead and pickup options. Mobile locations are also cohesive with third-party delivery options, eliminating lines and increasing prompt and accurate service for drive-thru customers.

### **AI-Based Drive-Thru**

Many QSRs work with AI-based drive-thru options. Through speech recognition and a personalized experience, customers identify themselves at the order point and are then linked directly to their payment method, providing a fast and customized experience. This capability provides enhanced profitability, expedited output, and richer data collection.

## Conclusion

Customers expect efficiency, accuracy and speed when visiting QSRs. Restaurants with strong infrastructure and design centered on efficiency will benefit from increased capacity, as well as a favorable customer experience. Plus, efficient processes help employees perform better work and increase production and the quality of customer interactions. The customer demand will only continue to grow, so ensure your locations are built for success.

Sevan Multi-Site Solutions can assess your current commercial properties with our mobile assessment tool to help you plan for your future capital improvements. Visit [www.SevanSolutions.com](http://www.SevanSolutions.com) to connect with one of our solutions experts!

For more information or to discuss solutions for your facility, please contact Sevan at [www.sevansolutions.com](http://www.sevansolutions.com)