The Operator's Guide to PRODUCTIVITY in a Short Staffed World

Unlocking efficiencies and job satisfaction in multi-unit operations

HELP WANTED

Zenput.

Contents

Introduction

A roller coaster no one asked to ride

Though finding (and keeping) good help has always been a challenge for restaurant, supermarket, and convenience store operators, the pandemic created a long, nerve-racking roller coaster ride of ups, downs, and unexpected twists at every turn. It's a ride no one asked to get on, and now the employees that you rely on to keep your business in the black, simply want to get off.

78%

OF RESTAURANTS

can't recruit enough new hires to meet consumer demand[1].

Source:
National Restaurant Association

Here's why:

1. Flexibility

Restaurants shed nearly 6 million jobs in February 2020. A year later, 1.8 million fewer people were working in foodservice[2]. Even with wage hikes, expanded benefits, sign-on bonuses, and other unprecedented perks across the industry, flexibility seems to be one driving factor behind the foodservice industry exodus. Some people have decided it's time for a career change with more remote job opportunities and/or flexible work schedules.

Glassdoor, the company review site, reports that workers who once looked for restaurant server jobs are now searching for listings under "office assistant," "data entry," or the top-searched title, "Amazon," which is up a staggering 600% from pre-pandemic levels.

Line cooks, cashiers, and waitstaff aren't the only positions that restaurant and store operators are struggling to fill. The labor shortage is reflected in job vacancies up and down the income ladder and across entire organizations—at the store level, in the field, and at corporate headquarters, too.

> **In August 2021 nearly 7% of restaurant, bar, and hotel workers in the U.S. quit their jobs[3]. That's more resignations than any other industry.**

2. Risk

Another contributing factor to the staffing shortage may be risk of exposure—not only to a deadly infectious disease—but more so to a small, but vocal, segment of increasingly belligerent patrons as well. As quickly as these essential foodservice workers—from line cooks to servers to cashiers—are exiting the industry, droves of "hangry" patrons are already coming back in.

Isolation-weary consumers emerged from their quarantine dens like hibernating bears, they want service, they want it now, and they don't want to be told when to mask, where to stand, or that they must produce proof of vaccination before entering an establishment. For some workers, especially those with public-facing roles, having to endure customer backlash while enforcing mandated safety protocols is the last straw. It's simply not worth the aggravation.

> **So, how do operators return to business as usual, when the reality is anything but?**

80%

OF RESTAURANT WORKERS
experienced or witnessed hostile behavior from customers in response to staff enforcing COVID-19 safety protocols[4].

MASK REQUIRED FOR SERVICE

Source:
One Fair Wage Worker Public Health Survey Data collected 10/20–4/21

Short staffed or not, the show must go on

Operators still have the same amount of work—if not more—while maintaining quality standards. With significantly fewer applicants for open roles, the result is heavier workloads for the crews that do show up.

Something's got to give—and it can't be quality, safety, service, or cleanliness. You really can't demand more of your staff either. Doubling up on shifts for the foreseeable future is neither realistic nor sustainable. Your employees are your most valuable asset and in this job market, you can't afford to lose even one.

You risk burning out the most valuable and loyal members of your team, plus tired workers are more likely to make mistakes. In the end, skeleton crews and overworked staff ultimately lead to unhappy customers and lost revenue.

Yet, as daunting as it sounds, today's staffing situation is not insurmountable. In the pages that follow, we'll explore how leveraging technology can help you unlock operational efficiencies to transform your business into a more productive and desirable workplace for everyone. Spoiler alert: working longer and harder is not the answer. Working smarter is.

Doing More with Less

Going to work with the resources you have today

As a famous military strategist once said, "You go to war with the army you have, not the army you might want …" For store operators and owners, that means doing more with less—finding ways to optimize operations using the resources you have today.

If you're like most operators, you've already cut back where you can—by necessity. You may have eliminated menu offerings or switched to making items that require fewer ingredients and less prep time. Or perhaps you've reduced your hours of operation. You may even be trying to get by with fewer staff by simply relying on the patience of patrons. Be warned: the latter is an increasingly risky strategy.

Higher prices, longer wait times, fewer options, and subpar service are a recipe for certain disaster—especially in an industry with the word 'service' in the title.

According to the American Customer Satisfaction Index, customer satisfaction has declined in 9 of the last 10 quarters and is at its lowest level in 15 years[5].

So, when we talk about doing more with less, we have to factor customer satisfaction into the equation. Higher prices may be unavoidable, but poor service is not an option.

Identifying the productivity leaks in your operation

Enabling every employee to be as productive as possible can help you accomplish more with fewer people and less effort, thereby reducing the burnout factor. Right now, it's likely that there are dozens of repetitive and mundane manual tasks hampering your workplace productivity and sapping your staff's energy. At every single level of your organization, there are tasks that your teams could be doing better or faster—and some that they don't need to do at all. Coincidentally, these are often the very same tasks that workers dislike the most. That's because they're usually tedious, repetitive, time-consuming, and manual.

Total hours per day spent tracking/completing essential tasks

Source: *2021 Ops Report* by Technomic & Zenput

Convenience Store

9+

HOURS/DAY

SPECIAL OFFER

Restaurant

8.5+

HOURS/DAY

Grocery Store

7+

HOURS/DAY

Recent research by Technomic and Zenput found that, on average, daily operational and safety tasks in restaurants, supermarkets, and convenience stores take anywhere from 11-14 minutes each to complete. Some tasks, such as cleaning and sanitizing, get performed multiple times over the course of a regular work day, amounting to 7-9+ hours a day to complete. That's a significant chunk of time across the board. Yet, despite that, fewer than half of operators are very confident that these tasks are actually being executed correctly or on time. Sound familiar?

If you could streamline or automate these tasks, or eliminate them all together, you'd make everyone's job easier.

Pinpointing the problem areas is the first step:

- Which tasks take longer than they should?

- Which are the first to get put on the back burner when staff gets busy?

- Which are the most error-prone?

- What happens when tasks aren't performed properly or don't get done at all?

Once you answer these questions, you can begin to identify those problem areas in your operation that are ripe for a tech upgrade/automation. Leveraging technology— specifically an operations execution (OpsX) platform—can lend a hand... or twenty.

Shaving hours off of daily routines

Whether it's digitizing paper checklists or automating food temperature monitoring, the right platform can help shave hours off of daily routines and free up employees to tackle more meaningful tasks—like assisting those "hangry" guests. Technology also enables operators to effectively scale up, increasing the efficiency and the execution of work across hundreds or thousands of locations.

To better understand the return that multi-unit operators achieve after implementing Zenput's OpsX platform and how it impacts their business, we recently surveyed customers about two key areas:

1. **Labor efficiency:** How much time employees were saving on manual, administrative work that Zenput either eliminates or helps them accomplish faster.

2. **Execution quality:** How Zenput affects the quality of work being done in every restaurant and store.

The results speak volumes. First, operators reported **saving anywhere from 5 to 10 hours per week at every level of their organization**—at the store, in the field, and HQ. Plus, district and regional managers were able to use the 8 hours that they saved on manual, administrative tasks to **cover 2 additional stores**.

> We're **investing in tech to make our people more efficient** to balance out the shortage in labor. And it lets us do more with less effectively, which is the situation that we're in just given the labor market.

P.F. CHANG'S

Damola Adamolekun,
CEO, P. F. Chang's China Bistro
via Yahoo!Finance

Zenput boosts productivity across the organization

Store Employees save

5+ hours/week

District/Regional Managers save

8+ hours/week

District/Regional Managers cover

2+ more stores

HQ Employees save

10+ hours/week

Source:

The Value of OpsX: Zenput Operations Execution Impact Report

Operators also reported achieving better audit scores and improved audit follow-up: two critical benchmarks used to assess the quality of operations execution at stores. By giving employees valuable time back and improving the execution of critical work being done in every location, operators using Zenput are boosting staff productivity and increasing store performance across the operation.

Leveraging OpsX across your business

Investing in operations execution or "OpsX" technology is the fastest and most efficient way to get a handle on what's happening in every store location. You'll get instant visibility into what's getting done and what's slipping through cracks—and you'll be able to quickly automate many of those manual tasks that are stealing hours from your employees every day. A robust OpsX platform can help drive the productivity of employees in the field and in your stores, and improve the consistency of work happening throughout your entire organization.

20%
IMPROVEMENT
in audit scores

24%
DECLINE
in compliance issues

Here's how:

At the store

Reduce manual work for store employees and ensure tasks are performed correctly and on time, allowing them to focus on higher-value work, like interacting with customers.

Food prep labeling is a critical aspect of food safety, but when done manually, it can eat up a ton of valuable staff time and risk costly downstream mistakes (e.g., mislabeled products, incorrect expiration dates). Operators use Zenput Labels to automate critical steps in the food labeling process, including product identification, calculation of expiration dates, and more.

Store employees simply select from a predefined list of products and ingredients available on a mobile app to quickly and easily print food prep labels. Zenput automatically calculates expiration dates based on the product selection and the current date and time.

> All told, automated food labeling **shaves as much as 30 minutes off food prep time** and reduces the likelihood of preparing and serving past-date products to customers.

30 minutes
SAVED BY AUTOMATING
FOOD LABELING

- Reduces margin of error

- Eliminates another mundane task

- Ensures food prep is done correctly and on time

```
      Fresh Bone-In Chicken

         May 21, 2021
EXPS        Friday

Jane Smith          Kill Date Tracker
May 21 17:09PM      Kill Date: May 10 2021
```

```
         Cajun Spread
       (Room Temp/No Ice)

          13:18PM
EXPS    Sep 22, 2021

Jane Smith          Sandwich Cooler
Sep 22 11:18AM      Expiring: Sep 22 13:18PM
```

```
         Mild Fresh

         May 24, 2021
EXPS        Monday

Jane Smith          Chicken
May 21 17:04PM      Seasoned on: May 21 2021
```

Zenput labels allows us to easily update the product lists across all our stores, the **labels are easy to read, and the app is really intuitive**. And the labels don't leave residue!

Stephanie Siegwald,
Operations Development Director,
RPM Pizza (Domino's Franchisee)

Food temperature monitoring is another key area where automation saves staff time, reduces food safety risks, and increases productivity.

Manually checking temperatures of equipment, such as coolers, freezers, and makelines, every couple of hours is tedious and time-consuming. Zenput Temp Monitoring automates that process.

Sensors automatically generate mobile alerts when temperatures go out of range, notifying the right personnel to identify and address issues as quickly as possible.

This frees up store staff to handle more important tasks like serving customers. Zenput customers use this approach to reclaim 60 minutes/day (or more) of labor time in every store location.

60 minutes

SAVED BY AUTOMATING TEMPERATURE MONITORING

- Auto-generates alerts when temps go out of range

- Immediately assigns follow-up tasks to managers

- Gets store staff out of the freezer and back in front of customers

In the field

Even when they're not on-site, field teams can oversee store performance and perform audits more efficiently, giving them time back to spend on employee coaching and training.

Because field managers can't physically be everywhere at once, Zenput gives them a virtual window into operations at every location— right from their mobile device or computer. Even when not onsite, field teams get instant visibility into where the biggest issues are surfacing so they can funnel resources and attention to the locations that need it most.

For example, when district managers or area coaches receive daily reviews of their process completion percentages in Zenput, they can plan their daily visits according to the completion gaps. As you can imagine, the stores that are executing daily standards at a lower rate also tend to be under staffed or higher volume and benefit the most from a field leader's support on any given day.

REMOTE VISIBILITY

- Gives field teams eyes in every store

- Helps identify short staffed locations that are struggling

- Empowers field managers to quickly funnel resources where they're needed most

JOE'S BURGERS & FRIES
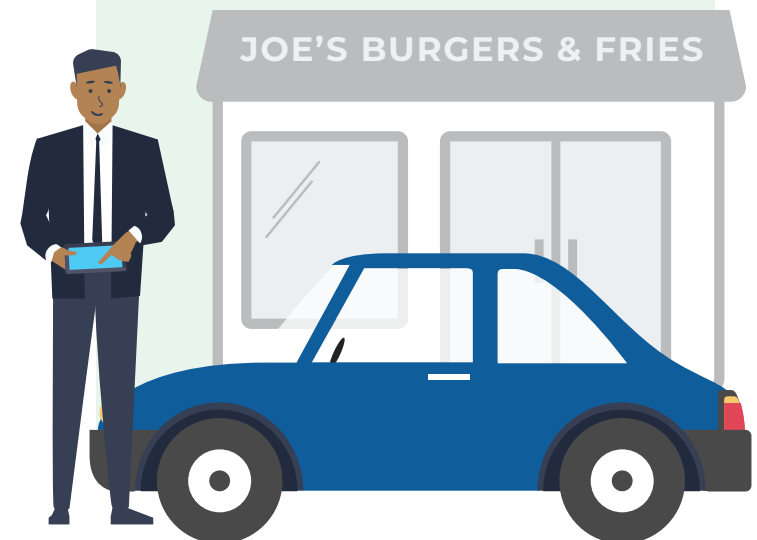
At corporate headquarters

Operations teams need visibility into potential issues before they impact the business. If your organization is still shuffling papers back and forth between store locations, field leaders, and HQ, you're wasting valuable time. The digital era has arrived and the sooner you embrace it, the better for more efficient operations.

Zenput's fully customizable form builder lets you create and edit digital forms, checklists, audits, and more, and instantly make the most recent versions accessible to your teams no matter where they are. Building out all your standard operating procedures in Zenput means that everyone in the organization, from HQ down to the stores, always knows the status of the work being done. That means no more copying, scanning, printing, mailing, shipping, or faxing.

DIGITIZING PROCEDURES

- Allows you to instantly update teams and assign tasks

- Eliminates costly paper-based processes

- Takes tedious, error-prone administrative tasks off everyone's plate

Retaining Your Most Valuable Asset

Optimizing operations is good for business, and for retention

Cutting down on mundane, repetitive tasks makes work less stressful, more enjoyable, and increases job satisfaction. It also lets employees know that they're valued, which is a good way to not only keep the talent you have, but also attract new hires as well.

An OpsX platform can help teams power through each shift more consistently and faster, saving everyone time at each level across the business. These time savings allow your team to put weight behind the big initiatives, like improving customer satisfaction.

Automating processes and speeding the flow of information helps drive efficiency and improves response times. Alerting the right people at the right time switches everyone's focus from reactive to proactive; from putting out proverbial fires to preventing them all together.

Letting everyone know what a job well done looks like

Through task assignments in Zenput, store employees know exactly what they need to get done, how to do it, and when it needs to be completed. Everything is organized for them, so expectations are clear and miscommunications can be avoided.

Understanding each task that needs to get done before completing a shift can make the difference between having a great day at work, or a really bad one. This also helps everyone get their work done faster, and properly.

Showing employees that they work for an innovative company

Operators that roll out next-gen tools like Zenput differentiate themselves from other "old-school" employers by showing that they are forward-thinking and innovative. By investing in the latest technology you can create a more secure and attractive workplace environment—one in which employees can see themselves establishing roots and even building a career.

Meeting today's app-savvy workforce where they are

Millennials and Gen-Z workers comprise an increasingly larger share of the eligible labor pool—and they are all tech-savvy.

> In fact, today's teens and young adults are the world's first "digital natives," meaning they've never known a world without technology. They were practically born with a mobile device in hand.

To attract and retain members of this younger workforce, you'll need to meet them where they are with tools and apps that are as user-friendly and engaging as the ones they rely on for everything else. The Zenput mobile app is designed with this in mind. Workers receive notifications, fill out forms, complete tasks, and communicate with their management team all from the convenience of a store-issued mobile device. Because the design and user experience closely mirrors the apps they use on their own personal devices, even new hires are able to navigate the familiar interface fast.

62%

OF GROCERY STORE WORKERS
agree that technology will create new job opportunities[6].

Source:
Technology and Disruption: Workers'
Predictions on the Future of Retail

Training (and cross-training) employees to boost confidence and reduce turnover

Training is another hot-button issue for multi-unit operators, especially now. We get it. Employee turnover rates are higher, you have less time to get workers up to speed, and there are new and evolving procedures for everyone to master. All too often, managers train a new hire only to have them exit the role months later—and the cycle begins all over again.

That said, given the current challenge of getting enough new hires in the door, it's critical to get every employee trained as quickly as possible. Educating employees to perform job tasks correctly, efficiently, and with confidence, is key.

Managers use Zenput to verify that new hires have not only completed training, but that they've actually understood the information presented to them.

With real-time data from stores, managers can quickly identify training gaps with their employees and distribute additional guidance right in the app, as needed.

96%

OF EMPLOYEES

said they are more likely to stay at a company when they feel confident.

Source: Indeed

In fact, throughout the first 90 days of their employment, Operators can use Zenput to send out procedures and as a result, new employees can quickly learn what procedures are and how to properly execute them to help reinforce what they've learned and to instill confidence that they're doing their job correctly—and that can be key to boosting retention rates. According to a recent survey conducted by the employment website Indeed[7], nearly all respondents said they perform better when they feel confident. Cross-training your staff is another way to help employees feel good about themselves and the work they do.

Expanding an employee's skillset achieves three things:

- It gives them a broader view of the business

- It equips them to fill in when team members from other departments call out

- It makes them feel trusted and valued because you're investing in them

Chipotle offers transparent career paths that include certified training at every level, and crew members sometimes become a manager of a restaurant within 18 months. Last year, the company promoted 13,000 employees in the organization and 70% of its general managers come from hourly roles.

Source: *Restaurant Dive*

Conclusion

Future-proofing your operations

In moments of great crisis: you pivot to survive. And that's exactly what multi-unit operators everywhere did when lockdowns and physical-distancing requirements forced them to adopt new ways of doing business.

For many, that meant completely changing their business model—*practically overnight*. Curbside offerings and food delivery quickly became a lifeline for struggling stores and restaurants, many of whom had little or no experience with the technology and infrastructure needed to make such sweeping changes. Yet, they did— and admirably so.

Almost two years later, the food delivery market in the United States has more than doubled.

Even in areas where pandemic restrictions appear to be on the way out, "to-go" is clearly here to stay. Lesson learned: It pays to pivot.

Now, operators confront another existential challenge: fewer workers and increasing demand. The multi-unit operators that Zenput supports are leveraging technology, including our OpsX platform, to equip their teams for success and future-proof their operations.

# A more productive and desirable workplace for everyone

To thrive and remain competitive, you must seize the moment and act fast to not only retain the staff you have but foster a work environment that attracts a new generation of talent down the road. That means investing in digital tools and automation that boost productivity and help everyone work safer, smarter, and more efficiently.

Ready for the next step?

We're here to help. See Zenput in action or contact us to learn more.

🖥 GET A PERSONAL TOUR

✉ GET IN TOUCH
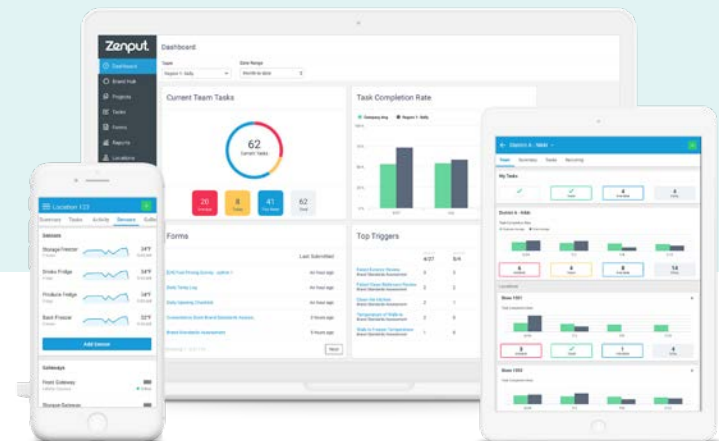
About Zenput

Zenput is how top operators elevate team execution in every store. Restaurant, retail, and other multi-unit operators such as Chipotle, P.F. Chang's, Domino's, Smart & Final, and Timewise use the platform to automate how operating procedures, public health and food safety protocols, and other key initiatives are rolled out and enforced. Supporting 60,000 locations in over 100 countries, Zenput turns strategy into action faster and equips teams to deliver on it.

For more information, visit **zenput.com.**

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