

Hofstra Menus Go Digital

When Hofstra University in Hempstead, N.Y., decided to renovate the cafeteria in its Student Center, it decided to update its menu displays with digital displays.

“The standard boards, what we had in the past, were getting a little outdated,” said Eisa Shukran, director of Dining Services with Lackmann Culinary Services, the campus food-service provider. “We all felt that the menu boards themselves were sort of ‘old school.’ We wanted to get something that was a little more exciting, that we could input and rotate and change the information on it to promote cross-unit marketing and cross-station marketing. Obviously, it is visually exciting to stand on line and watch different graphics and different things. Students have been very receptive to it. They love the idea and it is sort of interactive, too.”

The school, which serves more than 5,000 customers at the location on any given day, chose 13 menu boards and one greater board from Epicure Digital Systems. “The greater board is located at the walkway when entering the cafeteria,” he said. “The greater board was designed more for general information, marketing cross-campus and upcoming events. Inside the cafeteria, these monitors are intended to display menu specials. There are a lot of graphics behind each menu board at each station inside the cafeteria.”

The menu boards may contain graphics specific to each station’s theme. “Each station has its own identity in terms of the graphics,” said Shukran. “If you went to the crepe station, it has all food-related graphics. The graphic relates to the station. It would have fresh fruit and vegetables behind it in the monitor. If you went to the omelet station, it would have different things related to the omelet.”

What also works for the school is that cycle menus can be displayed. “Mondays through Friday could be different items and different periods,” said Lisa Lahiji, director of college and university marketing at Lackmann Culinary Services. “You can rotate a station from breakfast to lunch and the menu will reflect that. You can also make changes immediately. If you



wanted to, say change up Tuesday’s omelet station, if I did it right this second and push enter, it would automatically go to the system and it would show up and Tuesday, it would be automatically changed. Anyone from dining services can actually maintain it.”

The system has been well received by the students and Shukran already has enhancements in the works. “We are looking at different sites and locations. It is not ideal for every store, but some locations are definitely a good fit. We are looking to expand. One of the things we were looking at was changing it altogether for a different purpose. Maybe at one station, we will show live TV, depending on whether a cooking channel has a special on something that relates to that station. We were thinking about changing it up a little bit so it sort of breaks the monotony.”

Shukran sees this as only the beginning of the use of technology in menu marketing. “This is the new era. You see it all over. Technology is advancing and progressing day to day so that in five years, everything is going to be in monitors and there aren’t going to be any boards anywhere. You see that all over.”

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