

#RESTwithEU

# 02 Pathway

## Facilitating Booking: Easy Reservation Management



## INTRODUCTION - FACILITATING BOOKING: EASY RESERVATION MANAGEMENT

Gone are the days when diners had to resort to manual reservation procedures involving phone calls or emails in order to secure a dining reservation. Presently, a mere click consigns the outdated reservation procedure in the restaurant industry to the annals of history. The adoption of a modernised booking system, seamlessly integrated with the restaurant's infrastructure, is increasingly hailed as a best practice. Its implementation can be tailored to suit the unique characteristics of each establishment.

These innovative solutions empower clients to effortlessly make reservations, select their preferred dining choices and receive instantaneous confirmations. By embracing these digital booking tools and management systems, restaurants can significantly improve their efficiency, reduce errors, minimise no-shows, improve diners' experience and optimise their seating capacity.

So, get ready to revolutionise your reservation process and deliver a hassle-free experience that encourages repeat visits from your patrons.

**Let's delve into the realm of booking platforms and management systems to unlock the full potential for growth and success in your restaurant.**

## WHAT ARE THE RECOMMENDED BEST PRACTICES FOR THIS CHALLENGE?

# 01

**BEST PRACTICE 1:  
BUILD AND NURTURE YOUR ONLINE BRAND  
PRESENCE.**

- **Diner Perspective:** A table reservation system
- **Restaurant Perspective:** An efficient reservation management system

# What is **RESTwithEU** Pilot Project

RESTwithEU is a European Commission Pilot Project that aims to make the restaurant sector more resilient and sustainable by 2030 through accelerated digitisation.

## **DIGITALISATION WITHIN RESTAURANT INDUSTRY**

Digitalisation in the restaurant industry involves more than just integrating new technology or connecting to the Internet. It's the process of transitioning a company's operations into the digital realm. This guide specifically addresses digitalisation challenges faced by restaurants and provides recommendations for implementing best practices in your day-to-day operations.

## **WHAT IS A BEST PRACTICE**

A best practice, in essence, is a method or technique consistently proven to yield superior results compared to alternatives in a specific field. It represents the most effective and efficient way of accomplishing a particular goal, typically developed through experience, research, and experimentation, enjoying widespread recognition within an industry or field. In the context of the restaurant industry, these practices aim to optimize restaurant operations for maximum effectiveness and efficiency, contributing to improved performance and heightened customer satisfaction.

## **RESTAURANT CHALLENGES**

The most effective strategies that can significantly benefit your business have been organised and redefined as restaurant industry challenges. The aim is to make these challenges relatable to you, so you can personally connect with one or more and feel inspired to explore and implement the corresponding best practices in your business.

## **DIGITAL PATHWAYS**

Digitalisation pathways refer to the various routes that restaurants can take to incorporate digital technologies and processes into their daily operations and overall functioning. The objective of these pathways is to guide you through digitalization processes, offering support, assistance, and recommendations to help you initiate and navigate these initiatives effectively.

***\*Are you in need of assistance in selecting the ideal challenge for your business?***

*Delve into the Digital Pathway Tool to explore and pinpoint the most fitting best practices aligned with your current level of digitalisation. This tool has been designed to help restaurants SMEs identify and prioritise your digitalisation efforts.*



# Why should you embrace the best practices in this challenge?

We strongly recommend embracing these best practices for the following compelling reasons:



## IMPROVED BOOKING EFFICIENCY:

If you rely on traditional paper-based booking methods and encounter difficulties in maximising your venue's capacity, implementing a digital reservation system can significantly improve your ability to manage bookings and optimise your restaurant's seating.



## NO MORE MISSED OPPORTUNITIES:

Numerous reservations are missed because you cannot consistently answer phone calls while attending to your restaurant's demanding tasks, resulting in missed opportunities to serve potential customers. A reservation system enables both you and your staff to focus on delivering a dining experience rather than fielding phone calls, ultimately enhancing productivity and the quality of service provided.



## MINIMISED NO-SHOWS:

With a well-structured reservation system in place, the likelihood of no-shows is significantly reduced, resulting in a more efficient operation and maximising your revenue potential.



## IMPROVED ACCESSIBILITY AND ENHANCED DINER EXPERIENCE:

Incorporating a reservation system ensures that customers have the flexibility to make bookings around the clock, irrespective of your restaurant's ongoing activities. This extended accessibility not only accommodates a global clientele but also empowers potential diners to peruse your restaurant's availability and select the most convenient time to suit their preferences.

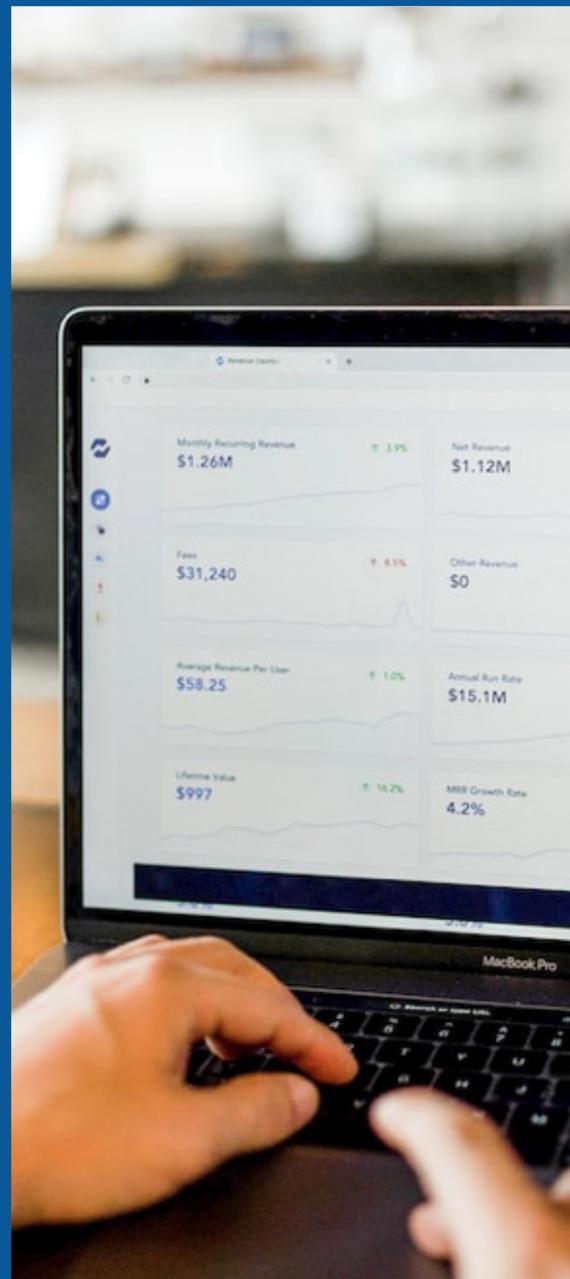
*\* In this challenge, we emphasise the importance of adopting best practices for reservation management. These practices address both the customer's experience and the operational efficiency of the restaurant. To the customer, these practices offer the convenience of reserving a table from the comfort of their home. For the restaurant, they provide essential tools for effective reservation management, accurate forecasting and smooth operation of the dining room. However, it's crucial to select these practices discerningly, taking into account the unique needs of your restaurant. It's worth noting that reservation systems may not be universally necessary, with fast-food establishments or restaurants in bustling locations potentially choosing not to invest in such systems. The decision ultimately hinges on your specific requirements. If you currently rely on traditional booking methods, such as phone- or paper-based systems, we highly recommend the transition to a digital solution for enhanced efficiency and customer service.*

Before the introduction of this pilot project, the participating restaurant relied on manual booking processes through phone calls and paper-based records, which resulted in missed calls from potential diners and incidences of no-shows while requiring staff to be available to receive phone calls for reservations. Initially hesitant about transitioning to digital solutions, the owner eventually embraced the online reservation system. At the conclusion of the pilot project, the restaurant owner was thrilled with the new procedure. Additionally, the restaurant garnered favourable feedback from customers regarding the user-friendliness of the online reservation system.

## DINER PERSPECTIVE: A TABLE RESERVATION SYSTEM

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In our rapidly evolving world, ensuring a smooth and hassle-free booking process is fundamental for the success of restaurants. The integration of a restaurant reservation system has become indispensable, granting diners the convenience of effortlessly reserving tables, whether through the restaurant's website or a third-party application. This user-friendly process typically includes selecting the desired date, time, party size and, if applicable, the preferred dining location, followed by a simple confirmation step. Restaurants have the flexibility to either develop their own in-house reservation system accessible through their website or opt for a third-party platform that centralises bookings within a single application. This duality of choice empowers restaurants to effectively manage their seating capacities while ensuring that diners can conveniently secure their preferred dining experience, thus promoting both customer satisfaction and operational efficiency.



## RESTAURANT PERSPECTIVE: AN EFFICIENT RESERVATION MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

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For the restaurant, a reservation management system enables efficient and organised scheduling of reservations and table allocation. It helps optimise staffing, manage customer flow and ensure smooth operations by providing a centralised platform to keep track of bookings, manage waitlists and handle customer data. The use of a reservation management system can help restaurants better plan for busy periods, improve the overall dining experience for customers and increase operational efficiency.



## What you should keep in mind to implement this best practice

We break down the crucial factors you need to consider when applying the recommended best practices. Utilise the provided template to verify that each recommendation is in place before commencing the implementation process.

Mark either a tick or a cross in the boxes presented on the following page.



### **CHOOSE THE CORRECT SOLUTION FOR YOUR RESTAURANT**



#### **DINER PERSPECTIVE: EFFORTLESS BOOKING**

By implementing user-friendly booking platforms and streamlined management systems, restaurants can simplify the reservation process and eliminate any potential hurdles. With just a few clicks, customers can easily secure their desired dining time, select their preferred seating options and receive instant confirmations. This can also help in facilitating cancellation, reducing the possibility of no-shows.



#### **DINER PERSPECTIVE: CONVENIENCE**

Online booking platforms give customers the luxury of making reservations at their convenience without having to wait for an available staff member to answer their call. This convenience not only saves customers time but also gives them the flexibility to make reservations whenever it's convenient for them.



#### **RESTAURANT PERSPECTIVE: REDUCTION OF EMPLOYEE ERRORS**

By implementing an online reservation system, restaurants can significantly reduce the potential for errors and miscommunication in reservation management. These centralised systems seamlessly connect multiple reservation sources, including online, phone and in-person reservations. Moreover, they offer customers a wider array of options, including choices between indoor and terrace seating, resulting in a smoother and more efficient reservation process that enhances the overall dining experience.



#### **RESTAURANT PERSPECTIVE: REDUCED CUSTOMER CHURN**

Making the booking process easier can contribute to a reduction in customer churn. When customers experience a seamless and hassle-free process, they are more likely to revisit the same restaurant for future reservations. This can lead to increased customer loyalty and repeat business.

## BEST PRACTICE 1 - FACILITATING BOOKING: EASY RESERVATION MANAGEMENT BUILD AND NURTURE YOUR ONLINE BRAND PRESENCE



### **SELECT THE OPTIMAL TECHNOLOGY FOR YOUR RESTAURANT**

Choose a reservation management system that aligns with your restaurant's specific requirements and can efficiently handle your reservation volume. Consider factors such as user-friendliness, integration capabilities and support services. Your choice will largely be budget-dependent, as is often the case. You'll find a range of options available, from straightforward, cost-effective solutions for setting up a basic reservation system to more sophisticated alternatives that seamlessly integrate with your restaurant's existing systems. It is essential to consider such factors when making your decision.



### **THE PLACEMENT OF YOUR RESERVATION SYSTEM**

The optimal location for your reservation system is on your website, which serves as the central hub for managing customer interactions. Your website is where you provide potential customers with information about your restaurant, menu and other pertinent details. This is where customers can conveniently make informed decisions and reservations. Alternatively, you can also utilise third-party platforms, such as search engines or specialised restaurant websites, for this purpose or find a range of options available, from straightforward, cost-effective solutions for setting up a basic reservation system to more sophisticated alternatives —that will enable you to monitor your performance, engage with your customers, gather historical data about your clientele, or that permits an integration with your Point-of-Sale. For further insights on implementing your restaurant's website, refer to Challenge 1's best practices: "Digital presence: connecting with diners".



### **IMPLEMENTATION DURATION**

The timeline for implementing the system is contingent on your chosen solution. As a standard reference, the setup process typically spans around two weeks. It is important to account for the additional period required for staff to become accustomed to the new reservation management approach.



### **TAILORING FOR YOUR RESTAURANT'S DISTINCT PROCEDURES**

This system offers the flexibility for customisation according to your restaurant's specific requirements. You can align it with your menu, operating hours, real-time availability and seating capacity, including specific areas such as lounges, outdoor terraces and reserved sections. Furthermore, you can manually configure the table layout as needed.



### **CONFIRMATION AND REMINDER PROCEDURES**

Customers seek assurance that their reservations have been accurately and securely processed. Develop clear protocols for confirming reservations and sending timely reminders to reduce the likelihood of no-shows. These can include email or SMS reminders. In most instances, applications will encompass this functionality, but it is important to consider during your decision-making process.



### **CONSIDERATION OF WAITLISTS**

In addition to managing confirmed reservations, it is advantageous to incorporate a waitlist feature into your reservation system. Waitlists can be instrumental in efficiently handling last-minute cancellations or accommodating walk-in customers during busy periods. When a reservation is cancelled, the system can automatically notify the next customer on the waitlist, optimising your restaurant's seating capacity and reducing idle tables.



### **ADDRESSING NO-SHOW CONCERNS**

No-shows can significantly impact restaurants, resulting in lost revenue and operational disruptions. Empty tables mean missed sales and potential food waste, affecting both the kitchen and overall operations. To reduce no-shows and improve table occupancy and the diner's experience, send reservation reminders to clients. Consider implementing a digital check-in system inspired by the hotel industry. This system allows customers to confirm reservations online, providing accurate guest counts and, consequently, reducing no-shows.

## BEST PRACTICE 1 - FACILITATING BOOKING: EASY RESERVATION MANAGEMENT BUILD AND NURTURE YOUR ONLINE BRAND PRESENCE



### COLLECT AND ANALYSE RESERVATION DATA

Consistently examine reservation data to identify trends and opportunities for improvement. This practice enables you to refine your reservation management strategy and stay responsive to evolving customer preferences. Take note of when your customers are most inclined to book as this information can inform the need for specific promotions or additional daily services. Furthermore, gathering customer data facilitates communication for marketing campaigns. However, it is crucial to ensure compliance with data protection and legal regulations in this regard.



### STAFF INVOLVEMENT IN THE TRANSITION TO THE DIGITAL PROCESS

Select designated staff members to use the solution. While not every team member in the restaurant needs to engage with it, those who are involved should undergo thorough training to seamlessly integrate it into their daily responsibilities. Please be aware that staff members will also need an adjustment period to transition to the new process. This time allowance is essential to ensuring a smooth and successful integration.



### DO YOU POSSESS THE NECESSARY EQUIPMENT?

A reservation management system necessitates a computer or tablet for control. A computer is stationary while a tablet offers mobility throughout the restaurant, allowing multiple employees to use it. The advantage of using a computer lies in its fixed location, providing a stable and dedicated workspace, while a tablet offers mobility, allowing multiple employees to use it throughout the restaurant. Select the option that best aligns with your needs.



# Recipe for Success: Simplified Table Reservation - A 5 Step Guide

01

## START WITH THE REQUISITES

Begin by establishing the necessary framework for reservation management. Ensure you have the table layout readily available, decide on the placement of the reservation system (possibly on your website) and choose the software that best aligns with your needs and preferences. Begin by selecting a reservation management system that suits your restaurant's specific needs. Look for user-friendly software that accommodates your specific requirements, and ensure you have the required infrastructure and hardware in place to set up the solution.

02

## SETTING UP THE BASICS

Once you have chosen the solution, start the process by adapting to it, onboarding the tool and establishing communication with the provider. Tailor the system to align with your restaurant's operational hours, real-time availability and seating capacity. This process entails following the specific requirements outlined by the solution provider, which may involve determining factors such as the maximum number of guests for table bookings (including group reservations), preferred dining locations (such as terraces or dining halls) and any pre-selected menu choices. Depending on the provider's protocols, they may request this information and subsequently present a tailored proposal. Additionally, you might be asked to provide input regarding colours, images and fonts to maintain branding consistency with your restaurant. Do not forget to include contact information, such as an email or phone number.

03

## DESIGNING THE BOOKING FORM AND IMPLEMENTING THE SOLUTION

With the availability of the necessary data, this step involves designing and developing the booking form. This means integrating the entire flow into the output placement, which could be the restaurant's website or a third-party application.

04

## STAFF TRAINING AND SOLUTION TESTING

Provide comprehensive training for your staff, especially those tasked with reservation management, to ensure their proficiency in using the system, including handling booking confirmations and addressing special requests or adjustments. Prior to the system's launch, undertake meticulous testing to detect and resolve potential issues. Examine various scenarios, including peak booking periods, to ascertain the system's adaptability to diverse situations. Verify the accuracy of bookings received. Additionally, communicate the introduction of the new reservation system to your customers, guiding them through its usage and ensuring their awareness of the booking process and any associated procedural modifications.

05

## ASK FOR FEEDBACK, COLLECT DATA AND IMPROVE THE BOOKING PROCESS

Regularly analyse reservation data to identify patterns and areas for improvement. Use this information to fine-tune your reservation strategy and adapt to changing customer preferences. By remaining flexible and responsive, you can enhance your overall restaurant efficiency and provide an improved dining experience for your guests.

# We encourage you to consider the following options after defining the new digital booking system:

## **A TABLE MANAGEMENT SOLUTION:**

Efficiently organise and utilise tables and seating areas within your restaurant. This encompasses optimising table placement and layout, ensuring prompt and seamless service and maximising seating capacity. These solutions are closely related to command management systems that facilitate communication from the diners' tables to the kitchen. The integration of a table management system that collects reservation information streamlines the process, reduces errors and enhances overall restaurant performance. Explore ways to optimise your table management system within the best practices outlined in [Challenge 4, "Improving Table Service: Faster and More Efficient Processes."](#)

Take note of:

- ✿ **Digital channels are experiencing a lot of traffic and have become a regular way for customers to place orders and make reservations. However, many customers still prefer to use their phones for these purposes. Therefore, having a system that supports all these channels will be beneficial to the restaurant's operational processes.**
- ✿ **The impact of no-shows on your restaurant can be substantial, leading to both financial losses and operational challenges. According to experts, these unfulfilled reservations can account for nearly 20% of all reservations, making it a pressing issue that demands effective mitigation. To minimise this issue and its associated losses, it is important to implement a robust reservation management system. This system can include measures such as reservation confirmations, prepayment options and a well-organised waiting list.**

## Other SME restaurants have already proved the best practice

**Restaurant Antica Trattoria Suban Di Mario (from Italy) is implementing the product of Superb (from Denmark).**



*"[The solution] helped me save time, and [thanks to the digital booking solution] I improved my work scheduling. Now I offer my customers the option to reserve a table or register on the waiting list, even when we are closed or busy. It's easy, convenient and useful. It's time saving."*

**Antica trattoria Suban 1865 (IT)**

### Objective of the pilot

The primary objective of the pilot was to successfully implement a user-friendly digital online reservation system within the restaurant. The aim was to create a platform that could be efficiently managed by the restaurant staff, enabling them to save valuable time and improve the booking process. Key goals included increasing the number of bookings and minimising the occurrence of no-shows.

### Overview

In this pilot project, the focus was on Challenge 2, which aimed to facilitate booking and enhance reservation management within the restaurant. Key objectives included implementing a user-friendly digital online reservation system, saving time for restaurant staff and improving the booking process to ultimately increase the number of bookings and reduce no-shows. The implementation of the online reservation system took a total of two months and incurred a cost of €3,498.

## HERE ARE THE MAIN ACHIEVEMENTS:

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- Conducted a comprehensive assessment of the current restaurant operations to identify the booking process and its connection with restaurant operations.
- Introduced the solution, facilitated onboarding and prepared the required infrastructure (setup of the solution, hardware).
- Designed and implemented a specific booking form, both for internal (for management) and external (on the website) use, tailored to the restaurant's unique specifications.
- Provided comprehensive training to restaurant staff on the new processes and procedures associated with the online reservation system.
- Continuously evaluated the effectiveness of the implemented solution, gathering feedback from both diners and staff.

## ABOUT THE RESTAURANT

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Antica Trattoria Suban di Mario Suban & C.S.A.S. is a family-owned restaurant located in Trieste, Italy. Established in 1865, the restaurant has been passed down through generations, preserving culinary traditions and emphasising customer well-being, food waste reduction, quality and sustainability. Offering fine dining, business dining and family dining experiences, Antica Trattoria Suban can accommodate up to 90 guests at a time with a dedicated team of 15 employees.

## ABOUT THE SOLUTION PROVIDER

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Superb is the world's first all-in-one platform that gives restaurants a comprehensive suite of critical tools, enabling them to collect and connect vital data points. This helps them to make better decisions, increase revenue and engage with their guests on a personalised level.