

Case Study

RESTAURANT  
**54<sup>TH</sup> STREET**  
DRAFTHOUSE

# 54<sup>th</sup> Street Grill & Bar

Serving a Completely  
Connected Experience





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### RESTAURANT PROFILE

#### Restaurant Type:

Table Service

#### Number of Units:

26 sites, in 4 states.

#### Year Established

1989

### THE CHALLENGE

To shape and improve the guest experience while streamlining operations throughout the restaurant.

Since its beginnings in 1989, 54th Street is no stranger to success. The American Casual grill got its start in Kansas City, Missouri—the brainchild of Thomas Norsworthy, who wanted to create a spot for locals with both quality food and a lively bar crowd. Fast-forward 28 years, and the national chain now has 26 locations across four states and employs nearly 3,000 people. With business steadily increasing, the company sought a partnership with QSR Automations in 2009 that gave it an advantage in a sea of national chain competitors.

### ELIMINATING THE WHEELMAN

Al Stenner, Chief Information Officer at 54th Street, said the partnership with QSR was created when the business model included an expeditor, or 'wheelman.' This position, said Stenner, allowed the chain to have a 13-minute average ticket time, but that was when the menu was smaller. The other problem, he said, was that the position had a very specific skillset that wasn't conducive to excelling at other needed skills.

"They weren't good at budgets; they weren't good at hiring and firing or managing employees – [expo] was all they were good at. We started growing and growing, and managers would come in from lunch to the dinner rush, but they couldn't use excel to reconcile end of night books."

With a growing need to create a more well-rounded position, the 54th Street team began searching for a kitchen automation solution. It was then they found out about QSR's ConnectSmart Kitchen. Implementing CSK and its coursing feature provided the solution they needed.

"It's been a home run since day one," said Stenner. "We were able to eliminate the wheelman position. Our managers now can do budgets, and they can hire and fire with confidence because they are well-rounded in their skillset. They don't

have to have that one skill that used to be so highly important to our success."

### A NEW STORE EVERY 7 MONTHS

The QSR solution provided 54th Street with more than just a cut in labor. The data that ConnectSmart Kitchen provided the restaurant became important when making business decisions.

"Because of all the data we get from CSK, we were also able to determine that we needed another fryer bin," said Stenner. "We looked at our cook times and noticed they were going up, so we decided to add new equipment to bring those cook times back down. We went from a 48-inch broiler to a 60-inch broiler and CSK was the tool we used to identify this. As our business, has steadily increased, with the use of CSK we were able to monitor through-put and identify bottle necks easily."

"After implementing ConnectSmart Kitchen, we went from opening up a store every 18 months to one every 7 months. **Things are just done more efficiently.** The personnel piece became so much easier to hire and staff our restaurants. We contribute some of our acceleration to QSR Automations, for sure."

- Al Stenner, Chief Information Officer

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### IMPLEMENTING OTHER QSR SOLUTIONS

In addition to CSK, 54th Street utilizes other QSR products—ConnectSmart Recipes, QSR's recipe viewer, and ConnectSmart, its guest management platform. About ConnectSmart, Stenner said, "One of our main front of house challenges has always been running a manual waitlist. We've done it that way since our conception. We realized that we needed a solution that is consistent and one that was able to provide accurate data and wait times. ConnectSmart was that solution."

Choosing those solutions was a natural step for the company. "We were already using QSR's CSK and ConnectSmart Recipes, so adding ConnectSmart was a smart solution to our problem. It integrates with our current systems." Stenner said the company reduced its cost for pagers using ConnectSmart's two-way guest text messaging, but that the biggest win for 54th Street was the data the chain was able to attain.

Want to learn more about QSR Automations restaurant solutions?

Contact us at 855-980-7328, ext 1 or email us at [Sales@QSRAutomations.com](mailto:Sales@QSRAutomations.com).

"[ConnectSmart Recipes] helps us keep our costs down in training and printing," said Stenner. "We don't have to print recipes. With ConnectSmart Recipes, we are confident that at each restaurant, the dining experience."

"For us, it is all about metrics, Data is very important. With the data we have access to, through both ConnectSmart and ConnectSmart Kitchen, we know we can shape the guest experience. We just recently rolled out ConnectSmart to all 26 of our stores and we know all the potential is there with this tool. We love the accurate wait times and we realize we can really grow with ConnectSmart and all of its capabilities."



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#### ABOUT QSR AUTOMATIONS:

QSR Automations, headquartered in Louisville, KY with offices in the United Kingdom, is a global industry leader in kitchen automation and guest management services. Since 1996, restaurant operators have turned to the brand's signature platform, ConnectSmart, for customized solutions to improve the guest experience and drive operational excellence. Used in 21 of the nation's top 25 casual dining chains, ConnectSmart leverages data to develop customized solutions that create calmer kitchens, simpler workflows and happier guests. We didn't just pioneer restaurant technology, we perfected it.