



# **MORE THAN MENUS: How Digital Signage is Making a Difference Behind the Counter**

**A COMQI THOUGHT LEADERSHIP PAPER**

# Introduction

Quick Service Restaurant operators are discovering how changing menus over from paper and plastic to LCD is just the start of a powerful digital makeover.

This paper looks at how operators – regional, national and global – are using one sophisticated digital engagement platform to gain tangible differences in both the customer facing and staff facing areas.

This paper will highlight the benefits of ComQi's EnGage CMS, deployed at top global food service brands:

Drive customer loyalty and revenue by

- Optimizing menus while still meeting FDA labeling regulations
- Increasing order size
- Improving drive through engagement
- Reinforcing the brand and promoting community programs
- Enhancing the store atmosphere
- Creating a personalized customer experience

Enhance the staff environment through

- Improving employee communication and retention
- Hiring, equipment and food safety training
- Refining staff product knowledge
- Driving policy compliance
- Creating brand mavens

Increase operational bottom-line by

- Improving supply chain efficiencies
- Supporting omni-channel strategies through integrating both customer and corporate devices

You will learn how screens that are powered by ComQi's EnGage™ content management system ensure timely and accurate menus, boost sales and in-store experiences, raise employee retention rates, introduce operating efficiencies, enable training and improve staff communications.

"The message from our clients and the QSR industry is loud and clear. When combining over 100% turnover of store staff with a workforce that are not in front of computers, the need for digital signage to communicate, educate and motivate store staff is critical," Says Ifti Iftar, ComQi CEO. "The benefits of staff facing digital signage positively hit our clients' bottom line immediately. It's for this reason that we developed powerful staff functionality into EnGage, our Content Management System. Now QSR operators have one comprehensive digital platform solving their communication challenges across the board."

# Customer-Facing Applications:

## Maximizing Menus

Around the world, QSRs of all sizes and types have done digital conversions of the static menu boards above or behind their service counters – most of them tied into network-connected content management systems.

That big switch is happening for a few reasons:

- 1 Display and related technology costs have dropped enough that converting from static printed displays makes budgeting sense - when all the costs of printing, shipping and mounting new signs multiple times each year are factored in.
- 2 Menu changes can be made in seconds instead of days or weeks using digital, and different menus can be shown by time of day. The age-old problem of breakfast menus appearing on signs all day has disappeared with digital.
- 3 Eye-grabbing videos for promotions, test products, under-performing items and high margin upsells drive sales on feature screens.



Getting menu items and pricing on screens is relatively easy, but the challenge and opportunity comes with scale. Sophisticated, data-driven platforms like EnGage tie into ordering systems and operator databases, as well as changing pricing and promotions based on things like performance metrics, inventory levels, geo-location and demographics.

What sells in Portland, Oregon can be very different from what sells in Portland, Maine, and smart, efficient systems are built to optimize by locale and by some key performance indicators. There are regional cuisines, and there are also regional food preferences.

More importantly, conversions of menu boards to digital are shown to boost sales on promoted items by double figures. ComQi's EnGage platform is used by McDonald's in the UK, and an analysis found using digital screens boosted sales by as much as 11%, and also increased average transaction values. Even a small percentage increase, though, is significant for these high volume businesses.

## Counting Calories

Long expected rules by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) will require all chain restaurants with more than 20 units, including QSRs, to add calorie counts to their menus by the end of 2016.

While the extra information won't increase the frequency of changes to printed menus, the new rules put more pressure on QSR operators to optimize menus already crowded, in many cases, by descriptions and pricing.

Going digital allows operators to test different menu design and presentation strategies, and find one that does the dual job of showing what's required but not overwhelming customers with too much information and slowing down decisions at the order station.

## Driving Through

Market research suggests as much as 70 per cent of total sales at typical QSRs come via the drive-thru lane, with burger chains on the high end.



Everbrite 3-panel drive-thru system powered by ComQi

With that kind of sales volume, restaurant operators generally have a strong grasp of how to optimize that part of their business – pre-selling motorists as they get into the lane to speed up orders, confirming orders through POS displays and running suggestive selling material intended to boost order totals.

Display, playback and enclosure technologies have advanced to a state that screens even in extreme weather environments – cold and hot – are both visible and reliable to get a message across.

Digital can play a new role in improving the experience of talking to a disembodied speaker and responding to people motorists can't see. While industry metrics for the accuracy and efficiency of drive-thru lanes, QSR Magazine research found 1 in 4 QSR visits were rated below "very friendly" or "pleasant."

The dynamic, real-time capabilities of digital displays – from live data to auto-generated content using HTML5 – make it possible to create unique customer touches. That could be a warm send-off video as people arrive at the pick-up window, or upselling suggestions tied to weather conditions, like "It's getting hot out here. Time for an iced cappuccino?"

But it could also, as systems grow more integrated, build mobile apps and loyalty into the experience. Using a smartphone apps, beacons and web services, it's possible to have motorists pull into the drive thru lane, be greeted and asked if they want the usual, and have the option to pay for the order right off that phone.

What that takes is integrated platforms, like EnGage, which work across multiple platforms and integrate with a variety of systems and engagement technologies.

## Getting Promotional

QSR menu conversions have been so subtle in some QSR chains it takes an experienced pair of eyes to determine if what they're looking at is print or digital. The operators have just output files to digital and left it there.



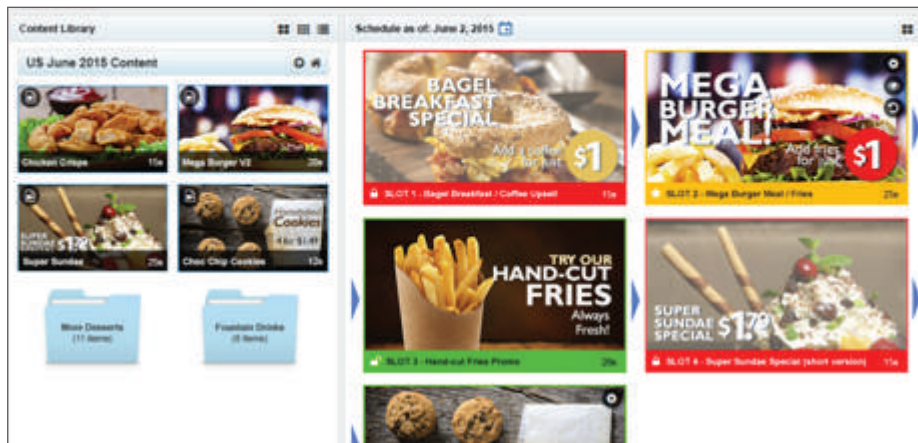
Everbrite 5-panel deployment powered by ComQi

But other operators have embraced and optimized the digital opportunity. They run video on feature zones of screens layouts, dedicate certain displays to targeted promotions, or even use more sophisticated content platforms like ComQi's EnGage to develop, trigger and play out full-motion video promotions that take over all the menu displays, or every customer-facing screen in the restaurant.

Store takeovers using motion graphics that run across a multi-screen menu board command the attention of restaurant customers and are a powerful way to drive new product or support sponsorships, special events or movie tie-ins.

QSRs are also using the menu boards and other screens in-store to promote community programs, such as summer camps for sick and disadvantaged kids, and to run influential, curated social media content posted by happy customers.

Tied to ordering and inventory systems, smart content management platforms like EnGage can shape promotions based on data thresholds. For example, should supplies for a hot item dwindle, the CMS will automatically remove that promotion from the playlist or the frequency at which promotions play will be keyed to performance metrics – increasing the appearance of a promotion that's underperforming.



ComQi's EnGage is evolving their popular On Site Manager to furnish a simple interface and workflow for the franchisee to do local store marketing and promotion.

## Serving Experience

Many QSRs have evolved from offering hard plastic, eat-and-go seating areas to lounges that have softer seating and even special touches like gas fireplaces. Often, these areas also include digital screens as amenities.

Canada's Tim Hortons coffee and bake shop chain, for example, has a dedicated Tims TV channel with screens mounted in the dining area – running news and entertainment content, as well as customer-focused promotions intended to drive things like quality and freshness, brand values, community activities and activations of the company's mobile app, which includes payment capabilities.

Other chains are using digital tools like in-store music. Starbucks, for example, in mid-2015 announced a partnership with streaming music service Spotify that empowers staff to influence the playlist of music being used in individual stores.

ComQi's EnGage platform uniquely provides the capability to manage and play scheduled video playlists and separate subscription music playlists off the same platform and same players in stores.

## Fast & Personal

Interactive screens are being trialed in QSR environments as a mechanism to skip lines by making food orders and paying for them, without talking directly to staff. When the order is ready, the patrons go to a pickup counter.

The attraction for consumers is fast, accurate, custom ordering ("No pickles!"). The attraction for operators is faster transaction processing and less cash handling, with customers paying by bank or credit cards. The stations also reduce the risk for order errors and waste, and come programmed with questions and responses that never have the human factors of teenagers with attitudes.

Jon Strawbridge, Manager of Digital Systems at Everbrite, says "Two recent developments in the QSR Market are the fast adoption of ordering from smartphones & tablets, and the use of Self Order Kiosks. Mobile ordering and interactive Self Order Kiosks are granting a growing number of consumers the ability to create & customize their orders at their own personal pace, which usually translates into a larger per transaction dollar amount."

Both White Castle and McDonald's have trials to test the impact of self-service ordering stations, while in the fast casual space, chains such as Chili's and Applebee's are testing self-service ordering and payment from tablets at dining tables.

Taco Bell, meanwhile, has a mobile ordering and payment app for both drive-thru and dining room orders.

In almost every case, more capabilities like this introduce additional technologies and technology vendors into a service delivery platform that already has many technologies that need to co-exist.

ComQi's EnGage is an Internet of Things platform to support integrated service delivery options that include interactive and mobile. The platform's open design readily integrates with other typical QSR systems like POS.

# Corporate Communication Applications:

## Back Of House

Working at a QSR is a job for most, and not a career. A typical QSR will turnover its full staffing complement annually, and that creates an ongoing need to get critical messages in front of staff who cycle in and out all day, every day.

Digital screens serve four important jobs that are usually out of the diners' view:

- 1 Equipment and safety training** - Kitchens are full of ovens, dryers, sharp utensils and slippery surfaces. Digital screens can powerfully reinforce workplace safety and food safety tips, and reduce liability and lost workday risks.
- 2 Product knowledge** – Operators in the hyper-competitive QSR business thrive or suffer based on the quality of customer service and customer engagement. Messaging that keeps staff informed on new offers and how to engage and speak effectively with customers is critical.
- 3 Company communications** – Typical QSR staff aren't issued desktop PCs or devices, or given email addresses, so the most effective way to ensure important HR messages reach employees are screens that staff invariably see throughout shifts.
- 4 Performance metrics** – Screens tied to management systems can display in real-time how the team is performing on key metrics, like service drive-through order and delivery time.



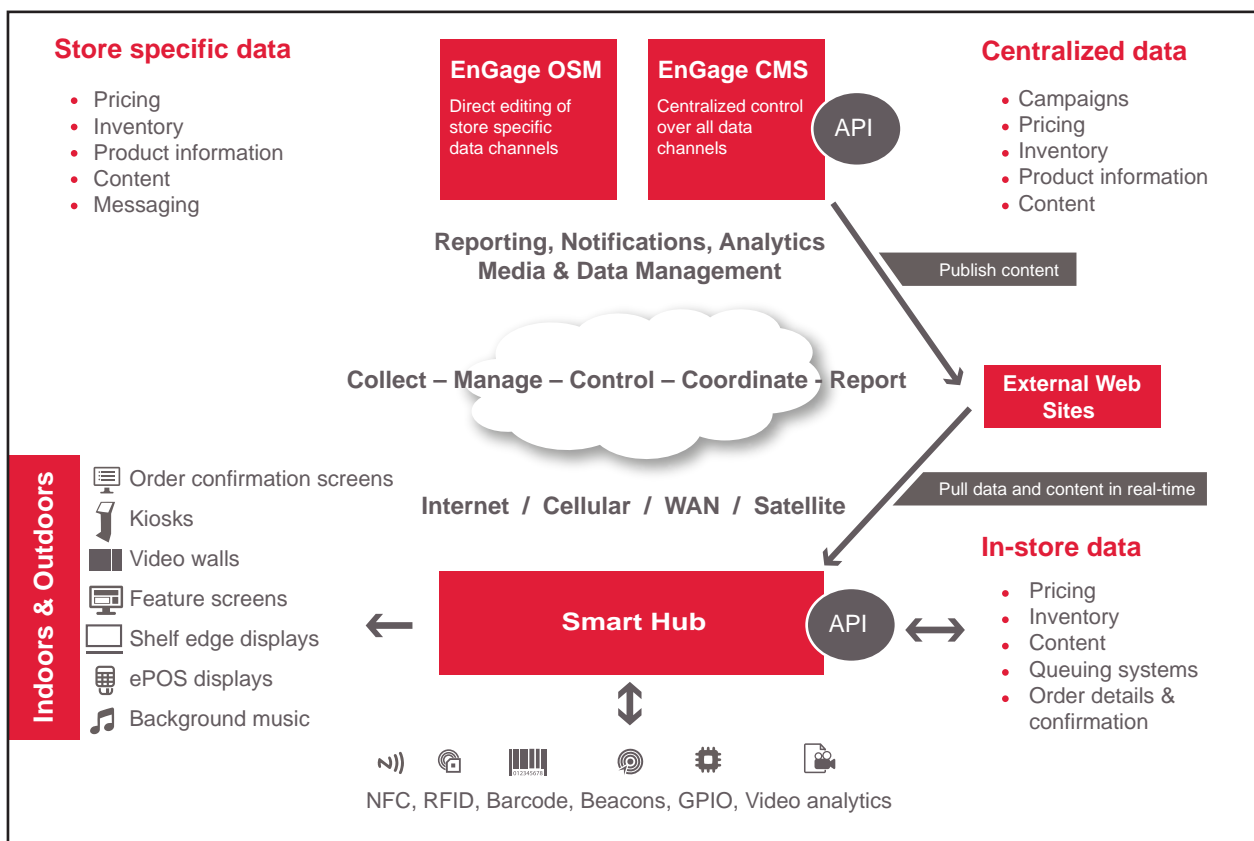
The EnGage platform enables food services owners and managers to tailor communications to their operations. ComQi has clients that, for example, use interactive touch screens to do initial training and provide refresh training on how to use different pieces of equipment in food preparation areas.

# How EnGage Plugs In To the Internet of Things

EnGage is designed with multiple points of extension and integration. On the server side, the data feed subsystem can pull data from a variety of sources, or have data pushed into it. A hybrid SOAP and REST API provide extensive means to command and control the system.

The EnGage Player is a highly extensible and robust end-point. Built using Linux, these rugged, reliable devices act as data integration points, fetching and transforming data from other systems. Via the local player REST API, data and events can be published to the device in real-time. The player's extensive scheduling and programming capabilities enable it to perform a broad range of playback and control functions within the store.

Out of the box, EnGage supports: Video analytics including gender, age, and interest (optional modules), WiFi and Bluetooth monitoring to detect unique visitors, and Device Drivers to provide additional capabilities.



ComQi's EnGage platform includes Smart Hub™ innovation that goes beyond managing in-store digital signage to enabling smart integration with in-store engagement technologies. ComQi's Smart Hub provides QSR's with access to valuable data and analytics that creates a better setting for decision making.

As shown in the diagram above, ComQi connects the store's multiple sensor technologies through ComQi Smart Hubs, ComQi Embedded and Web Applications/ URL Web Connected.

ComQi Smart Hub manages data and content and supports displays, kiosks, beacons, RFID, NFC, ePOS, etc. The Smart Hub provides superior benefits over the ComQi Embedded as it relates to interaction, playback, content/data, and integration capabilities. Currently thousands of Smart Hubs are already installed in Fortune 500 retailers.



ComQi Embedded is a ComQi software application installed on a retailer device which has a pre-existing O/S, such as point of sale (POS) registers, tablets, kiosks, and Samsung SSP (integrated media players).

Web Applications allow any smartphone device to integrate with the EnGage platform through web applications such as VOD, product lookup, etc.

## Pick the Right Path to Success

The QSR industry is diverse and vast, and so is its vendor and services ecosystem. The challenge for operators is trying to sort through all the options available and find solutions that fit their needs.

One path is assembling a collection of independent technologies that do very specific things. Another path is using the expanded capabilities of an existing provider, like a POS vendor that also does very rudimentary digital signage.

Arguably the best path is working with a vendor like ComQi that offers a rich feature set through EnGage, but also has the open design and experienced technical resources to integrate with a QSR's primary vendors.

It's an industry that's about as digital as retail gets these days. Is your chain where it wants to be?

To learn more please contact:

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