

# KDS 101: What Every QSR Needs to Know

Technology has revolutionized most industries, from medicine to music. Now, it is transforming another: meals. Kitchen display systems (KDS) are increasingly replacing manual methods of managing quick service restaurant (QSR) kitchens. This digital system automates order management and fulfillment to drive efficiency through QSR operations. The gains are significant enough that 91% of restaurants are interested in automating kitchen operations,<sup>1</sup> and 52% planned to invest in technology to do so in 2024.<sup>2</sup>

With such interest and potential in technology-based QSR transformation, it's a good time for all QSR owners and managers to learn how KDS works and what it has to offer.

**Here is your guide to understanding and implementing this powerful resource from the ground up.**



## Understanding the Basics of KDS

A KDS is a digital order visualization system that replaces traditional paper tickets with digital displays showing real-time order information. These displays, which can be oriented vertically or horizontally depending on the restaurant's needs, can include touch-screen functionality and bump bars to handle fast input and rough treatment in busy kitchens.

Why invest in these systems? For years, short-order cooks filled the griddle with ingredients based on paper-based slips that servers would tag to a rack. Sometimes, servers would forego the slips altogether and just yell orders to the kitchen, opening the door to lost or misunderstood orders. Plus, paper order slips or "guest checks" meant more paper waste to deal with.

KDS replaces this practice with fast, accurate order delivery. It can streamline the entire restaurant workflow by enabling customers to place their orders and integrating with POS systems for quick payment and bill printing.

## The Critical Role of KDS in QSR Operations

KDS offers several features that transform QSR operations:

- **Constant order tracking.** Before KDS, checking order status meant calling back to the kitchen and waiting to hear from harried staff. Restaurateurs can configure a modern KDS to display up-to-date order status, enabling kitchen staff, servers, and customers to see what's happening.
- **Customizable views for different stations.** Kitchens can configure KDS with multiple displays so that each kitchen station gets its own view of the action. Staff can configure each display to show just the relevant information for that kitchen.
- **Remote configuration.** Epson TrueOrder™ KDS scales beyond multiple stations in a single restaurant. It also operates across multiple sites, allowing managers to update system settings and make changes without being physically present and bill printing.

## 3 Big Benefits for QSRs

The sophisticated features in a KDS deliver some big benefits for QSRs:



### 1 Operational efficiency

One of the most important advantages of a KDS is operational efficiency, which comes in several forms. More accurate orders mean less wastage and refunded losses, and restaurants using KDS report a 56% reduction in order errors.<sup>3</sup>

A KDS also streamlines workflows. Its clear organization through digital displays helps kitchen and serving staff to work more efficiently without confusion. That leads to faster service — a benefit that is enhanced by automated prioritization to help get meals to the table more quickly. The real-time updates that a KDS provides enable staff and managers to monitor order progress constantly, identifying emerging problems, such as bottlenecks, and mitigating them to keep the kitchen running smoothly.



### 2 Customer satisfaction

Efficiency shouldn't come at the cost of customer satisfaction — and with a KDS, it doesn't. In fact, kitchen automation improves the overall customer experience, with 77% of consumers expecting it to speed up orders.<sup>4</sup> Those orders will also be more accurate when handling special requests, such as substitutions or ingredient modifications.

KDS excels at handling not just what is on the plate, but when it arrives. Order tracking through real-time status updates is an important part of the dining experience for two-thirds of customers.<sup>5</sup>



### 3 Staff experience

KDS can also have a positive impact on staff productivity and retention, and help make working conditions more pleasing. When workers first join the team, thanks to intuitive user interfaces that help them to learn the system. Those same interfaces clearly communicate fast-moving order information in a standard way across all restaurant locations, making it easier to transfer staff between restaurants in the same family to cover shortages.

## ROI and QSR Business Impact

Restaurants measure the success of technology investments through their business impact. A well-planned KDS solution can positively impact your restaurant's bottom line while elevating several key performance indicators.

One of the most important business impacts is waste reduction. Digital systems help minimize food waste through improved order accuracy, which can save money and help improve your restaurant's sustainability stance.

Alongside helping to ensure that food is more likely to make it to the table, a KDS can also support consistent processes that lead to more consistent food production. This, along with improved service and fewer ordering errors, encourages customers to come back for the meals they know and love.

Customer satisfaction isn't the only metric that a KDS can help improve. It is also a booster for labor efficiency. It can help staff to work smarter and more productively, which can translate to higher per-shift order processing volumes and reduced fulfillment times.

In general, look for greater efficiencies from your KDS deployment. As a digital system begins to transform your restaurant, you can expect reduced paper costs and better resource utilization.

## Implementing KDS and Where to Start

With the benefits of KDS so clear, it's no wonder that so many QSRs are eager to implement them. But where to start? **Here are some things to consider when procuring and setting up a KDS:**



**Fast order visualization.** Look for a KDS that goes beyond simple order tracking to include easy order visualization at a glance. [Epson TrueOrder KDS](#) automatically color-codes orders based on how long they have been waiting.

**Hardware requirements.** Each station needs an appropriate display and input method based on its function within the restaurant. Consider how many stations you have and their individual requirements.

**Staff training needs.** Although user-friendly interfaces reduce training time, you must still assign time to educate staff on the new system.

**Integration with existing systems.** KDS solutions like [Epson TrueOrder KDS](#) can adapt to work with current restaurant technologies, including POS systems. Analyze your current technology setup, including any future planned upgrades, and talk to your vendor about how best to support it with your incoming KDS.

**Scalability options.** What are your future expansion plans? Choose a KDS that can grow with the business and support multiple locations with minimal effort.

**Offline functionality.** Epson TrueOrder KDS offers remote online configuration capabilities. After configuration it can then continue operating offline without internet connectivity, helping to ensure uninterrupted service.

**Individual station licensing.** Ensure that your KDS vendor offers flexible licensing so that you can take full advantage of cost efficiencies. With [Epson TrueOrder KDS](#), restaurants can license each station individually for maximum flexibility.

## Time to Put KDS on the Menu

With KDS offering clear advantages in efficiency, accuracy, and customer satisfaction, now is the time to consider upgrading your QSR operations with streamlined automation. Quick food service is a competitive industry, and restaurants need every advantage at their disposal to stay ahead.

The advantages of a KDS implementation can be more within your reach than you might think – Epson TrueOrder KDS is designed to be affordable and easy to install. Implementation can begin with a single station, enabling you to quantify the benefits before scaling up your automation.

To learn more about how you can modernize and optimize kitchen operations, visit [Epson.com/kitchen-display-system](https://Epson.com/kitchen-display-system)



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- <https://www.globenewswire.com/news-release/2024/04/16/2863803/0/en/Global-Kitchen-Display-System-Market-is-Set-Attain-Valuation-of-USD-801-2-Million-By-2032-at-6-62-CAGR-Astute-Analytica.html>
- <https://restaurant.org/research-and-media/research/research-reports/2024-technology-landscape-report/>
- <https://www.globenewswire.com/news-release/2024/04/16/2863803/0/en/Global-Kitchen-Display-System-Market-is-Set-Attain-Valuation-of-USD-801-2-Million-By-2032-at-6-62-CAGR-Astute-Analytica.html>
- <https://www.pymnts.com/restaurant-innovation/2023/consumers-want-robots-out-of-sight-and-out-of-mind-when-eating-out/>
- <https://hospitalitytech.com/2023-customer-engagement-technology-study?email-confirmed=1724853500003>

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