

REINVENTING A BUSINESS DURING COVID-19:

How UNO Pizzeria & Grill Used Crunchtime to Create a Stronger Brand

EST. 1943

UNO
PIZZERIA & GRILL

About UNO Pizzeria & Grill

UNO Pizzeria & Grill is an American franchised pizzeria chain created by UNO founders Ike Sewell and Ric Riccardo in Chicago, IL in 1943. Famous for its Chicago-style deep dish pizza, UNO continues to draw its identity and inspiration from the artisan heritage of the original recipe, and each restaurant still makes their deep dish pizza dough fresh every morning. UNO Pizzeria & Grill now boasts over 90 locations in 20 states, the District of Columbia, and across a variety of countries such as Qatar, India, and Saudi Arabia.



The original UNO location | Source: www.unos.com

The Challenge

For better or for worse, the COVID-19 pandemic brought with it a new, ever-changing restaurant landscape. Instead of allowing these new operational challenges to define their business, the management team at UNO decided to use this time of uncertainty to reinvent their business model with the goal of coming out of the pandemic stronger than ever before. Regina Jerome, Senior Vice President of Information Technology, was a key contributor to this transformation and was heavily involved in scaling it across the UNO brand. “It was a strategic decision that we were going to use this time to pivot our business and have new tools in place so that when we came out of COVID, we’d come out swinging,” explained Jerome. “So we really looked at our antiquated tools and took a step back and asked ourselves: what do we really need to run this business?”

To start, UNO found that they were paying too many different vendors for different things. “We had a very large financial system that just didn’t fit the bill. We had [a platform] just for scheduling. We also had food cost tracking that was antiquated or incorrect and was all based on averages costs, so nothing was real. We would load food sales, but couldn’t do it by location, and then also, mysteriously, food costs were the

exact same percentage every week. From a feature and functionality standpoint, Crunchtime sold itself. It just did everything we needed it to do and we could consolidate vendors into one platform.”

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Implementing Crunchtime

Ultimately, the team at UNO selected Crunchtime as their restaurant management platform, due in part to the commitment to keep the platform at the cutting edge of restaurant management and the hands-on support Crunchtime offers.

“I was a big proponent of Crunchtime because while other [platforms] leave their system to get stagnant, Crunchtime continues to develop and expand and maintain and create more within their system,” says Jerome. “We had been doing our daily cash reconciliation and some other reporting on spreadsheets – so we replaced a lot of those tools and really consolidated into one.”



UNO's deep dish pizza | Source: UNO Pizzeria & Grill Facebook

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Given the unknowns brought on by the growing pandemic, it was important to not just have the right resources available, but to take time to evaluate and reshape UNO’s business model. “You can’t wake up on a Monday and decide to be a different company – but you can after COVID,” says Jerome. UNO didn’t shy away from this major project because they were confident with Crunchtime as a partner and recognized that

they had the necessary tools to help manage implementation across all their locations. “It was the easiest and most complex implementation I’ve ever done,” adds Jerome.

UNO’s franchisees added a layer of complexity because not every location operates the same; some have tips and checks, some have coupons and others don’t. The customizability of Crunchtime’s platform allowed different franchisees to be configured to their exacting needs and the Crunchtime implementation and customer success teams were there to help every step of the way.

Adapting During COVID-19

Recognizing that customers weren’t dining out the same way they were previously, the team at UNO began developing plans to adapt. “We immediately went to more take-out and delivery, which we already had built in, but obviously that changed dramatically,” says Jerome. “Our focus is now on a new franchise concept focusing on take-out and delivery and we have found some success in new franchisees in hotels.”

The last piece of UNO’s strategy was to revitalize their brand and define it moving forward. With this in mind, the team at UNO decided to turn to their origins. “We are going back to our roots as a Chicago pizza joint. Our Bar and Grills have been our bread and butter and continue to be a strong part of our brand, but new development will be focused on franchising pizza joints.”



Pizza & beers at UNO | Source: www.unos.com

Outcomes

Just as combining their vendors into one platform was a big draw for UNO, so was having accurate, real-time data at their fingertips.

“With the franchisees that understand the complexity and the power that [Crunchtime] brings, they’re thrilled to get reporting right from the Crunchtime product. It’s all right there: your sales, your labor, your food costs, your controllables that are not food cost related – you can look at a P&L at any time – all of it. Now that we have everything in one place consistently, [the team] is really starting to depend on it.” In particular, the **actual vs. theoretical drill-down tool** was one feature that made Crunchtime stand out compared to other platforms on the market.

“Crunchtime has the strongest food cost [system] in the industry, and the actual versus theoretical is probably the best in its class. Everyone uses that – it’s wonderful. The biggest thing for actual versus theoretical is that anybody can figure out a variance, but to be able to drill down and say for example I don’t have a dairy problem, I have a mozzarella cheese problem – so to find something actionable [with Crunchtime] is amazing.”



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Besides seeing big wins with food costs, UNO has seen positive results with labor costs as well. “[Crunchtime] helped us tremendously with labor management through COVID. We can run labor two points lower than we were ever running it before. We’ve learned how to be efficient and are now more profitable with fewer guests!”

The corporate team at UNO used to have to look in five different places to see a consolidated view of labor across the company and franchisees. Now, they can easily see all the data in one location. With the added visibility, the team realized they can also learn from what other franchisees are doing. “Some of the franchisees were doing it better than [corporate], but now we know who they



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are and we can ask the questions to be able to strengthen our own operations.”

The UNO team has also drastically improved their inventory counting process by using **Counter**, CrunchTime’s inventory app that allows for simultaneous inventory counting using any mobile device.

“Counter is just amazing. It’s so

easy to tell someone like the bartender to do the inventory right there while they’re on their shift as they’re closing. Then someone can be in the walk-in and doing it separately too. No more printing pieces of paper, asking if that says eight or nine, or wondering who did inventory last night. It’s really saved a lot of time,” Jerome says.



An UNO location interior | Source: www.unos.com

Next Steps

Going forward, UNO will continue developing new pizza joint concepts and maintain their focus on take-out options for their franchisees. “We signed up four multi-unit franchisees in the last few months, which during COVID is unheard of,” Jerome noted.

When it comes to adding to their Crunchtime solution, UNO is exploring the possibility of adapting TalentLink as their new Learning Management System (LMS). “We look forward to integrating TalentLink. We have a separate LMS now, but it’s one more thing, one more integration, one more piece that’s outstanding and not being developed. We would love to get onboard with TalentLink.”

COVID may have impacted their business operations, but UNO has successfully evolved into a stronger brand with additional growth goals to come.

About Crunchtime

Crunchtime is how the world’s top restaurant brands achieve ops excellence in every location. Our software is used in over 100,000 locations in 100+ countries to manage inventory, staff scheduling, learning and development, food safety, operational tasks and audits.

For more information visit www.crunchtime.com

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