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**SOCIAL MEDIA** | January 2011 | By Denene Brox

## 500 Million Reasons to Launch Online Ordering

A growing number of quick serves are using the power and influence of social media to revolutionize online ordering.

Facebook now boasts 500 million active users. The average Facebook user clicks the Like button nine times, writes 25 comments, and becomes a fan of two pages each month, according to Mashable's Facebook Factlook. The average user also has 130 friends on the site—giving their Likes a wide reach of influence among friends.

Realizing the influence Facebook users have on their networks, a growing number of quick-service restaurants are taking their fan pages to new heights by incorporating online ordering directly through a Facebook interface.

[A] key way quick serves can take advantage of Facebook is by allowing customers to link their personal Facebook accounts directly with online ordering software—making it even easier to place orders and share online activities with their friends. NetWaiter is one online-marketing and ordering provider for restaurants that offers websites that quick serves can customize with their own branding and menu. A NetWaiter site can link an existing restaurant website to an e-mail address, fax machine, or POS system.

“When a customer places an order through a restaurant that uses NetWaiter, and they use their Facebook account to log in, NetWaiter will take the restaurant's logo and post it to the customer's Facebook feed that says, ‘John Doe just placed an order at Joe's Tacos,’” says Jared Shimoff, senior director at NetWaiter. “That post links back to the NetWaiter site for Joe's Tacos. So it's a neat way for customers to tell their friends, ‘Hey, I just ordered here.’”

Shimoff says that, depending on the restaurant, up to 50 percent of customers will permit NetWaiter to post the activity to their Facebook wall for their friends to see.

“The average number of friends a Facebook user has is about 130; so if only 10 people placed an order using their Facebook account, that's 1,300 people who would get notified about the restaurant,” he says. “It's a great marketing tool.”

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While social media often presents a challenge to businesses trying to evaluate the return on investment, online-ordering applications can offer more concrete results.

With all of the buzz and urgency surrounding social media and mobile apps, jumping head first into an online-ordering application on social media might seem like a logical next step for any quick serve.

Like traditional websites, social media and mobile-ordering platforms require marketing to boost awareness, traffic, and ultimately sales. NetWaiter provides operators a manual with tips for best practices, how to promote online ordering to their customers, and how to make it easy from an operational standpoint.

Shimoff says that to market online and mobile ordering to customers, operators need to create awareness for their customers. “Every time someone calls, take their order, of course, but let them know they can place their order online and tell them to check out your site,” he says.

Online ordering through social media, he says, will continue to grow as more consumers learn about it. “It's not going away, that's for sure,” Shimoff says. “It's a logical step for customer convenience and the marketing for a restaurant.”