

Many restaurant owners ask themselves: *Should I implement an online ordering system for my website or should I just work with an online food delivery portal like Grubhub, Seamless or Just Eat?* Well, the answer to this question might be black, white or... grey.

Advantages of working with an online food delivery portal

The biggest advantage that comes to one's mind is that these portals have a huge number of users, which could become your potential clients. So it must be a very good channel for acquiring customers.

The big portals invest a lot in marketing, resources that a small restaurant could not even dream of. The more clients they get, the bigger the pool for the restaurant becomes. So at least in theory, you would need to focus only on food.

Disadvantages of working with an online food delivery portal

While there are many users, there are also thousands and thousands of restaurants. Depending on your area, the competition could get quite high and you might struggle getting viewed by users.

Many times, increasing your sales through them translates into promotions / discounts or advertising (pay to get listed higher). Note these extra costs (that reduce your margin) and then add the commission that the portal takes per each order.

How should your restaurant work with GrubHub, Seamless or Just Eat?

Should you even consider the food delivery portals? Definitely. They could indeed be a nice source of new clients. But you need to make sure that if you want to build your own client base, you need to have your own website and Facebook page with an online ordering system that you can control. That is not GrubHub, nor Seamless nor whatever other competitor of them. The customers that are visiting your property pages are yours. You can capitalize on your own client base more effectively as you don't need to pay commissions each time they order!

Use the food delivery portals only to acquire new customers

Since the orders coming from your website are free of commissions, you should aim to acquire new customers from the portal and turn them into loyal customers that order from your website or Facebook page.

How do you bring the new clients to your website? It depends on the clients:

First, they need to know that you have a website and that you take online orders from there. Make sure you slip an info flyer in their delivery bag or use a “no touch seal” ([download the template here](#)). Second, customers usually choose the easiest path to order. If you are using our online ordering system, you can confidently advertise a better ordering experience.

On the opposite side you have those that picked you for the promotion. Those are the hardest to convert, as most likely they will search for another promotion (from your restaurant or another) when ordering the next time. Those will need some stronger incentives to follow you on your website ([like a loyalty program](#)).



Be aware of the “reverse” effect

If you already have a good customer base ordering from your website and start with a delivery portal to acquire new clients, pay attention NOT to migrate your customers from your own website to the portal. This is not something likely to happen naturally, as your clients already have the habit of visiting your website, but it's good to keep an eye on how the orders volume change per sources. Once again, it's important that you use a good ordering system, as customers tend to follow the easiest ordering path, with less friction.

Make sure you afford the online food delivery portal

Do the math. Can you afford paying these commissions? Of course you can increase the prices, but this also comes at a cost.

In the model above, the extra costs you have with the online food delivery portals can be seen as an investment, just like you would invest in promoting on Facebook or advertising offline. However, you still need to ask yourself: are these new customers bringing enough extra value to cover for the initial investment?