

# FACILITATOR

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2022  
**bp**  
best  
practices issue

Your **annual guide** to the  
top restaurant facility  
management techniques

◀ **Best Practices in  
Smart Technology**

## DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

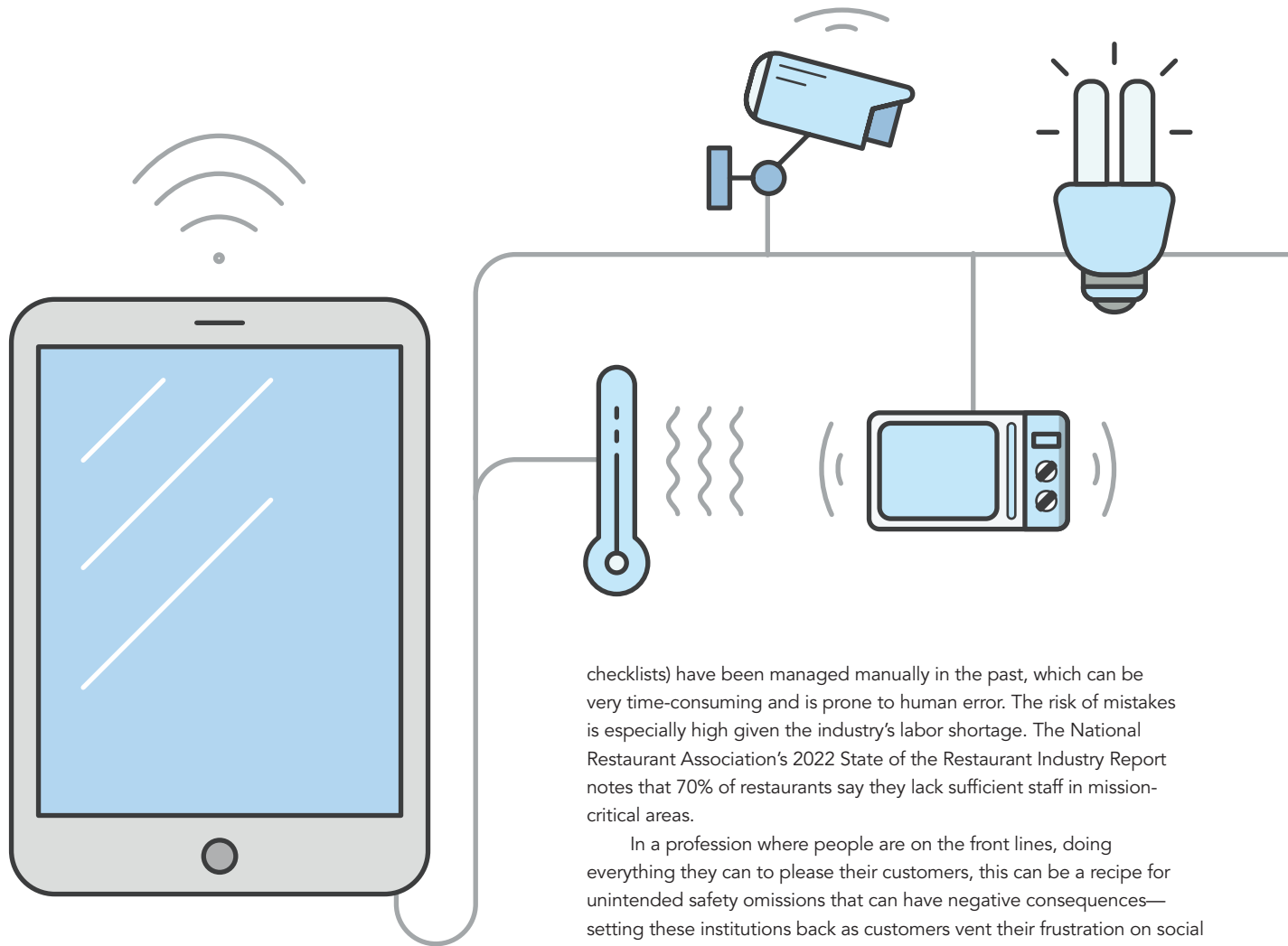
Lead in a way that honors everyone's  
unique perspectives and skills

## MITIGATING WINTER WORRIES

Key considerations for your RFP  
process for snow removal

## DEFENDING YOUR DRAINS

Exploring a new approach to  
commercial food waste disposal



# Improving Site Safety

The power of digital connection

By Jay Fiske

**W**hile food safety and facility sanitation procedures have always been critical for restaurants and foodservice operators, restaurateurs had to become even more vigilant during the onslaught of the pandemic.

Even as the world enters a new normal, and most Americans are comfortable eating out again, restaurant managers continue to face added responsibilities to ensure that every possible safety box is checked.

However, many of their protocols (such as completing safety

checklists) have been managed manually in the past, which can be very time-consuming and is prone to human error. The risk of mistakes is especially high given the industry's labor shortage. The National Restaurant Association's 2022 State of the Restaurant Industry Report notes that 70% of restaurants say they lack sufficient staff in mission-critical areas.

In a profession where people are on the front lines, doing everything they can to please their customers, this can be a recipe for unintended safety omissions that can have negative consequences—setting these institutions back as customers vent their frustration on social media and to the press.

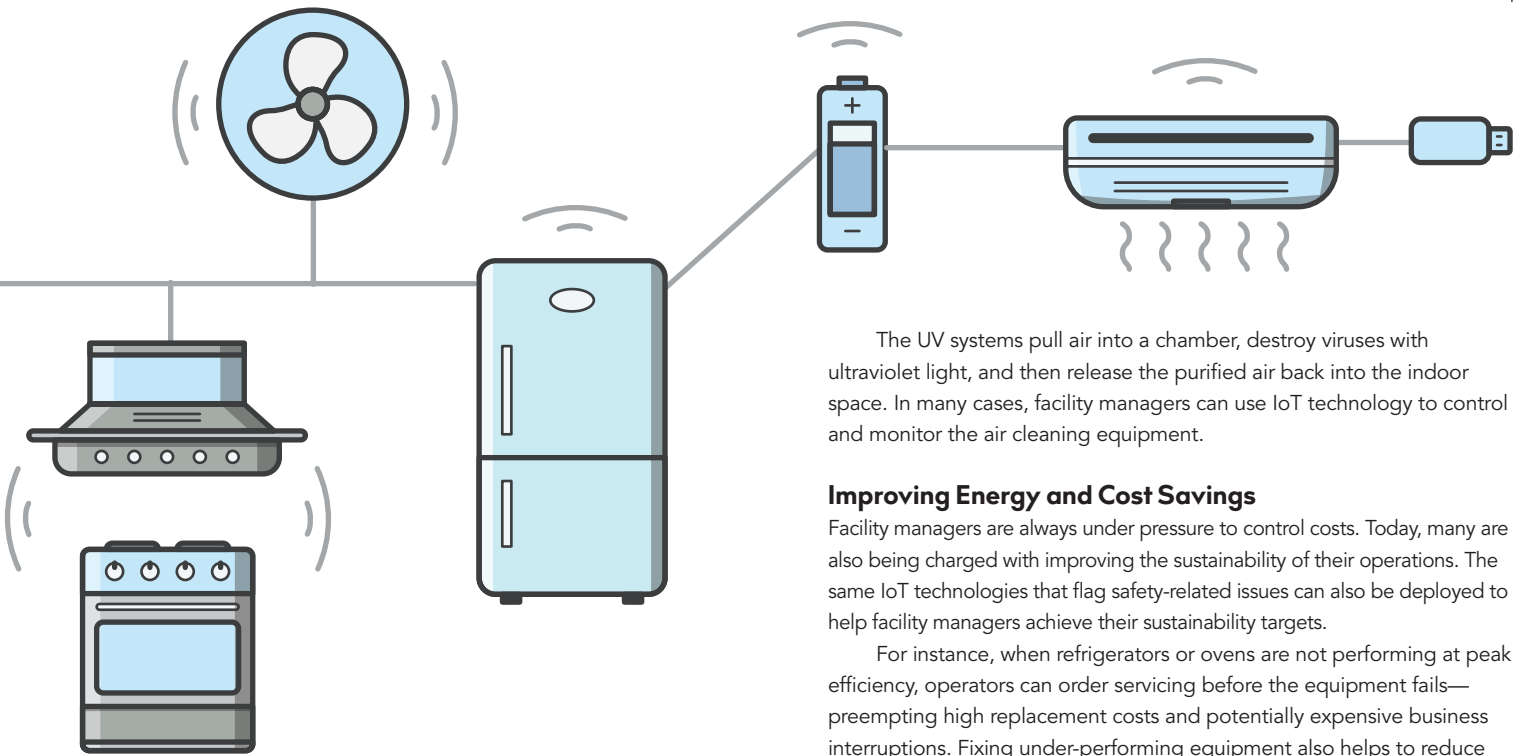
Heightening their risk: Facility managers at multi-unit brands often have dozens of restaurants in their portfolio, making it hard to stay on top of small problems that could morph into major headaches, such as subtle or not-so-subtle signs that a refrigerator is too warm or that a dish machine's rinse cycle isn't hot enough.

For these reasons, restaurants are taking a new look at IoT (Internet of Things), as well as other technologies such as UV air purification, to handle food safety and protection more economically and efficiently and keep facility managers in control of their operations.

## Empowering Facility Management

While restaurant managers might have used various mobile apps and devices to ensure safety in the past, this piecemeal approach is inadequate today, especially for multi-unit brands where the risk of systemic issues exists. One kitchen's problems may be linked to safety hazards throughout the enterprise. However, with an IoT solution that connects key equipment in every location, restaurant managers use one mobile platform to better monitor, analyze, optimize and control safety processes across their portfolio.

By installing sensors on equipment (such as HVAC, ovens, refrigerators, dish machines, freezers, fryers, coffee makers, shake machines, etc.) or directly integrating with the appliances' digital controls, managers can access a range of new data. This data can quickly reveal if



The UV systems pull air into a chamber, destroy viruses with ultraviolet light, and then release the purified air back into the indoor space. In many cases, facility managers can use IoT technology to control and monitor the air cleaning equipment.

### Improving Energy and Cost Savings

Facility managers are always under pressure to control costs. Today, many are also being charged with improving the sustainability of their operations. The same IoT technologies that flag safety-related issues can also be deployed to help facility managers achieve their sustainability targets.

For instance, when refrigerators or ovens are not performing at peak efficiency, operators can order servicing before the equipment fails—preempting high replacement costs and potentially expensive business interruptions. Fixing under-performing equipment also helps to reduce the energy the equipment consumes. In addition, proactively repairing and maintaining equipment can prolong its useful life, keeping it out of landfills for a more extended period.

### Practical Considerations

Thankfully, IoT integrations like these are straightforward to implement and have no meaningful impact on a location's available internet bandwidth.

Investments, which include software fees and, in some cases, additional hardware modules, vary with the extent of the project. Depending on the configuration of each site, there are different ways to connect equipment with cloud-based analytics and controls and start realizing the benefits.

Some equipment may already be "smart"—with embedded wireless radio modules or Ethernet connectivity. In other cases, operators can add a communications module into each appliance. To communicate with connected equipment, facilities can also add a central wireless hub providing a dedicated and secure network for equipment to transmit its data to the cloud.

### The Bottom Line

Restaurants typically measure payback from these integrations in months, rather than years. With IoT technologies, facility managers keep staff and diners safe while improving their facilities' performance, reducing their operating costs, and ensuring that their customers will return again and again. ■

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all systems are operating effectively and if team members are adhering to standards and protocols. Using the platform, managers can review dashboards and alerts across equipment and locations to spot deviations and trends. If an "exception" does occur, managers will receive an alert so they can promptly preempt any issues.

For example, one restaurant brand received alerts from its connected oven, and "forensics" showed that restaurant staff was accidentally cooking proteins before they were fully defrosted. Not only was the restaurant able to stop this protein from being served, it led to the prevention of faulty practices across additional sites.

Having this type of critical data at their fingertips also allows managers to digitize their HACCP safety task lists so their teams don't forget a critical check when staff is spread thin. In addition, digitizing these procedures makes record keeping and storage seamless and helps surprise audits go more smoothly.

The magnitude of problems that data from connected equipment uncovers can be a surprise. For instance, one restaurant concept with more than 200 locations and an excellent safety record installed sensors to monitor its 700+ refrigeration units and flag food temperature "incidents" in real time. Over a five-month period, they received more than 1,000 alerts related to potentially unsafe refrigeration conditions. The good news is that these indicators never turned into actual incidents because the restaurants discovered the issues in time.

### Clean Indoor Air as a New Requirement

Food safety is not the only safety concern for restaurants these days. Air quality is another potential worry.

In response to concerns about airborne viruses, many restaurants have started incorporating ultraviolet (UV) air cleaning technology into their facilities to protect the well-being of their customers and teams. Some solutions kill close to 100% of viruses in the air, including the virus that causes COVID-19.