

Q&A

A one-on-one interview with Brian Sill,
President and Co-founder of Deterministics

Turning foodservice potential into *performance*

Deterministics 10 Commandments of Service Design

- 1 Configuration** of service steps determines optimum delivery system.
- 2 Coordination** of service timing determines guest service quality.
- 3 Control** of service steps—by the guest and by the server benefits each.
- 4 Choice** in menu and service deliverables is key to guest feeling in control.
- 5 Continuity** of coverage by single server consolidates the guest-server relationship.
- 6 Capacity** measurements of service steps assure you don't over-promise and under-deliver.
- 7 Consistency** of roles and methods builds service staff confidence.
- 8 Communication** builds guest-staff relationship.
- 9 Compensation** and reward propel the success of service delivery.
- 10 Celebration** and recognition inspire continuous team excellence.

The international chain restaurant consulting firm Deterministics has pioneered the application of quantitative techniques for improving unit-level productivity and performance since 1985. Their operations engineering, facility design and labor management services have improved the performance of more than 100 restaurant companies around the world. This interview with Deterministics President and Co-founder Brian Sill will provide you with some insights as to how their *deterministic* approach has helped companies reach their full potential over the past twenty years.

Q: You developed a continuous improvement approach that applies capacity measurement to restaurants. How does this work?

Sill: Our philosophy is that every work position, process, equipment piece and facility in a restaurant has a capacity that can be measured, and therefore, managed. We say that if you can't measure it, you can't manage it! The beauty of this is, if you measure your operations in capacity terms you truly understand the throughput potential of your brand. At the same time, you learn your physical limitations, so you do not overpromise and underdeliver. Marketing can get customers to your door, but how you manage your throughput determines how many you serve and how many will return. That's why we call this approach Throughput Capacity Management (TCM).



Q: What are the benefits of TCM?

Sill: Working side by side with service staff in the dining room and cooks in the kitchen, Deterministics develop Labor Recipes™ for each work position. We measure "everything that moves" in the operation to get an inside-out look from the frontline worker perspective. Our dine-along service studies provide a view from the customer perspective and putting it all together gives us five determinates of operations excellence: 1) variability in work processes, 2) capacities of each work position, 3) removal of workflow bottlenecks to create the most efficient facility design, 4) throughput modeling of menus and recipes and 5) recipe-based labor standards for accurate labor management and maximum management buy-in.

Q: Your firm has performed hundreds of service studies. What would you say is the most important in defining service quality?

Sill: Restaurants are a web of time and motion where service quality is determined by the time and timing of service steps – too slow and the experience breaks down, too fast and it flies apart. Since the inhibitors of perfect timing are variability and an ineffective service structure, we measure staff time and timing in step with guest demands, and evaluate these with the company's throughput and table turn goals. The root causes of variability are problem-solved and, when applied with the correct staffing configuration, the guest receives a more consistent and rewarding experience. We see throughput and table turn gains of 10% – 30% with improved service quality and greater tips.

Q: How do restaurant companies design a consistent experience?

Sill: Today it's no longer enough to simply establish timing standards for service and production. It is essential that you continually measure and correct inconsistencies in your delivery system to protect your guests from service failure, and to protect your staff from fatigue and stress, which leads to higher turnover. Once you have researched all avenues for removing service variability, you must design in protective "service buffers" to shield the guest from remaining inconsistencies. Service buffers take the form of safety labor, safety stock and a fast expedition system. Diligent application of our TCM methods combined with our Ten Commandments of Service Design will guide you in setting up a delivery system that wins the guest over every time.

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