



TECH IT SERIOUSLY

Meet Digital Expectations—Or Lose Business to Someone Who Does

By Brandon Willey

It's easy to think digital engagement is just a branding buzzword. But done right, it drives real revenue. Whether streamlining bookings, promoting time-sensitive offers, increasing spend per visit, or building brand awareness in your community, digital engagement drives repeat business. I recently sat down with Chuck DeMonte of Raydius.co to discuss digital strategies that enable center operators to influence guest behavior in real time, extend the lifecycle of a guest, and maximize revenue across multiple channels.

THE MOBILE-FIRST ADVANTAGE

Optimized for Every Screen (Especially Phones)

These days, if your site does not work beautifully on a smartphone, you are losing business—plain and simple. With most online traffic now coming from smartphones, mobile optimization is no longer a "nice to have," but a prerequisite. As DeMonte puts it, "First impressions are everything. When someone lands on your website, you must make navigating easy for them." He continues, "Your website should be responsive, fast-loading, and intuitive, with simplified navigation and bold calls-to-action that make it easy for guests to book a lane, reserve a party room, or browse your menu."

He adds, "A well-designed mobile checkout flow also allows guests to pre-order food, reload arcade cards, or purchase branded merchandise, all from the palm of their hand." This convenience enhances the guest experience and reduces friction in the buying process, directly impacting conversion rates and average transaction values.

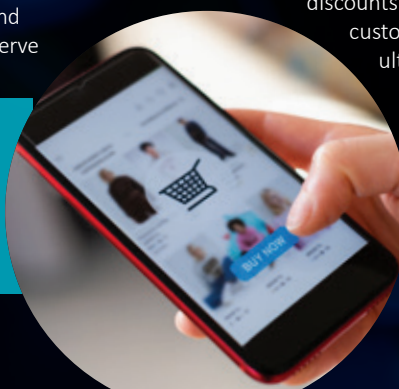
A Seamless Digital Journey

Not everyone will download your app, but just about everyone will visit your website. That is why having a mobile-optimized site *and* a branded app is smart business. Each touchpoint should feel connected and easy to use. The more intuitive and professional your tech is, the more likely people will make reservations or buy something on the spot. "Both the app and website should collect valuable customer data—contact details, purchase history, preferences—that feed into your centralized guest profile database," DeMonte says.

Engagement On-the-Go

"Having relevant, timely, and convenient conversations with your guests is a marketing superpower, and push notifications are a powerful tool for real-time engagement," DeMonte mentions. He continues, "Use these notifications to alert guests about flash sales, birthday promotions, or new attractions. Timed correctly, these nudges can drive impulse visits or increase party bookings around key seasonal windows."

DeMonte encourages using mobile-only rewards, like special discounts or loyalty perks, to keep customers checking your app. This ultimately builds a stronger relationship with your guests and results in a more consistent revenue flow. DeMonte exclaims, "It's strategies like these that can take your bowling center from mediocre to uber-successful!"



Competitive Strategies

TURNING SOCIAL MEDIA INTO REVENUE

Awareness to Conversion

Social media is not just about likes and shares—it is a direct path to conversion. DeMonte explains, "The top of the marketing funnel for any business is awareness, and the easiest way to get that is social media content marketing on platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok." These platforms are ideal for showcasing your center's energy and excitement, primarily when posts feature real guests having real fun. This content builds FOMO (fear of missing out) and can nudge people into booking, especially when paired with easy booking links or swipe-up offers.

Tip: Demonte adds, "If you eventually venture into paid social media advertising and you have been posting organic, engaging content, it will make the paid ads much more effective."

Influencer and User-Generated Content

Your guests are already taking photos, so you need to encourage them to tag you. Use in-center signage and sweeten the deal with a simple giveaway (e.g., "Tag us to win a party for 10!"). DeMonte adds, "Make sure to place signage throughout your center promoting the social sharing and tagging of your brand."

Collaborating with local influencers, especially family-oriented creators and community figures, adds credibility and introduces your venue to new audiences. Demonte clarifies, "These partnerships are often more affordable than traditional advertising and deliver high engagement with niche, local followers." This organic content acts as social proof and extends your reach exponentially.

Power Up with Paid Ads

Innovative advertising strategies allow you to fill slow days, promote seasonal events, and drive specific bookings—like birthday parties or corporate events. DeMonte remarks, "The cost to reach people through social media ads is a fraction of that of legacy media and advertising. This is one of the biggest reasons it has been the dominant form of advertising for the last ten years." Geo-targeted ads can reach users within a defined radius, while retargeting strategies can re-engage website visitors or app users who did not complete their booking.



DeMonte cautions, "If you're a beginner, you should use paid social media minimally to increase your brand's reach." With proper segmentation, however, you can deliver personalized ads based on past behavior, reminding a previous guest to rebook or offering a special incentive for first-time visitors. He continues, "If you have the budget to hire a professional or have the knowledge yourself, paid social advertising can be an awareness-to-conversion game changer."

MEASURE WHAT MATTERS

Do not just post—track. Use data to understand what is working. Key metrics include:

App downloads

Bounce and conversion rates

Customer Lifetime Value (CLV)

Social media engagement

Return on Ad Spend (ROAS)

Measuring your Return on Ad Spend (ROAS) should be monitored closely. DeMonte suggests that your ROAS should be three times your spend. For example, if you spend \$1,000 on ads, then that should return \$3,000 in attributable revenue.

START SIMPLE, BUILD SMART

Ultimately, the most successful operators will be those who stop viewing digital as an accessory and start using it as a primary driver of guest acquisition, retention, and revenue. DeMonte emphasizes, "The more digitally integrated you are, from being active on social media to having the proper tech stack for measuring conversions, the higher the probability of success, period."

If you are overwhelmed, start small:

Make your mobile site unforgettable.

Encourage social engagement.

Test a few paid ads.

Most importantly, do not ignore digital because it is not your thing. Someone on your team should own it. The more connected your tech is, the more connected your guests feel, and that means more bookings, more birthdays, and more revenue. ●



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