

Case study: Kahala Brands

Location: Scottsdale, AZ



The client

With a collection of nearly 30 unique restaurant concepts and approximately 3,300 locations in roughly 30 countries, Kahala Brands is one of the fastest growing franchising companies in the world. Generating over \$1 billion in system-wide sales annually, they continue to grow and leave a lasting footprint in each market they enter. With dedicated in-house teams to support the brands, Kahala Brands is committed to helping franchisees achieve their entrepreneurial goals of building and operating their own business. Some of their most popular brands include Cold Stone Creamery, Blimpie, Thai Express, Planet Smoothie and TacoTime.

The challenge

Thai Express, the company's most popular Asian quick service restaurant brand, was in the process of revamping around ten of its North American franchise location menu boards. No longer having a relationship with their initial menu board/point of sale partner, the Kahala Brands franchisees had been looking for a new provider to help make the transition from static menus and older out-of-date signage to digital, requiring custom menu board software.

The solution

Best Buy® Business partnered with L Squared, a Content Management System (CMS) and software provider, to respond to an RFP to be Thai Express's sole provider for new store locations, mainly in the southwest, that were in need of digital menu boards. Best Buy Business provided the hardware, installation, software licensing and software content while L Squared delivered the content management platform. Michelle Gothan, Kahala Brands National Marketing Manager, explains:

"I inherited the transition from our old partner, so it took me a while to figure out this process. I was put in contact with the Best Buy Business Account Managers, who were very patient and explained what would be needed and how everything worked. We ended up having a few conference calls, each of them really great conversations that we continue to have.

"So fast-forward to when we began to switch out the old menu boards, which were a combination of old TVs and magnetic boards. I was in the trenches with the installers and figured out the software side and how to manage it through those helpful interactions.

"Now we're in the process of rolling it out to other stores as well, so I'm really excited about that and so are they, especially knowing how much they'll pay a month against what they used to. It's really quite a substantial savings and, on top of it, our graphic designers have more control of the graphics and the messaging, like motion graphics, daily specials and limited time offers.



Thai Express location with digital menu boards. Graphic representation of a single digital menu board.

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— Michelle Gothan, National Marketing Manager, Kahala Brands

"In one instance, just to illustrate the ease, we were having our graphic designers design all these menu boards and just doing it from a computer screen. So I asked, and was granted permission, to have one of them come out to one of the locations, and we literally interfaced with the management system and spent three hours tweaking it. I mean he was literally making the changes on his Macbook, changing graphics on the fly and then throwing it up on the boards—and were watching it all live, in real time. In the past, it might've taken a week to get it right.

"It's also totally self-sufficient; and in events where an issue comes up, like I had at one new installation site, one of your Geek Squad® technicians literally texted me and within minutes everything was resolved. I think he was out there in less than an hour. That's the responsiveness we need right there."

Michelle concludes, "As you know Kahala has almost thirty different brands and everybody runs them differently. So now we're trying to get everyone on the same menu boards. It has been happening like this and I'm confident it will continue over time now that we have Best Buy Business and L Squared. It's because these guys are so fantastic, very patient and very expressive in terms of helping me learn things. It's been just fabulous."