

How 54th Street Grill & Bar Accelerated Growth and Streamlined Operations Across 26 Locations

54th Street Grill & Bar began in Kansas City in 1989 with a mission to serve quality food in a lively, neighborhood bar-and-grill atmosphere. Over nearly three decades, the brand expanded to 26 locations across four states, employing nearly 3,000 team members. As the business grew, leadership recognized the need for technology that could support scale, improve consistency, and help shape a better guest experience across every restaurant.

 Casual Dining
  26 Locations
  United States
  Crunchtime Kitchen & Crunchtime Host



**54TH
STREET**

Faster ticket times and improved kitchen throughput

Optimized labor, management, and layouts using data-driven insights

Reduced store opening cycle from 18 to 7 months

Challenge

Scaling Growth While Improving the Guest Experience

As menu complexity increased and volumes grew, 54th Street relied heavily on a highly specialized expeditor role—referred to internally as the “wheelman”—to maintain fast ticket times. While effective in the short term, this role created long-term challenges. The required skill set was narrow, difficult to hire for,



and limited managers’ ability to focus on broader operational responsibilities such as budgeting, staffing, and performance management. At the same time, the brand needed better visibility into kitchen performance and guest flow to support expansion and ensure consistency across all locations.

Solution

Replacing Manual Processes with Connected Kitchen and Guest Management Technology

54th Street implemented Crunchtime Kitchen to automate kitchen workflows and introduce coursing, timing, and real-time visibility across the line. Crunchtime Kitchen also allowed the brand to eliminate the wheelman position entirely while maintaining fast ticket times and improving coordination.

To further enhance operations, 54th Street added Crunchtime Host to modernize guest waitlist management. Host replaced manual waitlists with accurate, data-driven wait quotes and two-way guest text messaging, improving both the guest experience and staff efficiency.

Because the solutions integrate seamlessly, leadership gained a complete view of the entire restaurant's performance.



[With Crunchtime] it's been a home run since day one. We were able to eliminate the wheelman position."

Al Stenner
Chief Information Officer,
54th Street Grill & Bar

Results

Operational Efficiency, Smarter Decisions, and Faster Expansion

With Crunchtime Kitchen in place, 54th Street significantly improved labor efficiency and manager effectiveness. Managers became more well-rounded, able to focus on hiring, budgeting, and leadership rather than relying on a single specialized role to manage the kitchen.

The real-time data enabled smarter operational decisions. By analyzing cook times and throughput, the team identified bottlenecks and justified equipment upgrades—such as expanding broiler capacity—to maintain speed of service as demand increased.

"Because of all the data we get from Crunchtime Kitchen, we were able to determine that we needed another fryer bin."

— Al Stenner, Chief Information Officer

These efficiencies helped fuel rapid expansion, accelerating growth from one new restaurant every 18 months to one every seven months.

Crunchtime Host delivered more accurate wait times, reduced reliance on pagers through two-way SMS, and provided valuable guest flow data across all 26 locations.

"For us, it is all about metrics. With the data we have access to, we know we can shape the guest experience."

— Al Stenner, Chief Information Officer

By standardizing kitchen, training, and guest management technology, 54th Street Grill & Bar built a scalable, data-driven operation that supports growth, empowers managers, and delivers a consistent guest experience across every location.