

Topher Smith

The Customer Advocate

SERVING UP A NEW CAREER

Great customer service can go a long way. For Topher Smith, it opened doors to a new career and an exciting entrepreneurial journey.

Whether working as a bartender, supervisor, or restaurant general manager, Topher had been immersed in the food and beverage industry for over two decades. And while he loved the fast-paced environment, his favorite part of the job was connecting with people.

“I loved developing relationships with customers,” he says. “You become part of each others’ lives and start conversations that last for years.”

In 2015, one such conversation with a regular customer set Topher on the path to business ownership. The customer, a local entrepreneur, approached Topher about managing a couple of his Jimmy John’s franchises in town. “It felt like a natural progression for my career,” says Topher. “I was excited to apply what I already knew from the industry, while also learning more about the business side of things.”

BREAD & BUTTER

After managing operations for a while, Topher was ready to take on a larger role. He and his business partner eventually purchased the two sandwich shops, but this exciting milestone didn’t come without its fair share of challenges.



As a new business owner, Topher says he had to overcome a “steep learning curve” during the first few months, particularly when it came to juggling day-to-day tasks, managing personnel and making high-level decisions.

“I was working 70 to 80 hours a week in the shops trying to balance everything,” he recalls. On top of a new role and an intense work schedule, Topher had to navigate financial difficulties at both franchise locations.

“We took over 2 stores that weren’t doing well,” he shares. “I wanted to build them back up and grow our customer base as quickly as possible.”

But when Topher began digging into the stores’ existing financial systems, he worried that inefficiencies would drastically slow their progress.

“I had to spend hours looking at our books, printing and mailing reports and receipts to a bookkeeper each week,” he says. “We usually wouldn’t hear anything back for a month. It was tedious.”

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Customer Testimonial

Quick Service Restaurant

Jimmy John’s

Topher’s why:
Connecting with customers and bettering their lives.

Years as an entrepreneur:

2

These types of hurdles took Topher's focus away from the initial reason he got into the industry: service.

If he was going to free up time recruit and hire friendly team members and build relationships with customers, Topher knew he needed more efficient, reliable financial systems in place.

FREAKY FAST GROWTH

After attending a franchisee event and meeting other fast-casual business owners, Topher discovered Ceterus.

“The customer service is great. Everyone is very helpful and friendly; it's really refreshing and different from what I'd experienced before.”

“I'm able to see how the stores are doing and where we can focus on cutting costs,” says Topher.

He and his partner are planning to open two or three new locations in the coming years, and they're using Ceterus to help scale those operations.

“We're able to look at the financials instantly, and it's incredibly comprehensive and interactive,” he says. “As we grow and I become less involved in the day-to-day, that will be very important.”

The platform blended everything he valued.

“The customer service is great,” he says. “Everyone is very helpful and friendly; it's really refreshing and different from what I'd experienced before. Plus, it's much more efficient.”



Rather than spending hours each week going over his books, organizing printouts and receipts and mailing them to an accountant, Topher can now login at the end of each period to see his monthly reports.

“I generally go in when the financials are live to see how the previous month went,” he says. “Everything is in place and online -- it's so much better and faster.”

He also uses the platform's built-in KPIs to assist with high-level decisions and plan for the future.

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Get In Touch

Find out how you can start making better decisions!

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Want to know more?

Ceterus empowers small business entrepreneurs with done-for-you accounting and benchmarked reporting. Ceterus' Edge system automates entries into QuickBooks Online and aggregates financial data to provide peer benchmarked reporting. Ceterus pairs technology with people to deliver a one stop solution for entrepreneurs. Headquartered in Charleston, SC, Ceterus has been named to the Inc. 5000 and South Carolina's Best Places to Work.