

CASE STUDY

THE MADERA GROUP



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Support
System

PROBLEM TO SOLVE

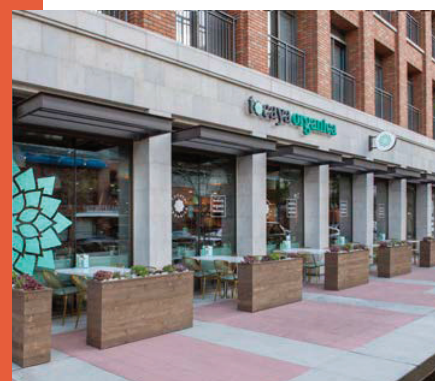
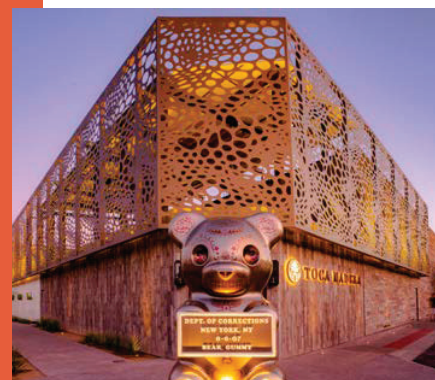
As the Madera Group expands its portfolio of locally-sourced, chef-driven restaurant venues to new concepts and geographies, it is increasingly important that the company have fast, reliable and cost-effective IT support. Employee retention, however, is challenging as burnout is high among IT staff required to be available on-call 24/7/365.

SOLUTION

The Madera Group has partnered with independent IT provider Sidewerks to operate a virtual help desk with round-the-clock support to all of the venues in its portfolio. Director of Technology Justin Keenen says that with its hospitality pedigree and deep knowledge of restaurant systems, Sidewerks has become “part of the team.”

RESULTS

Keenen estimates that Sidewerks now provides all the productivity of two full-time employees at a fraction of the cost. Not only has he gained peace of mind in entrusting IT help services to experts at Sidewerks, Keenen says he now has more time to pursue value-adding strategic initiatives that impact The Madera Group's bottom line.





Based in West Hollywood, The Madera Group operates a sophisticated portfolio of locally-sourced, chef-driven restaurants across Southern California and Arizona. Among its most recognized brands are Toca Madera – a glamorous reimagining of traditional Mexican cuisine with sensuous lounge vibes – and Tocaya Organica, a chain of healthy lifestyle eateries offering modern Latin fare. In addition to its two legacy brands, The Madera Group is now pioneering a series of new ventures including the Burrito Lab, a ghost kitchen concept, and others that will soon be bringing the group's signature fresh flavors to the region.

Behind The Madera Group's impeccably appointed dining rooms, a robust systems infrastructure is the backbone of the company's success, says Director of Technology Justin Keenen. A diverse restaurant portfolio like Madera's requires extensive IT capabilities and round-the-clock support for network connection management, backup, phones, utilities, core systems like POS and kitchen displays, online ordering and third-party delivery platforms, SaaS products, back office IT support, security and video surveillance. It's a complex web of technology and a failure at any point in the chain could bring business grinding to a halt at one or more locations.

"It's always a challenge for restaurants to develop – and afford – a help desk that can operate 24/7/365 across multiple time zones," Keenen says. Full-time IT staff are expensive and employees burn out quickly when on-call for nights, weekends and holidays. Turnover rates can be high, and both time and systems knowledge is lost to a revolving door of personnel requiring training and departing just as they've built up IP.

IT with a hospitality pedigree

"In the life of any restaurant group, there's a point where you have to determine whether to staff up [an IT help desk] with your own people or go with a third party," Keenen explains. But conventional third-party IT providers are not without their own risks. "Hospitality and restaurants are like no other business," Keenen

says. "You can teach IT to restaurants, but you can't teach the restaurant business to an IT provider."

That's why when The Madera Group made the decision to bring in third-party IT support, he says, "Sidewerks was the obvious choice – they have a hospitality pedigree."

LA-based managed IT company Sidewerks offers side-by-side support to clients in the hospitality industry. It's this unique industry expertise, and the fact that the company came highly recommended, that had Keenen convinced.

A third-party provider that becomes part of the team

"[IT providers] need to know your business and act like part of it," he says. That means not only delivering prompt and skillful IT support, but also advancing The Madera Group's business goals through the implementation of cost-saving efficiencies and improvement opportunities. "Sidewerks is an extension of my IT," Keenen explains, "They act as part of the team." In fact, he laughs, most people don't know that they're not.

Sidewerks now provides The Madera Group with an augmented IT help desk available 24/7 every day of the year across multiple time zones. The company's staff quickly resolve IT issues whenever they arise, from something as simple as resetting a password to more complex security or kitchen display system trouble shooting that can be done on or off-site. Keenen says not only are Sidewerks just a call away, they're constantly in touch via Slack.

No matter the issue, Sidewerks responds within minutes. "They meet or beat their service license agreement every time," he says.

The productivity equivalent of two employees

Since The Madera Group first brought on Sidewerks, the service has become an essential part of the company's business operations. In

line with The Madera Group's efforts to work smarter and more efficiently, Keenen says Sidewerks offers all the productivity of two full-time employees at a fraction of the cost. Rather than spending time troubleshooting basic network failures or resolving a POS issue, he adds, "having Sidewerks on board has freed me up so that I can focus on my larger strategic initiatives" –that is, those that have an impact on the company's bottom line.

And as The Madera Group expands their brand portfolio and geographic reach, Sidewerks will grow with the company. It's all about being able to scale the business without needing to also scale the help desk, Keenen says. Bringing Sidewerks onto the team was the right decision when The Madera Group's portfolio contained just two brands, and it's a choice that's looking even more prescient in hindsight.

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–Justin Keenen, Director of Technology

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