

Why-fi?

Why not? For minimal cost and inconvenience to yourself, you could offer your customers an extra incentive to come in and use your premises

Most restaurants and bars these days have some form of computer in the back office somewhere, more often than not either gathering dust, being used for games of solitaire or for visiting dodgy websites. While larger establishments and chains have heartily embraced computer technology and all its trappings, realising the financial benefits that Electronic Management Systems and other such hi-tech applications can bring them, for the smaller operator, computerbased solutions don't seem to offer so much of a money saving/generating incentive, and so they've been slower on the uptake when it comes to things like Wi-Fi.

But Wi-Fi offers a fantastic opportunity to generate a wealth of extra business and income, because rather than

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restricting your computer capability to your own back office, it offers it to your entire clientele, front of house.

And that's a major attraction these days. A little over ten years ago, hardly anyone had a mobile phone. These days very few of us could imagine our lives without one. A sad fact, but true nevertheless. The same fact is becoming true of email. Take me, for example. Whenever I turn up in town or city for an appointment early, I always duck into the nearest branch of Starbucks, not because I'm sucker for their delicious coffee, but because I know I can get myself online and check my emails. Now, what do you think someone like me would rather

do, pop into a coffee shop, check my emails and come out with a cappuccino moustache, or pop into a bar, check my emails and have a couple of pints and a packet of pork scratchings whilst ogling a busty barmaid's wares?

And I'm just one example. Most business people nowadays carry with them a complete mobile office, in a bag only slightly larger than the current Mrs Ferguson's handbag. They want to be able to sit down, open their bag of tricks and log on to the Internet or their email account, anywhere that suits them. Wouldn't it be interesting if that happened to be your bar or restaurant?

Short for Wireless Fidelity, Wi-Fi is simply a wireless internet access facility enabling users to connect without the need for individual terminals or cables.

As long as their laptop is Wi-Fi compatible, which most models these days are as standard, all the customer has to do is open their internet browser programme and follow the on-screen instructions.

You can, if you want, charge for the facility by installing a gateway the password for which customers have to pay for, or you can lay it on for free, as an incentive to come in and partake of your delights.

All you will need to install is a 'Wi-Fi transmitter, which should be nothing more than a fairly small black box positioned somewhere near a telephone point. You will probably have to pay for installation and then pay a monthly line rental charge.



Installation can cost anything from £50-£1,000 with line rental costing between £40-£100 per month.

Dine, a restaurant and wine bar near Chancery Lane in London, offers complimentary Wi-Fi access to customers using the bar, issuing cards for 30 minutes of internet access on request against a minimum purchase of a glass of wine. This they envisage helping to boost sales outside their main meal times, which, like the vast majority of us, is always traditionally quiet time.

So, Wi-Fi could potentially be a great money-generating solution for your business, whatever size you are. Now, I know what you're thinking:

nothing's that simple, there has to be a downside. Well, the only downside is that the whole area of Wi-Fi a huge untapped goldmine. Which means that the number of operators out there is set to use dramatically in the next year or so, all of them, you can guarantee, being prepared to fight tooth and nail for your business by offering a bewildering array of different value packages. Choosing the best one for your business might just drive you crazy.

Wi-Fi Folk

www.hotspots.co.uk

www.broadscape.net

www.starktechnologies.com