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## Will Airport Mobile Ordering and Deliveries Have a Future Post-Pandemic?

*IdeaWorksCompany contributed information to this article - - see italics.*

*Some may wonder if airport mobile ordering and delivery is a pandemic fad or a trend. The answer will come quickly for anyone who's spent an extended amount of time in airports. It's only a matter of time before competitors start popping up.*

What began as an idea in 2015 for its founder, who was tired of running through airports without any time to grab a meal or coffee, is now a growing in-airport mobile app food and retail delivery company.

At Your Gate offers a convenient and touch-free approach to ordering food, drinks, adult beverages, and merchandise from airport merchants through its app, with deliveries directly to departure gates, employee breakrooms, and on the planes for flight crews.

Valued at \$40 million, At Your Gate has grown the most throughout the changing landscape of the pandemic that has been embracing mobile ordering and deliveries at major U.S. airports.

"What's nice about our business, is it's extremely scalable," said PJ Mastracchio, founder and CEO of At Your Gate.

For example, he delivered 30 mobile airport orders in an hour compared to two an hour for mobile ordering and delivery services on the streets.

Currently, At Your Gate doesn't have any competitors offering airport mobile app deliveries, he said.

The need for social distancing and other pandemic requirements has created a ripe environment for airport mobile ordering apps and deliveries to become the next hot thing. But will they have a future post-pandemic?

According to Mastracchio, that genie is out of the bottle, and there's no going back.

"Many of the innovations that became prevalent in the last 18 months will continue to be important for consumers as they have created an expectation for contactless and touchless services and capabilities," Mastracchio said.

And while it's difficult to predict the future, it's easy to see how having airport mobile ordering and deliveries will be hard to let go of once the world returns to the hurried pace of life.

Mastracchio believes that the services will remain a time saver and critical part of the airport experience for travelers and airport employees post-pandemic.

He's not alone.

***"There is a big future for online ordering of food within the airport environment," said Jay Sorensen, president of IdeaWorksCompany, a product, partnership, and marketing practice.***

***"The low profit margin of food, and the complexities of holding fresh food, dissuades airlines from making major effort here. That food is already available on airport concourses, and freshly prepared, is huge advantage for on-airport sources," Sorensen adds.***

Semi-autonomous robots assist At Your Gate brand ambassadors on the ground with large orders.

Founded by Mastracchio, Chris Hartman, and David Henninger, At Your Gate's in-airport mobile ordering and the delivery app were inaugurated in one terminal at San Diego airport in 2018. The strategic launch was only available to airport employees, allowing room for mistakes, improvements, and compensating its customers, Mastracchio said.

From doing distance studies between locations three times a day to checking food temperatures to ensure the food wouldn't get soggy and remained hot, to learning the intricacies of the airport and working with airport employees, the company founders learned a lot.

These methods proved effective in convincing weary airport concession operators to partner with the mobile ordering and delivery service.



*At Your Gate ambassador gets mobile order delivery assistance from a robot. Photo courtesy of At Your Gate*

“We learned that employees are heavy users and there’s incrementality to our sales,” Mastracchio said.

Mastracchio said giving customers that voice helped springboard the company to launch at airports in the NYC area, Boston, and Minneapolis before Covid-19 hit. The company furloughed 81 workers and applied for a paycheck protection program loan to survive.

Instead of having to shut down operations, Mastracchio said the phones started ringing. The first calls came from concession operators forced to close some restaurants when the pandemic brought flying to a halt but still trying to find a way to feed essential workers at the airports.

Although the flying public wasn’t at the airport, employees were there unloading cargo and personal protective equipment, and At Your Gate became essential workers at the height of the pandemic, he said.

United was the first airline to call, needing help to feed its pilots, followed by other airlines looking for help with crew meals at the time and providing food for employees on the ground, Mastracchio said.

Presently available at 18 airports nationwide, the company’s goal is to be at 28 to 30 domestic airports before the end of 2021 and launch internationally soon after.

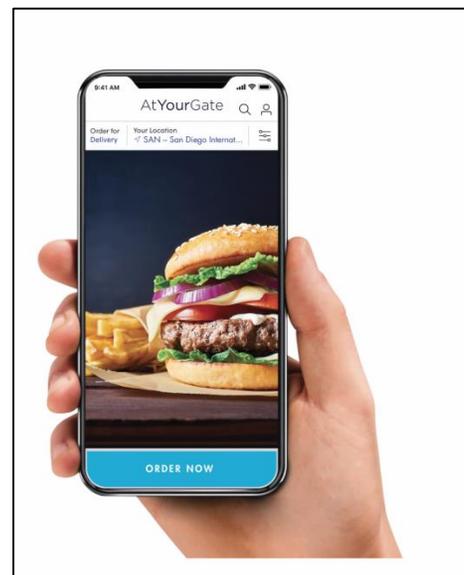
A customer is ordering At Your Gate airport delivery via a mobile app. Photo courtesy of At Your Gate

At Your Gate is expanding its reach by partnering its delivery services with airport orders and other airport mobile ordering apps, including an aggregate on the American Airlines and United apps.

“At Your Gate is the boots on the ground,” said an American spokesperson confirming its partnership with the mobile app startup in an email to Skift.

The At Your Gate offerings on the American app only appear 90-minutes before departure for passengers with a booked flight, she said.

Mastracchio said customers do not incur added fees to items in their orders. Instead, At Your Gate charges a \$4.99 delivery fee for travelers and \$2.99 for employees entitled to a 15 percent to 20 percent employee discount off their order.



*At Your Gate Mobile Airport Delivery app*

Another revenue stream the company recently introduced is a forty-nine-cent pick-up fee allowing customers to skip the line. And already at New York's JFK airport, it's generating a couple of hundred pick-ups before At Your Gate employees show up to work with pre-orders of coffees and other morning treats customers collect on their way to work.

At Your Gate has also been charging a four percent convenience fee since Covid-19, which Mastracchio said proves beneficial on large orders of hundreds of dollars it sometimes receives.

Additionally, the company is delving into distributing product samples in airports along with its delivery orders as another revenue stream and is currently working with a local New York City coffee brewer.

After raising over \$7 million from mostly family and friends, the company is in the process of getting more strategic investors to come into the company, Mastracchio said from Southern California, where he is raising an equity round.

Now 60 plus strong with eight executives, the company is adding more brand ambassadors to existing airports and new airports joining its portfolio.

At Your Gate partners with SkyQuad, an airport startup offering families part-nanny and part-concierge service at five airports and counting, to share its badged laborforce in airports they both serve, Mastracchio said.

***“As Zoom — because of the pandemic — opened our eyes to online meetings, delivery apps have blossomed during the pandemic. Both will continue as major consumer habits as the pandemic recedes,” said Sorensen.***