

**CASE STUDY**

# **How Boston Pizza Improved Guest Experiences beyond the Dining Room during a Global Pandemic**





# Summary

## The Challenges

Being able to...

- Provide a consistent online guest experience beyond the dining room
- Navigate the COVID-19 pandemic's widespread impact on the customer journey
- Unify 375+ separate franchises with decentralized customer communication touchpoints, inconsistent responses, and differing brand voices

## The Solution

- 24/7 review management and customer engagement on Boston Pizza's owned channels
- Side-by-side coaching, education, and social listening tech onboarding
- Customized and template response strategies from one brand voice
- Daily customer insights reports to triage and navigate crises

## The Results



**3% → 99% RR**

Transformed a 3% Response Rate (RR) to a 99% RR



**↓ 2 days**

Reduced response time by up to 2 full business days



**★3.3 → ★4**

Improved customer review rating from 3.3/5 to 4/5

**Boston Pizza's decentralized platform management needed an upgrade. Integrated, 24/7 community management turned their customer's experience around, and formed a foundation for changes in the COVID-19 pandemic.**



## The Company

As Canada's #1 casual dining brand, Boston Pizza has been serving communities through 375+ franchisees coast to coast. Described as both a family-friendly, casual dining restaurant and a sports bar with a lively atmosphere, Boston Pizza serves up an extensive menu with more than 100 items to choose from for dine-in, take-out, and delivery.

Since opening their first location in Edmonton, Alberta in 1964, Boston Pizza has served more guests annually than any other casual dining concept in the country – over 40 million guests each year.

But a discrepancy between the in-person customer relationship and online one was growing. Then, the COVID-19 pandemic hit. Like many businesses during the pandemic, Boston Pizza had to make massive changes to their business model, and it shook an already decentralized communication foundation with their customers. During the pandemic, they leveraged their strong relationship with 24/7 community management agency, ICUC, to continue to build consistency and reliability with their loyal customers and improve the overall guest experience.



Keep reading to learn how Boston Pizza implemented guidance from social media first experts to navigate **decentralized customer service** issues and form one **unified brand**.



## The Challenges

Ensure consistent, reliable, and fast customer responses online during a rapidly changing global pandemic.

As Cory Goddard, Senior Director, Operations Systems & Training at Boston Pizza explains, Boston Pizza needed social media first experts who could become an extension of their team and navigate the unknown. With millions of guests across 375+ franchises, their team was burdened with new responsibilities and a lack of time and resources.



The past 2 years have been the most challenging that our industry has ever faced, and it's been made more manageable by partners like ICUC.



Cory Goddard,  
Senior Director, Operations Systems & Training



It was not only the pandemic that caused guest relationship shifts. Social media itself boomed to a front in the mid-2000s, and at the start of the partnership, Boston Pizza considered itself behind the times.



“One of our biggest challenges to overcome was education and awareness of the social media landscape... We needed someone who spoke the language and were the experts.”



Not to mention, BP was dealing with a national chain and separate customer touchpoints. ICUC offered a systemized community management and customer service model. The two teams formed a strong partnership through a side-by-side onboarding experience.



“A huge hurdle ICUC helped us overcome was just system implementation. They provided side by side coaching and support ... it was a lot of coaching, training, and assistance. Our 375+ restaurants all have separate pages, so you can imagine the groundwork we needed to cover to get us up to speed. I just know that it was cumbersome, and they handled it.



Together they set a new standard for Boston Pizza's service level agreements (SLA) so that the Boston Pizza internal team could focus their time back on their business.

## **The Solution**

Rapidly scalable community management and crisis moderation with hands-on coaching, and an embedded team of experts.

ICUC's strategic community management foundation showed Boston Pizza they could understand the brand at a genuine level, combining the power of humans and data-rich social listening technology.



The most appealing aspect of ICUC's services was their ability to provide consistent response times and nuanced responses based on the guest experience. Before, we had anxiety about guests being left hanging online.





During the densest period of the pandemic, ICUC employed a global team to set a new standard for customer experience through:

- 24/7 online engagement and management with online, social, and app-based feedback
- Mass tracking and daily sentiment reporting, raising flags before they became viral issues



They helped us communicate to and manage our guest experience despite the many challenges we were facing such as supply chain shortages, program changes, and even vaccine passport verifications. They gave us daily summaries so we could get a handle on the scope of complaints, and it was a huge relief.



Knowing they could rely on ICUC with their brand and customers, Boston Pizza could focus on business growth and development.



ICUC has been able to give us relief in the customer engagement area of our business to shift our attention to other serious realms, especially because we've been stretched so thin.

Our franchisees are saving time by not having restaurant managers respond to all the reviews, comments, and questions. Not to mention listing accuracy and SEO optimization. And there's no way we'd be able to respond as fast as ICUC.







## Results

### Transformed a 3% Response Rate (RR) to a 99% RR

ICUC has been Boston Pizza's "always-on" partner for digital customer service, community engagement, and crisis management since 2015. They were able to form authentic guest connections and a genuine understanding of the company's mission and value through their unique service offering.



In the 12 months prior to partnering with ICUC, Boston Pizza had a response rate of 3% and an overall rating of 3.3/5. Year to date (2021), we have a response rate of 99% and an overall rating of 4/5, with an additional 20,000 reviews."



With a pandemic in the rearview mirror, its effects (and industry changes) remain. Together, ICUC and Boston Pizza are looking forward to a future post-pandemic and establishing an even stronger and innovative customer experience.



ICUC has been consistent throughout, and each person we work with has had a genuine commitment to be present. We appreciate it so much. There is a strong throughline with ICUC."



Cory Goddard,  
Senior Director, Operations Systems & Training



# Stay “Always On” Social, Without the Hassle

Allow your brand to be active online 24/7 with a  
global community management agency.

**LET’S TALK**



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