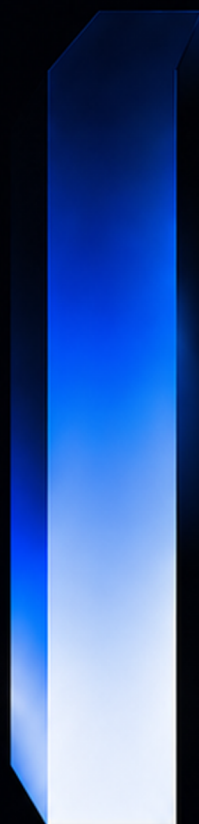
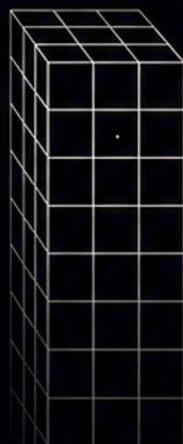
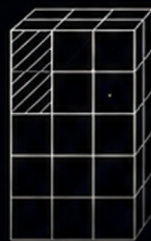
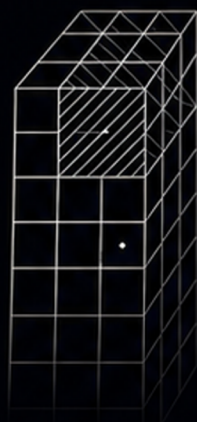


RESEARCH REPORT

The State of Voice AI in Restaurants

Insights from one million customer interactions across thousands of restaurants.

Explore call volume, answer rates, after-hours demand, order intent, and more.



→ Insights from one million customer interactions

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01 The headline numbers

The phone is the most under-instrumented part of the restaurant business. Restaurants have an under-acknowledged problem with their phones. The average paying restaurant on Maple receives roughly one in five of its calls outside the hours it's open to take them. Friday's call volume is nearly double Monday's. And the dominant reason people call isn't what most operators think it is.

19%

of calls land after-hours or on closed days —
1 in 5 calls a typical restaurant never gets to
answer

87%

of calls resolved by AI — the remaining 13%
transferred by design, to the calls that actually
need a person

Caller intent changes by phone mode. At restaurants taking orders over the phone, ordering is the dominant named intent. At restaurants that don't take phone orders, reservations become the largest named intent. Both cohorts share a common pattern: more than 1 in 8 calls are customers explicitly asking to speak to a human.

The phone is still the highest-intent channel a restaurant has. It's also the one most teams are quietly losing every day they don't have someone fast enough to pick up.

02 When the phone rings

Friday is the peak. After-hours is the leak. The gap between Friday and Monday call volume is roughly **+80%** — whoever takes calls on Friday handles nearly twice the volume they saw three days earlier.

Restaurant phone volume isn't evenly distributed. It clusters Friday and Saturday — by a wide margin. This isn't surprising, but most restaurants staff phones as if volume were flat across the week.

Roughly **19% of restaurant calls land either on a day the restaurant is closed entirely, or before the open time, or after the close time.** Without an automated phone agent, that's 1 in 5 calls a typical restaurant never gets a chance to answer. If you have voicemail, industry data suggests it captures maybe a third of those — meaning roughly 13% of all calls simply disappear.

+80%

Friday vs Monday call volume — the weekly
peak is nearly double the trough

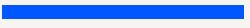
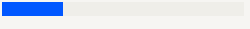
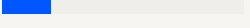
~13%

of all calls lost entirely — after-hours calls that
voicemail never captures

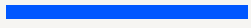
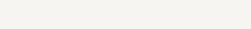
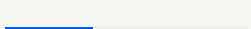
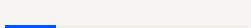
03 What callers want

Caller intent depends on the kind of phone your restaurant runs. Restaurant phone data changes meaningfully by phone mode — stores that take orders over the phone generate a disproportionate share of all call volume, while reservation- and information-heavy restaurants have a different phone shape entirely.

ORDER-TAKING RESTAURANTS

Intent	Share
Place an order	 ~40%
Transfer to human	 ~13%
Hours / info	 ~10%
Reservation / book- ing	 ~8%

RESERVATION-LED RESTAURANTS

Intent	Share
Reservation / book- ing	 ~28%
Transfer to human	 ~13%
Hours / info	 ~10%
Place an order	 ~6%

The shared pattern is human escalation. In both cohorts, more than 1 in 8 calls are callers asking to speak to a person or to be transferred. Some of those questions genuinely need a human; others reflect gaps in what callers expect an automated system to handle. Across all calls, about **87%** are resolved by AI.

04 What gets ordered

Order intent and reservation intent are the two biggest revenue signals. On order-taking restaurant phones, 40% of callers are trying to place an order. On reservation- and information-heavy restaurant phones, 28% of callers are trying to reserve or book. Those are intent declarations before the call even starts — the caller already decided what they want.

Reservation-led restaurants have a different phone shape. The phone is still high-intent, but the action is booking rather than ordering. Both patterns point to the same conclusion: the phone is not a support channel — it's a revenue channel wearing a support channel's hat.

40%

of callers at order-taking restaurants are trying to place an order — before the call even starts

28%

of callers at reservation-led restaurants are trying to book — the top intent in that cohort

05 The 8-question phone audit

Eight questions every restaurant owner should answer. Use this list as a self-audit. If you don't know the answer to most of these, you don't have visibility into a meaningful chunk of your guest relationship.

01 How many calls did your restaurant receive last week?

Most operators guess 30–50% of the real number. The phone is harder to instrument than the POS, so it stays invisible.

02 What % of those calls did you actually answer?

On busy nights, the answered rate at independent restaurants is often below 60%. Every unanswered call is a customer who tried.

03 How many came in after-hours?

Industry data (this report): about 1 in 5. If you have voicemail, it captures maybe a third of those.

04 What were the top 5 reasons people called?

Most operators guess “reservations” first. The real answer in 2026 is ordering, then transfer-to-human, then reservations, then hours.

05 How many catering inquiries did you get last month?

Catering is often the single highest-revenue conversation a restaurant has. Most teams never count it explicitly.

06 How long does the average call to your restaurant last?

Industry median (this report): a little over a minute. Anything above 2 minutes is usually staff getting tied up — the cost the phone imposes on the floor.

07 How many calls turn into orders or reservations vs. die on the phone?

The conversion rate from phone call to revenue event is one of the most leverage-able numbers in restaurant ops. And almost nobody measures it.

08 If your best host is on the phone, who's seating the four-top at the door?

The cost of the phone isn't just labor on the call — it's the on-floor experience your guests don't get because someone is stuck answering.

06 What to do about it

The first step is just measuring. We built Maple because the phone is the part of the restaurant business that has the most direct line to revenue and the least modern tooling. The vast majority of independent restaurants in America are running phone operations that would have been recognizable in 1996.

You don't need an AI agent to act on most of what's in this report. Answer the eight questions in Section 05. If after reading this you don't know your call volume, your after-hours rate, your top intents, and your answer rate — you're not alone, but you should fix it.

The numbers in this report come from restaurants that made a decision to instrument their phones. The restaurants that did are now making better staffing decisions, capturing more orders, and losing fewer guests to a busy signal. That's not an AI story — it's a measurement story.

What to do this week: Pull your phone records (most carriers give you a call log). Count your calls Monday through Sunday. Note the after-hours calls separately. That number alone will tell you whether the phone is a problem or an asset.

If you want help — or you want to hear what an AI phone agent actually sounds like in production at a restaurant similar to yours — we'd love to show you. Maple sets up in under a week, integrates with most major POS systems, and answers calls in real time with no per-minute fees.

[Get your phone audit →](#)

Source: Maple production data, queried 2026-04-28. All figures are relative shares of actual customer behavior across restaurants on the platform — no estimates or projections. Maple Inc. © 2026 · [maple.inc](#) · The Restaurant Phone Audit may be reproduced with attribution.