

Technomic Taps ANFP Members for Healthcare Foodservice Survey

The Nutrition & Foodservice Education Foundation (NFEF) was one of several organizations that participated in a Technomic study this spring titled **Understanding Healthcare Foodservice—An Updated Evaluation of the Hospital, Long-Term Care, and Senior Living Segments**. The study—which concluded May 31—includes information on the healthcare foodservice market, critical issues facing healthcare food service, operational dynamics, menus, and supplier support. Of 450 total survey participants, nearly 200 were ANFP members.

The survey results will be helpful to manufacturers, distributors, and others striving to better understand and meet the needs of the healthcare market. NFEF will use these industry findings in many ways. To date, three webinars are planned—one for the long-term care market, one for the acute care market, and one for ANFP industry partners. In addition, the NFEF will prepare a series of short (one- to two-minute) videos for ANFPtv detailing study results.

KEY FINDINGS AND IMPLICATIONS

So what are healthcare foodservice operators facing today, and what are they looking for from their suppliers? Following is a brief summary of the Technomic study results. Key findings appear in bold type. Implications have been edited for brevity.

Healthcare is one of the fastest-growing areas in the foodservice industry.

Implication: Hospitals and senior living are well positioned to take advantage of current trends.

While patient and resident satisfaction remain critical, budgetary/financial concerns are growing.

Implication: For manufacturers, the increasing power of GPOs and FSMs suggests it will be necessary to align with the most strategic Source GPOs and proactively with the key Access GPOs. Partnering with these organizations requires product solutions (healthy, local, etc.), program solutions (marketing support, sustainability measures, and cost

Continued on page 40

savings), and a willingness to offer insights and transparency.

Labor is a constant struggle for healthcare operators.

Implication: In the short term, operators will value high quality, easy-to-prepare items that meet nutritional standards. In the longer run, operators will continue to look to such product innovation, but will also consider commissary use, leasing arrangements, and help with building career paths and skills for employees.

Offering made-to-order options is becoming increasingly important.

Implication: Menu ideation that allows operations to better offer customizable and made-to-order meals would likely be well received by operators.

The use of pre-prepared products and speed-scratch is becoming commonplace.

Implication: Manufacturers/industry partners who can provide training and/or a wide variety of speed-scratch items and prepared food items that need minimal amounts of training will likely have a strong selling position when approaching operators.

Operators rely on ready-made products, but bemoan their nutritional.

Implication: This demonstrates a strong need in the marketplace for healthy prepared items, especially ones that address operators' biggest complaints.

Operators are looking to offer variety to their patients, as well as staff and visitors.

Implication: Manufacturers should be cognizant of this when developing a

THOSE who understand the challenges facing the healthcare industry, and can provide products and services to alleviate or address those challenges, will be the preferred partners of healthcare operators going forward.

portfolio of products for healthcare operators and should ensure that they are fulfilling the need for variety.

Technology integration is an increasing focus for healthcare operators.

Implication: Technology that provides efficiency in systems such as record keeping and food service are invaluable to healthcare operators. With rising labor costs, technological integrations that can replace or be used in conjunction with existing manpower to provide operational efficiencies are worth the investment to operators.

Healthcare operators heavily rely on distributors, not necessarily manufacturers.

Implication: Manufacturers/industry partners would do well to improve customer service and engagement with healthcare operators as this segment has specific needs when it comes to food products and services.

Healthcare operators look to supplier partners for trend data and information.

Implication: Industry partners that help operators stay up-to-date on current trends will be valued.

Competition for patients and residents is on the rise.

Implication: High impact dining can set a healthcare facility apart from the competition, ultimately gaining patient dollars.

Senior living is evolving.

Implication: This segment offers tremendous opportunity due to strong growth and the increased ability and flexibility this segment has (versus long-term care) to incorporate commercial and consumer trends.

WHAT STUDY FINDINGS REVEAL

Technomic reports that all of these points are interrelated and dependent on one another when it comes to the success of healthcare operators for the future. Companies/industry partners that understand the challenges facing the healthcare industry, and can provide products and services to alleviate or address those challenges, will be the preferred partners of healthcare operators going forward. ■

Thanks to Technomic for giving NFEF the opportunity to participate in this study and for providing the results presented here.