

## Silver Diner Serves Up Old-Fashioned Customer Service with High-Tech Solution

**Customer:** Silver Diner

**Location:** 17 Restaurants in Washington, D.C., Maryland and Virginia

**Industry:** Restaurant

### About the Company

After spending a year on the road visiting more than 500 American diner style restaurants, Bob Giaimo and Ype Von Hengst opened the first Silver Diner in Rockville, MD in 1989. Today, the restaurant serves the region with 17 locations with authentic American classics and healthier options – all delivered with a smile.

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Jimmy Aguilar  
Senior Network Administrator,  
Information Technology

### Business Challenge

An American institution, the diner is still alive and well today. Silver Diner, with 17 locations across Washington, D.C., Maryland and Virginia, carries on the proud tradition with iconic building styles and classic diner fare.

Yet, Silver Diner also takes a modern twist. In addition to employing friendly, attentive servers and healthy food options, the company has turned to technology to help maintain its 110 percent guarantee: “prompt service with a smile, food 100% right, and restaurant sparkling clean.”

“We take customer service very seriously,” said Jimmy Aguilar, senior network administrator, information technology. “All guests are treated like it’s a home away from home.”

The diner tracks every customer comment closely – good and bad – in a system, and ensures that the general manager for each location follows up on every one in a timely manner. With four million guests per year,

Silver Diner receives 20-30 comments every day across restaurants.

Yet before moving to a technology solution, Silver Diner’s traditional approach to customer comments fell short. Diner executives were never sure when or if someone followed up on comments. Nor did the company have a way to report on trends in customer feedback. In response, Silver Diner executives approached the IT department for help.

### Solution

Given the workflow nature of processing comments, the IT department realized the company already had an appropriate system in house. A few years before, IT had implemented IssueTrak software to manage technology related problems and requests from the 1,500 Silver Diner associates and managers. In doing so, IT moved its help desk from mostly phone calls and paper notes to an electronic, workflow-driven approach.

“IssueTrak had everything we were looking for, looked pretty simple to use, and it fit our budget,” Aguilar said.

It also offered the opportunity for Silver Diner to host the solution in house, as well as much-needed reporting to help the team identify training and replacement needs.

When the customer service need arose, the IT team recognized the similarities with the help desk. Both required a specific workflow, the ability to assign issues, and built-in accountability for resolutions. While executives were initially skeptical, IssueTrak quickly demonstrated its value.

Working closely with company managers, the IT department re-configured the help desk to accommodate customer service. On their own, they easily tailored the fields and business rules to ensure the restaurant collects the right information and that every customer comment goes through a specific process.

#### **Managers Personally Call Every Customer**

At the same time, Silver Diner hired a third-party call center to enter all comments and complaints from comment cards, emails or calls, along with the customer's contact information. The software automatically assigns and alerts the general manager at the specific restaurant, who then follows up with that customer in a specific timeframe.

General managers receive emails alerting them about a new comment, and then personally call that customer. Each time a manager calls, he or she notes the action in IssueTrak, so executives know the manager attempted a call. When the manager reaches a customer, he or she notes that in the system and closes the issue. After three unsuccessful tries to reach the customer, the manager notes that in the software and the issue is closed.

"Managers are held accountable," Aguilar said. "They must follow up in a certain amount of time, and we know every time they tried to reach a customer and the result."

Yet, tracking goes beyond just comments. Silver Diner also uses IssueTrak to keep up with the various fundraising requests it receives from charitable and other organizations.

## **Benefits**

### **Faster, More Informed Decision – Making**

Because IssueTrak offers an unlimited number of licenses for standard users – free of charge – executives run reports themselves, sometimes daily, to see responses and understand the types of comments coming in. They can sort issues by all open items, location, timeframe, type and more. Additionally, the director of marketing presents findings for discussion on a monthly basis.

"It takes about five minutes to set up a query and the fields for a new type of report and then managers can run them in seconds," Aguilar said.

For example, after a menu update, some customers expressed their love for new dishes while others missed items that were removed. With reporting, managers know if they're on the right track with customer preferences and can make informed decisions regarding issues like the menu.

### **Caring Attentive Customer Response**

At the location level, managers likewise have immediate feedback from customers visiting their establishments and a reminder to follow up on anything from maintenance needs to staffing challenges. If the comment involves a specific staff member, managers will address the concern with the individual. With it all documented, Silver Diner builds a history of comments to support raises, promotions or disciplinary action.

Most essentially, customers feel like Silver

Diner listens to them, takes the time to respond, and cares about their dining experiences. By impressing customers with a timely, sincere response, managers have turned negative experiences into positive ones.

“Having a tool like IssueTrak helps us live up to our 110% brand promise by immediately correcting any problems and helping us turn customer experiences around,” Aguilar said. “We might see a customer with a past negative comment later write in with a positive comment.”

#### **A Partner in IssueTrak**

With such high standards, Silver Diner expects the same from its vendors. In addition to IssueTrak’s ease of use and capabilities, Aguilar notes that the software’s support team rounds out the positive experience.

“IssueTrak customer support has been phenomenal,” he said. “They’re friendly, knowledgeable and give me an answer within minutes at times.”

### **About IssueTrak**

IssueTrak develops, sells and supports issue tracking software. First released in 2000, its signature software package has become a robust platform for internal and external customer support, IT help desk, workflow management, and issue tracking throughout the enterprise. The 100% web-based software is currently used by more than 1,700 companies in 36 countries, and across 54 major industry groups.

Based in Virginia Beach, VA, the company is a Microsoft Gold Certified Partner and has been recognized with a number of awards, including the Inc 500, Inc 5000, and Deloitte Technology Fast 500.