

**Steritech**

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INSIGHTS FOR CONVENIENCE STORES

# SPEED OF SERVICE

KEY OPPORTUNITIES TO EXPEDITE  
CUSTOMERS AND ACCELERATE SALES





## A CORNERSTONE OF MODERN CONVENIENCE

Across North America, convenience stores are evolving rapidly, transforming into more than just quick stops for busy consumers. Some brands are setting themselves apart with sleek, inviting spaces, loyal customer followings, and irresistible food offerings.

This evolution has positioned c-stores as direct competitors to quick-service restaurants (QSRs), long favored by customers on the go. However, c-stores offer an edge with their one-stop convenience, allowing patrons to refuel their vehicles, pick up groceries, and enjoy a meal all in

one trip. Yet, convenience goes hand-in-hand with speed of service; if the speed of service falls short, the advantages of convenience may be diminished.

Speed of service issues at QSRs may offer implications and opportunities for c-stores to leverage. To gain insights into these challenges, Steritech analyzed data from over 25,000 assessments conducted in 2023. These assessments spanned 10 QSR clients. Our key finding from this analysis is unsurprising—there is a strong correlation between shorter ticket times and customer satisfaction.

*A survey by BlueDot of more than 1,500 consumers revealed that merely SEEING someone else in line can affect whether or not a consumer makes a purchase; 57% will leave without purchasing if there's a line in the convenience store.<sup>1</sup>*



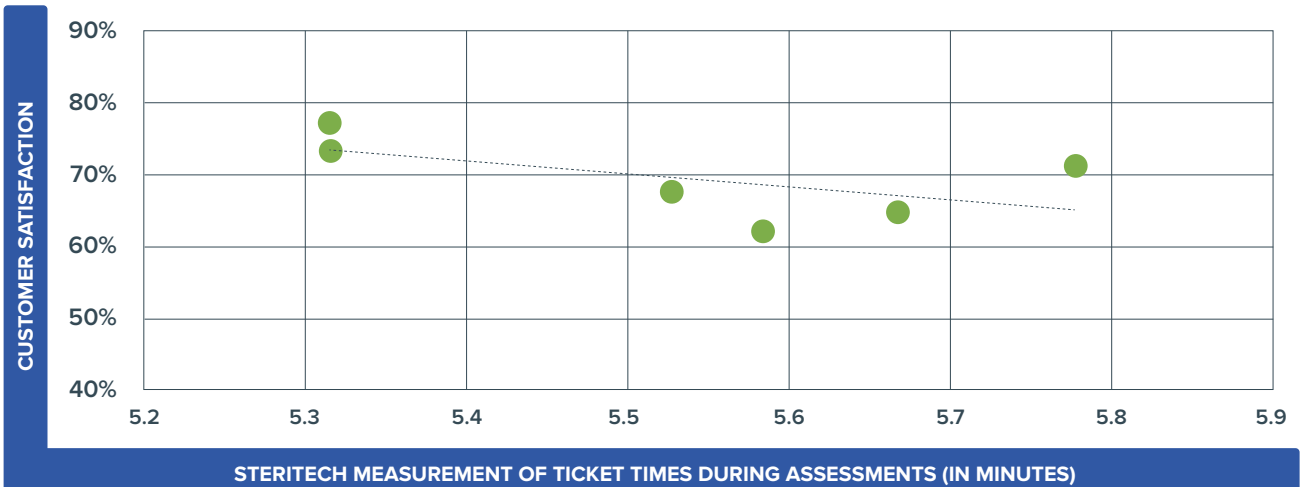
The takeaway for c-stores, though, is much bigger; organizations that DO put a priority on speed of service may be able to sprint ahead of the competition. In fact, c-stores that increase the number of completed transactions by even 1% can realize “more than \$30,000 in extra annual merchandise revenue per store.”<sup>2</sup>

When comparing QSR and c-store speed of service assessment, which provide real-time evaluations of time to delivery, it’s important to recognize that these two industries aren’t directly comparable. Unlike QSRs, which typically measure speed of service in two areas—drive-thru service and counter service—it is not something that c-store

organizations typically measure, as they tend to focus primarily on food safety programs. For the sake of this comparison, we looked specifically at counter service, as it is more comparable to the checkout experience that customers have in c-stores.

Another distinction is the frequency of 3rd party operational excellence assessments. QSRs average 2.66 assessments per year, compared to 1.92 for c-stores. Why is this significant? Based on Steritech’s 35+ years of experience, we’ve found that peak improvement happens with four assessments annually—resulting in up to six times more improvement than locations receiving just one assessment.

**EXAMPLE A: STRONG CORRELATION BETWEEN TICKET TIME AND CUSTOMERS SATISFACTION**





## SPEED OF SERVICE CHALLENGES AT QSRs

QSRs recognize that speed of service plays a crucial role in customer experience, it frequently takes a lower priority. An analysis of one brand's voice of customer surveys indicates this, with speed of service falling behind taste of food, accuracy of order, and team hospitality. Ultimately, Steritech's findings confirm that general customer satisfaction is brought down due to suboptimal service speeds.

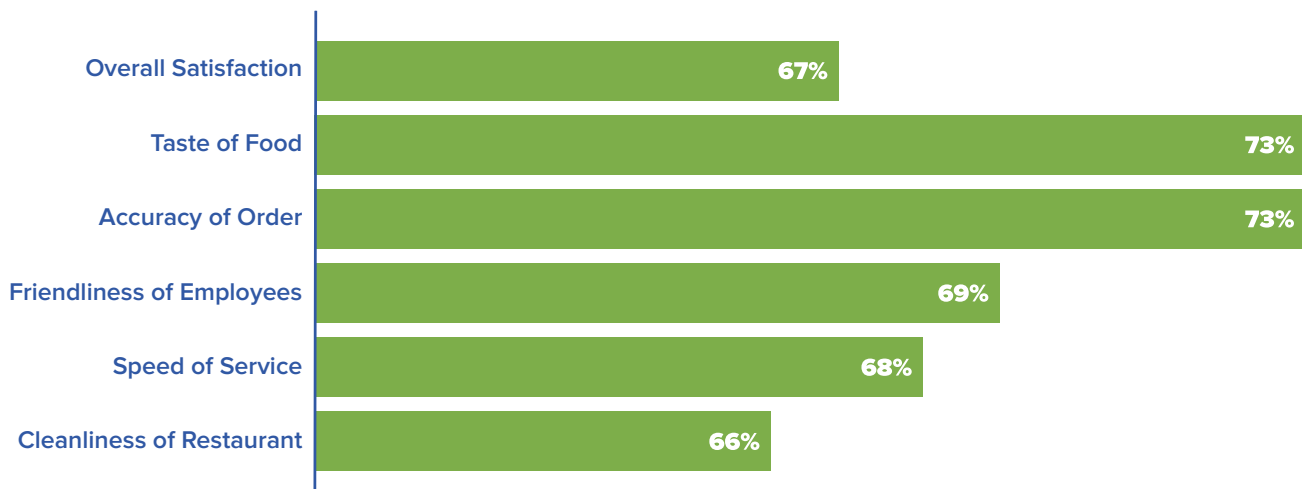
Through our analysis, we were able to categorize the reasons for slower speed of service in QSR locations into a few key categories.

### Ranked in order, these are:

1. Staff shortages
2. Equipment failures
3. Communications issues
4. High customer volume
5. Training issues

These challenges can similarly affect c-stores. Are you aware of any of these factors impacting your stores? Have you observed specific issues related to speed of service that may be linked to these areas?

### EXAMPLE A: VOICE OF CUSTOMER RESULTS





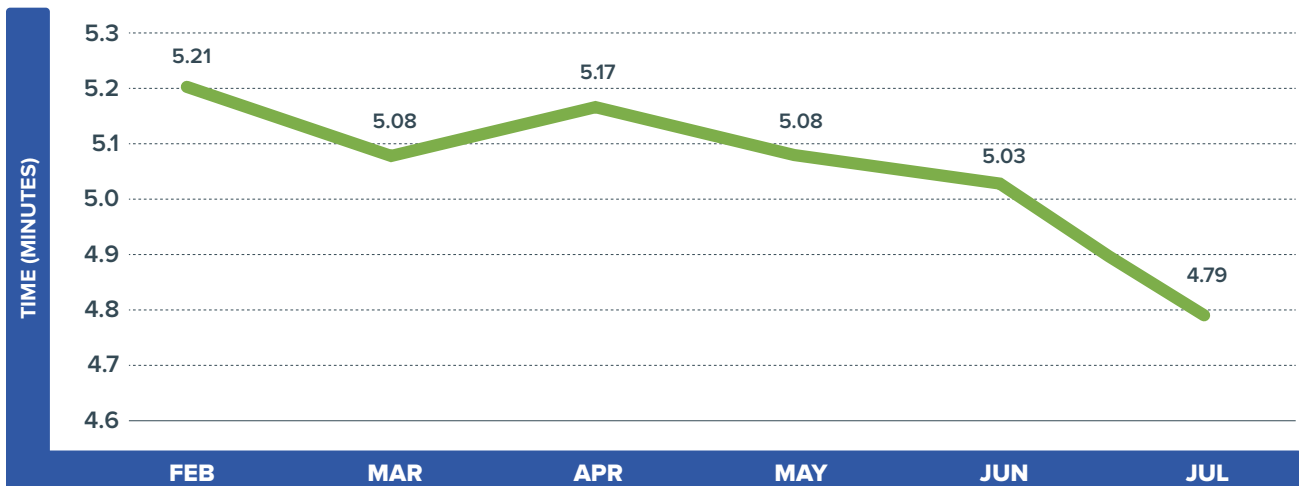
## INCREASING THE FOCUS ON SPEED OF SERVICE

Speed of service at QSRs can vary significantly depending on the products—boxing donuts is much quicker than preparing a made-to-order sandwich. However, as data from one brand illustrates, even small improvements in expected service speeds can noticeably boost overall customer satisfaction scores.

This graph illustrates what can happen in 6 months of focused effort in driving down speed of service.

The brand has made several adjustments to equipment and processes to help improve speed of service, and the trend line shows that steady improvements were made between each Steritech evaluation. Furthermore, this brand's average customer satisfaction scores now align with the 70-80% noted in the first chart.

**EXAMPLE A: FRONT COUNTER SPEED OF SERVICE RESULTS**



# 5 BEST PRACTICES TO HELP IMPROVE SPEED OF SERVICE

By adopting strategies from QSRs, c-stores can potentially enhance customer experiences, optimize resources, and achieve other benefits.

To pinpoint the most effective actions taken by QSR locations, Steritech utilized AI to analyze 1,500 documented speed of service Corrective Action Plans from 2024. This analysis identified key trends and highlighted the most common and successful corrective actions implemented to improve speed of service across locations.

- 1 Increase Staff Levels:** Maintain sufficient staffing levels to effectively manage customer volume throughout the day.

*Actionable steps:* Hire additional part-time employees specifically for peak hours, leading to quicker service times and higher customer satisfaction.

- 2 Regular Equipment Maintenance:** Implement routine checks and preventive maintenance for critical equipment to avoid unexpected breakdowns.

*Actionable steps:* Plan a weekly maintenance schedule to ensure that equipment is always in optimal working condition during business hours.

- 3 Improve Communication Protocols:** Establish clear pre-shift meetings to ensure everyone is on the same page.

*Actionable steps:* Incorporate a digital communication system using tablets or a dedicated app to minimize miscommunication, flag issues promptly, and ensure quick resolutions.

- 4 Implement Customer Flow Strategies:** Develop and follow strategies to manage high customer volumes efficiently.

*Actionable steps:* Prevent long lines at checkout during peak hours by using digital queues or opening a dedicated express lane for customers with fewer items.

- 5 Enhanced Training Programs:** Invest in comprehensive training programs for new employees and ongoing training for existing staff to maintain high service standards.

*Actionable steps:* Develop detailed tutorials, hands-on training routines, or a mentorship system pairing new hires with experienced staff.



C-stores have much to gain by learning from the successes and challenges faced by QSRs in managing speed of service. While QSRs offer valuable lessons in food quality, order accuracy, and hospitality, their common shortcomings related

to staffing, equipment failures, and communication breakdowns can provide important insights that c-stores can use to enhance their own operational efficiency and speed of service.

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## SOURCES

1 "[The Convenience Experience Report](#)" *Blue Dot*. Published June 27, 2022. Accessed July 23, 2024.

2 "[Faster Checkout with Fewer Staff](#)" *National Association of Convenience Stores*. Published May 2021. Accessed July 23, 2024.

## ABOUT STERITECH

For over 35 years, Steritech has been a trusted assessment and consulting partner that helps multi-location businesses drive operational consistency, mitigate risk, and accelerate growth.

Our 450 Specialists serve nearly 135,000 individual locations across food, retail, hospitality, and consumer services. The derived data and insights allow organizations to benchmark against best practices, improve performance, and deliver consistent, high-caliber brand experiences.

Steritech is part of Rentokil North America, a leading business services company, operating across the United States, Canada, and Puerto Rico.

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