

Zing creates 'Safe 2 Serve' pub and restaurant app in just 24 hours

Since reopening, pubs and restaurants are now obliged to keep a record of customers and visitors for 21 days to assist the NHS Test and Trace application. To support this, a tech startup has created, in just 24 hours, a quick and efficient app that can be used by pubs, restaurants and customers.

Twilio partner Zing is offering a free app to enable pubs and restaurants to capture customer information securely and hygienically. Using a rapid development methodology, it was built and implemented using the Twilio platform in just 24 hours. Already in use at Michelin-recommended The Fontmell in Devonshire developers are now looking for more pubs and restaurants to take it on for free and aim to make the app available nationwide.

It's a move that is being tested already, with the closure of three English pubs following confirmed cases of COVID-19. For many this will mean the manual recording of customer details on pen and paper, with the resultant issues of privacy, security and the risk of loss, not to mention all the time it would take to notify all those customers should infection be detected.

To counter this, Zing partnered with Devonshire pub The Fontmell to design and test an easy to use data logging and storage app using a combination of Twilio's Channel APIs.

“One of the benefits of the rapid development we specialise in, is being able to respond to changing events and build prototypes or solve problems, almost as they happen. So, last week when we were discussing the upcoming pubs and restaurants reopening, we had a thought: how would they capture customer information in a safe way? We quickly established that what was needed was a lightweight solution requiring no complicated setup for the venue, as well as no installation for customers. The answer was Safe2Serve.” – Julian Hucker, CEO of Zing Dev Ltd

The way the app works is simple. Customers drinking at The Fontmell text ‘I want a drink!’ to a dedicated mobile number to register their attendance and provide their name. If they don’t have a mobile connection, they can access a chatbot or QR code via The Fontmell’s free Wi-Fi. The app captures that information for the pub or restaurant and stores it securely then deleting the data after 21 days.

Customers receive a “Safe 2 Serve” badge, which they can show to the waiter or waitress when they are ready to eat or drink. According to Julian, the speed at which they were able to develop and test the app was thanks to the Twilio Conversations API and a good relationship with the owners and landlord at the Fontmell.

“Twilio’s Conversations API enabled us to easily implement the same workflow across both SMS and Web Chat, to provide a consistent experience to

both customer and owner. Using Twilio Studio, inbound messages from either SMS or Web Chat are received and screened to validate their input (we even built in a profanity filter!) An automated response is then sent to confirmed customers, including a “Safe 2 Serve” badge which is then shown to the bar staff to allow service.”

Given the app’s success, Zing Dev is now looking for 10 further pubs to test it out for free and will be making Safe 2 Serve available to pubs and restaurants across the UK. Further development of the app’s functionality could also enable customers to engage in other ways, such as pre-ordering drinks, checking in with the venue before arrival, or even providing an indication of how busy a pub or restaurant will be at any given time.

“I love the ingenuity from the Zing team. It solves a small but important problem at a time when we’ve already got a lot on our plate. Our staff were delighted to welcome customers back and this simple application keeps everyone safe and avoids an admin headache on our side too. That’s something everyone can drink to!” – Ben Moxham, Manager at The Fontmell

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