Startup's software allows diners to text servers

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Where's our waiter? Patrons won't ever have to ask that again if a South Florida tech startup has its way.

Einar Rosenberg, a 15-year veteran of innovation in near field communications, mobile payment and mobile retail technology, has turned his attention to solving an age-old problem: finding an employee to help you. His startup company, Creating Revolutions, is focusing first on the restaurant industry.

Creating Revolutions, founded in 2013, creates mobile hardware and software that increase employee efficiency and enhance customer engagement. With its first product, Service Pager, a restaurant patron can communicate with his or her waiter in one step. In the past few months, the product was extensively tested at the Miami restaurant City Hall, shown at the National Restaurant Association Show in Chicago, and picked up by the world's largest restaurant distributor.

Why hadn't technology solved that problem yet? Rosenberg believed that the right technology needed to be invented, and said it took his team around the world two years to create it.

The technology needed to be a tool for an employee, not a replacement for the employee like other table-top ordering systems, said Rosenberg. Creating Revolutions' Service Pager lets employees access notifications on basically any device. For instance, if a restaurant patron wants another glass of wine or changes her mind about dessert, she can text it

and then simply tap her phone to a disc affixed on the table to be securely sent to the waiter. "We made it only one step to initiate for both customer and employee, and intuitive, with a near-zero learning curve," said Rosenberg, founder and CEO. "Only telepathy could be easier."

The son of a small-business owner also knew he wanted to make the product affordable. "So the little guy gets the technology at a low monthly cost (about $10 per table per month), and average setup time is less than 30 minutes, with minimal technical knowledge. Every year you renew your subscription, your hardware and software get replaced with the latest and greatest," said Rosenberg, who holds dozens of patents in the areas of mobile payment, security, digital signage, medical, vending, retail and restaurant industries. He was also a founding partner and currently a board member of Narian Technologies.

"About 20 minutes into my first meeting with Einar, I concluded that he was a uniquely talented genius: a rare and prolific inventor capable of transforming the lives of others. I was not wrong. He isn't legally permitted to talk about much of what he's accomplished, but I can tell you that the majority of people in America already have technology that Einar invented," said Owen Evans, a corporate attorney with Comiter, Singer, Baseman & Braun LLP who has worked with Rosenberg's Creating Revolutions and previous endeavors.

The product includes three parts, starting with the company's small Touch & Discover disc that sits on a restaurant table and works on 95 percent of smartphones. It doesn't need to be recharged or plugged in and lasts up to 10 years. The waiter can receive the customer's request through a specially designed watch made by Creating Revolutions or on any number of screens at waiter stations or elsewhere, which instantly shows customer requests and can be translated from more than 15 languages. Customers can also receive marketing information and offers from the business while they wait, if the business chooses to do that.

Through the employee ID system in the technology, management always knows which waiter received requests and how long it took to be serviced.

Earlier this year, Creating Revolutions, now a team of six, began a six-month long pilot at Steven Haas' City Hall restaurant in Miami. Each day, Rosenberg checked in with Haas and the restaurant's staff, received feedback and made changes - many times the very next day, said Haas, who said he was happy to be the first "guinea pig."

"This is the hottest, latest, newest, the future in customer service," said Haas, also a former chairman of the Greater Miami Convention and Visitors Bureau. The product changed significantly at least five times, he said, adding that it was accepted by customers in all age groups. Haas lauded Rosenberg's outside-the-box thinking: "And he thinks really big."

The results of the pilot test: Tables turned over for new customers on average 10 minutes faster, and up-selling of high-profit items such as liquor increased by 32 percent, boosting both a waiter's tips and a restaurant's bottom line, Rosenberg said. With less than 1 percent of customer usage, the service is profitable for a restaurant. "The feedback (Steve) gave was constant, patient, insightful - and daily," said Rosenberg. "The product wouldn't be half as good today if it wasn't for Steve's wisdom."

trimeIn addition to City Hall, the Service Pager is now also in use at the Dream Hotel in South Beach, and the company also launched with its first group of independent sales operators in four countries. But Creating Revolutions' big coming-out nationally was at the National Restaurant Association Show in May in Chicago, with 68,000 people in attendance. After waiting hours, Rosenberg received a 15-minute meeting with Brad Wasserstrom, president of The Wasserstrom Company, the world's largest distributor of restaurant products. That 15 minutes turned into a

two-hour meeting - and then a deal.

Last month, The Wasserstrom Company announced it would be distributing Creating Revolutions' Service Pager system. "Wasserstrom is excited to partner with Creating Revolutions. Their new Service Pager product is a fantastic innovation, bringing better service to the customer, up-selling opportunities to the brand, as well as increased labor efficiency and management tools," said Brad Wasserstrom.

Creating Revolutions' development costs of more than $1 million have so far been self-financed, and the company is now seeking one or more investors for a $500,000 to $1 million round of funding. Its management team includes Chief Marketing Officer Rosemary Staltare and Chief Development Officer Ricardo Mamani.

The timing is right for the company, believes Bengt Horsma, head of Issuer Commercialization for Visa Token Service, who has worked with Einar more than 10 years. "Einar has always been able to evolve and adapt his NFC, Bluetooth, Wi-Fi and technology solutions to adapt to the changing market. Unfortunately it has taken the industry and market's infrastructure 10-plus years to reach the current tipping point whereas we will see the demand for Einar's solutions grow fast. ... Consumers are now getting familiar with using NFC technology for payments with ApplePay, AndroidPay and SamsungPay."

Creating Revolutions is going to focus sales efforts first on beach and poolside resorts, sports bars and casual dining restaurants, Staltare said. Casual dining and bar, which includes sports bars, in 2014 was a $431 billion market in the U.S., more than half the $709 billion U.S. restaurant industry.

The Service Pager is the first of eight services Creating Revolutions plans to release over the next year. As Service Pager sales begin to roll

in, the company plans to open an assembly and distribution center, creating nearly two dozen jobs in South Florida.

"It was more than a dream for us, it was a vision to create a technology that would make the day to day of living better for not just some of us, but for all of us," Rosenberg said.

While Rosenberg has global aspirations, Haas hopes to some day soon see the Creating Revolutions discs at poolside resorts and restaurants all over Miami-Dade, where customer service powers one of the area's biggest industries: "How cool to see this being developed in Miami."

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CREATING REVOLUTIONS

Business: Mobile hardware and software that increase employee efficiency and enhance customer engagement in the hospitality industry.

Website: www.creatingrevolutions.com

Founder: Einar Rosenberg, CEO

No. of employees: six

Funding: Self-funded with more than $1 million; raising $500,000 to $1 million.

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