



How Gusto 54 Is Building a Culinary Empire

POWERED BY PUSH



CASE STUDY

From Local Gem to International Flavor

Gusto 54 Restaurant Group's story began in 1954 when Giacomo Zuccarini opened the Sidewalk Caffè in Toronto, introducing the city to its first espresso machine, wood-burning pizza oven, and heated patio. Inspired by her father's pioneering spirit, Giacomo's daughter, Janet Zuccarini, founded Gusto 54 as a tribute to family, innovation, food, and design that honors tradition while boldly rewriting the rules. Gusto, which means 'tasty' in Italian, paired with 54, the year the Sidewalk Caffè opened, became the perfect name as an homage. Under Janet's leadership, Gusto 54 has since grown into a collection of 14 restaurants and partnerships across Toronto and Los Angeles, with each deeply rooted in community and heritage.

The company is committed to creating inspiring dining experiences grounded in collaboration, diversity, and sustainability. Known for its soulful hospitality and commitment to culinary excellence, Gusto 54 has become a recognized leader in hospitality, including recognition as one of Deloitte's Best Managed Companies in Canada.

Recently, we spoke with Tyler Rutherford, Director of Business Operations and Expansion at Gusto 54, to learn how Push has contributed to the company's continued growth.

Gusto means 'tasty' in Italian



"One of the things that makes us unique is that we don't copy and paste concepts. When we look for new locations and communities, we look for what's missing, identify the gap, and bring what we do best — soulful hospitality — into that community."



Cooked to the Limit

Before transitioning to Push, Gusto 54 was relying on a legacy platform that caused frequent complaints from employees who struggled to access their pay stubs — and even questioned the accuracy of their tax information. The fragmented system led to miscommunications, with updates scattered across emails, texts, and town hall meetings. On top of that, day-to-day management relied on manual tracking sheets and clipboards, which made it difficult to organize employee time tracking and labor data.

As Gusto 54 considered expanding, they realized they needed a streamlined, reliable solution to deliver a consistent employee experience across all locations. Recognizing these challenges, Gusto 54 knew it was time to make a change — and that's when they found Push.

"Before we implemented Push in 2016, we were with a legacy platform. We consistently received negative reviews from our team members that they couldn't find their pay stubs and that they thought the taxes were incorrect. These are some of the main reasons why we joined Push."



Before Push

✗ Outdated System

Legacy platform was unable to meet the needs of a growing business.

✗ Employee Frustration

Issues accessing pay stubs and tax inaccuracies.

✗ Scattered Communication

Updates spread across emails, texts, and meetings.

✗ Inconsistent Experience

Difficulty providing a unified experience across locations.

✗ Manual Time Tracking

Reliance on sheets and clipboards, resulting in increased risk of human error and lack of real-time data.

✗ Growth Limitations

Legacy platform wasn't scalable for multi-location expansion.

✗ Data Inaccuracies

Hard to generate accurate reports and insights with a fragmented system.

Serving Up Efficiency With Push

In 2016, Gusto 54 made the switch to Push in hopes of streamlining their people management and creating a consistent, connected experience for their team. Once they started using Push, it was a complete 180-degree change for their operations.

Now, they're able to enjoy a smoother, more efficient work environment with payroll, communication, and scheduling in a single system. Push's proactive tracking of labor costs, overtime, and meal break violations has given Gusto 54 managers the tools to make real-time decisions for cost control.

"Now our managers can spend more time on the floor, our servers can spend more time at tables engaging with guests, and our line cooks can spend more time doing what they do best — cook and enjoy food," explained Tyler.

Gusto 54's transition to Push allowed them to reinvest their time into delivering world-class hospitality.

"We were just starting our growth, and it was time to decide what would be the best thing to actually set us up to grow — which is how we landed on Push Operations."

"Creating a consistent ecosystem for our team members is important. That's why when we started to expand in the U.S., Push was a no-brainer. For us, the ecosystem means having all the different platforms talk to each other, with Push really being the home for people operations."



Savoring the Benefits of Push

For Gusto 54, Push unlocked many valuable benefits that go far beyond time-saving automation. While having a centralized platform is a highlight, it's only one of the many advantages they've come to rely on with Push.



Compliance

Expanding to Los Angeles came with new labor laws. Push helps them stay compliant with Meal Break Waivers and updated employee handbooks.



Digital Onboarding and Employee Files

Centralizing all employee files digitally supports their culture of celebrating each other.



Real-Time Access to Data

Business leaders and managers have the ability to see labor data in real-time, allowing them to plan ahead.



Built-In Messaging

One-on-one or group messages reduce managers' workload of finding shift coverage and making team announcements.



Cost Savings

Real-time data highlights inefficiencies and opportunities to save on labor costs.



Digital Time Tracking

Team members use a tablet to quickly sign in and out for their shifts, eliminating the need for manual time tracking.



POS Integration

Integrating with their POS system provides predictive forecasting and labor vs. sales data.



Mobile Device Compatibility

Team members can access their schedules, pay stubs, and time-off requests from anywhere at any time.



Streamlined Applicant Tracking System

Integrated job boards make the hiring process seamless.



A Culture Built With Passion and Purpose

At Gusto 54 restaurants, work is more than just a job — it's a place where team members feel valued, respected, and part of a family. Push has made that vision a reality by centralizing employee records and streamlining digital onboarding. Now, managers are kept in the loop about upcoming birthdays and anniversaries, which reinforces Gusto 54's commitment to celebrating each other.

As they continue to expand across North America, culture remains at the heart of their growth as they foster an environment where everyone feels welcome.

"Push allows us to focus on our people, it allows us to be creative, and allows us to be free in a way that we can focus on our training and retention with our team, creating the best culture possible."





Growing the Menu

Expanding into Los Angeles brought unique challenges for Gusto 54, especially in handling California's complex labor laws. Each city in California has its own regulations, which are difficult to keep track of. With Push on their side to streamline this process, Gusto 54 was able to stay compliant with minimal effort.

"Push has helped navigate everything around overtime, ever-changing minimum wages, and even meal break violations that we weren't used to before moving down to Los Angeles," said Tyler.

Automating their people management has allowed Gusto 54 to focus on growth while still ensuring fair and respectful treatment of every team member. As they look toward expanding further, they're confident that Push will continue to be a reliable partner and provide a consistent experience across all locations.

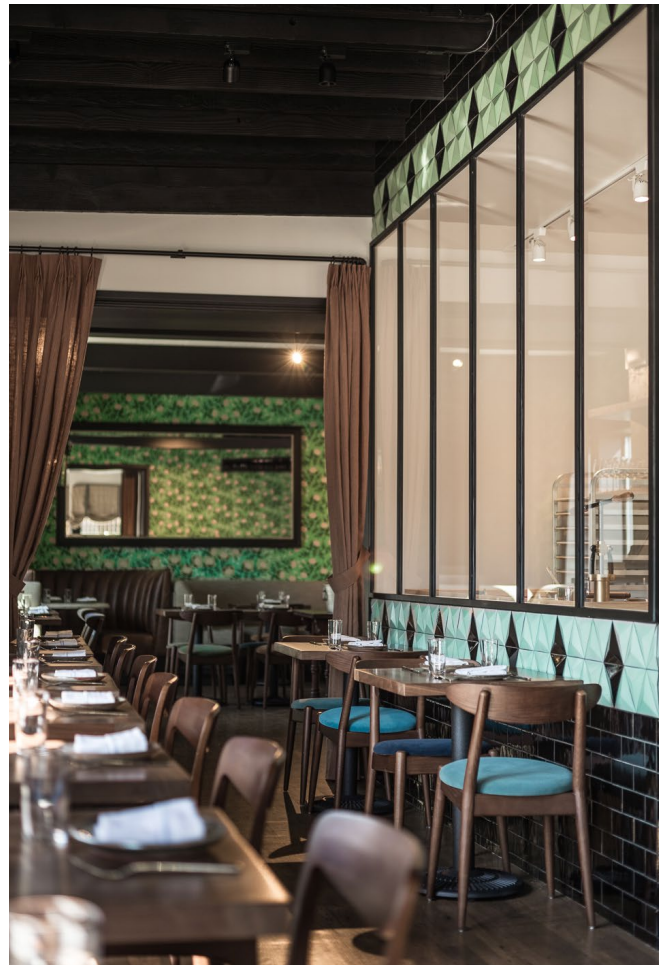
"We are excited to continue our growth outside of Toronto and Los Angeles, and I have no doubt that Push will be part of that."

Push does all the heavy lifting, so Gusto 54 can focus on

- ✓ Growth and expansion
- ✓ Creating a respectful and fun work environment
- ✓ Cooking up soulful international flavors
- ✓ Providing an unmatched dining experience
- ✓ Proactive profit planning to improve profitability

"Compliance and regulations are different everywhere. Push has made it easy for us to maintain compliance with state law, so we can expand with success."

"While we continue our expansion, both in Canada, the U.S., and maybe more to come, we often talk about culture being key — the way people talk to each other, the way we treat each other with genuine respect and kindness, and the way that we want to show up for each other at work. Push allows us to focus on our people, giving us back the time to create the best culture possible."



Join Tyler and thousands of restaurant leaders in simplifying your restaurant operations with Push's all-in-one people management solution!

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