

RESTAURANT MARGIN PLAYBOOK

**How to Stop Losing 20–30% of Every Order
Without Killing Your Delivery Sales**

A FREE GUIDE FROM [iORDERS.CA](https://iorders.ca)

Canadian restaurants are losing \$60,000/year in commissions. This playbook shows you exactly how to stop it — without quitting the apps.

*For every restaurant owner who handed over their margins to big tech
and finally had the courage to ask —*

"Why am I still paying for my own customers?"

This one's for you.

INTRODUCTION

You Cooked the Food. Where Did the Money Go?

Three coffees deep. Barely slept. Kitchen's been running since 10 AM and it's now midnight.

Your restaurant is growing — everyone says so. More orders. More volume. More noise. And yet, somehow, the bank account tells a different story. You feel it but can't explain it. Like running fast on a treadmill — motion, sweat, exhaustion — but the scenery never changes.

You're not losing your grip. You're not doing anything wrong. You're just playing a game where nobody told you the rules.

Because here's what the delivery apps will never put in their welcome email:

The system is designed to look like growth — while quietly extracting your profit, order by order, customer by customer, month after month.

Once you see it, you can't unsee it.

My name is Rakesh. I'm co-founder of iOrders. And before you assume this is another tech pitch dressed up as a playbook — I want to be direct with you. I've spent more time standing behind restaurant counters than most people in my industry. Not as a customer. As the guy watching the numbers and asking uncomfortable questions.

This playbook is the result of those conversations. It's not theory. It's what I've seen play out, over and over again, in real restaurants across Canada.

Let's get into it.

CHAPTER ONE

The Night the Numbers Stopped Making Sense

It was late. Kitchen closed. Lights dimmed to half. The owner sat across from me with his phone on the table, delivery app dashboard open.

He'd had a good month. \$18,000 in online orders. That's real volume. Real work. Real food going out the door.

He looked at me and said — not with anger, just with exhaustion:

"We did \$18,000 this month online... so why does it feel like we're still broke?"

So we grabbed a pen and a receipt and started doing the math. Order by order. Fee by fee. Commission by commission.

About ten minutes in, he stopped mid-sentence.

Looked up.

"Wait... I'm paying them again? For the same customer?"

Yes. That's exactly what was happening.

And that single question — that moment of quiet frustration — is where everything in this playbook begins.

Let's Break Down One Order

Nothing exotic. A regular customer. A \$40 order. Here's what happened to it:

	Amount
Order Total	
Platform Commission (25%)	\$40.00
Service & Processing Fees	– \$10.00
Promo Adjustment (applied auto)	– \$0.50 (not noticed until \$2.00)
What Actually Landed	
	\$27.50

He shook his head. Not dramatically. Just quietly.

"So I made the food... paid the staff... covered the rent... and they still took that much?"

Here's what made it worse: that customer wasn't new. They'd ordered before. They knew the menu. They knew exactly what they wanted.

And the app still took its cut.

Again.

CHAPTER TWO

It's Not a Fee Problem. It's a Control Problem.

The first instinct every restaurant owner has when they see those commission numbers is: raise prices.

Logical. Understandable. Wrong — as a long-term strategy.

Because the deeper you look, the clearer it becomes. This isn't about the percentage. It's about what you lose the moment an order goes through a third-party app.

You lose three things that matter far more than the commission itself:

You don't know who the customer is.

The platform owns the data. Name, email, order history — all of it. You get a ticket. They get a relationship.

You can't reach them again.

No email. No SMS. No way to say 'we've got a new item you'll love' or 'here's 10% off your next order.' That channel belongs to someone else.

You can't bring them back without paying for it.

Every single repeat order runs through the same commission loop. There's no loyalty that flows back to you.

That customer could love your food. Order every week. Recommend you to friends. Build you real word-of-mouth.

None of that belongs to you. It belongs to the platform.

The loop looks like this:

**Customer finds you → Returns via app → You pay again → And again →
And again.**

That's not growth. That's renting your own customers one order at a time.

And the worst part? The system is designed to feel normal. Busy screen. Notifications firing. Orders coming in. It feels like progress.

Until you stop and do the math.

Most owners never stop. They're too busy running the kitchen, managing staff, fixing the fryer that somehow breaks every Friday.

That's exactly what the model depends on.

The Real Question

It's not: 'What are they charging me?'

It's: 'Why do I keep paying it — for customers I've already earned?'

If you don't control the customer relationship, you don't control repeat business. And if you don't control repeat business, you don't control your margins.

Slowly, without noticing, your business stops being something you own — and starts becoming something you feed.

CHAPTER THREE

The \$60,000 Question

Forget theory. Let's look at a scenario that's more common than most owners realize.



\$60,000 is not a rounding error. It's not 'the cost of doing business.' Here's what \$60,000 actually means:

A full-time salary for a key team member

A kitchen upgrade you've been putting off for two years

Six months of rent, covered

A marketing budget that could actually build your brand

Or simply — money that should have stayed in your business

Now Here's the Real Question

What happens if just half of those orders start coming directly to you?

Not all of them. Not even most of them. Just half.

	Apps Only	Balanced with iOrders
Monthly online orders	\$20,000	\$20,000
Commission paid	\$5,000	~\$1,500
Annual commission cost	\$60,000	~\$18,000
Annual savings	—	\$42,000+
Customer data ownership	None	Full
Repeat order control	None	Complete

Same kitchen. Same staff. Same customers.

Completely different outcome.

This isn't about working harder. It's about the system finally working in your favour.

CHAPTER FOUR

Two Models. One Choice.

There are only two ways to run your online ordering. Here's what they actually look like:

MODEL A: Renting Your Customers	MODEL B: Owning Your Customers
Orders come through third-party apps	Orders come directly to you
You pay commission every single time	You keep the full margin
You don't know who your customers are	You own full customer data
You can't reach them without paying again	You can reach them on your terms
Relationship belongs to the platform	Relationship belongs to you
Repeat orders = repeat commissions	Repeat orders = pure profit

"Renting customers keeps you busy. Owning customers builds your business."

This isn't a dramatic switch. It's a gradual shift. A few orders move. Then more. Repeat customers start coming back directly. The math slowly, quietly, starts working in your favour.

Not because you're working more hours. Because the system finally makes sense.

CHAPTER FIVE

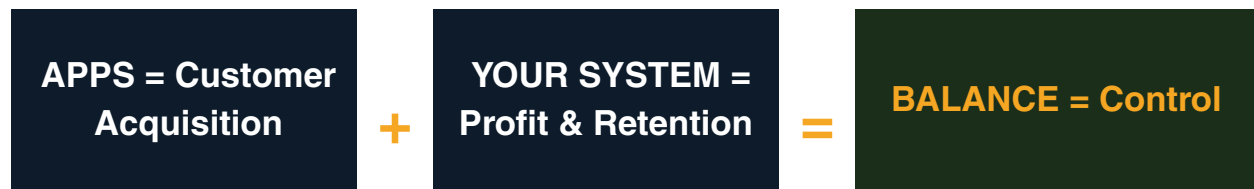
The Smart Approach: Don't Fight the Apps. Outgrow Them.

Let's be clear: this playbook is not telling you to delete DoorDash.

That would be like turning off your main water line because you don't like the bill. Apps bring visibility. They bring new customers. They keep your kitchen busy during slow periods. That's real value — and we're not dismissing it.

The problem isn't the apps. The problem is when they become your only system.

Think of it this way:



Let the apps bring people in the door. Stop paying them to keep the relationship.

Once a customer already knows your food, knows your menu, knows what they want — you should never have to pay to speak to them again. You've already done the hard part.

The shift is gradual. Non-disruptive. And the results compound month after month.

What Restaurant Owners Tell Us

"We did \$18K a month on apps. After six months with iOrders, 40% of those orders were coming directly. Same customers — we just finally owned the relationship."

— Independent Restaurant Owner, Toronto, ON

"The setup was done in 48 hours. We didn't lose a single delivery order. We just started keeping more of what we made."

— Multi-location Operator, Vancouver, BC

CHAPTER SIX

How the Shift Actually Works

This isn't complicated. It's a small change in how your order flow is structured — and it starts working from day one.

1**Customer Discovers You**

Through DoorDash, Google, Instagram — doesn't matter. The app did its job. New customer, new relationship.

2**You Offer a Better Path**

A QR code on the packaging. A note in the bag. A loyalty prompt on the receipt. 'Order directly and save — or earn points.' Simple. No tech required at this step.

3**Next Time, They Come Directly**

They bookmark your site. They download your branded app. They text the number on the sticker. The commission loop is broken.

4

You Own That Relationship Now you know who they are. You can reach them. You can bring them back — on your terms, at zero cost per order.

What You Actually Need to Make This Work

- ❑ A branded online ordering page (mobile-optimised, takes 48 hours to go live)
- ❑ A way to receive orders — tablet, printer, or direct POS integration
- ❑ QR codes on tables, bags, and receipts pointing to your direct ordering page
- ❑ One reason for customers to come back direct — a loyalty point, a small discount, an exclusive offer
- ❑ A simple follow-up — email or SMS — to customers who've already ordered

You're not forcing anything. You're not disrupting anything. You're simply making it easier — and slightly more rewarding — for customers to order from you directly.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Your 5-Move Playbook: Start This Week

You don't need a new strategy meeting. You don't need to overhaul anything. Here are five things you can start this week — before you even talk to us.

MOVE 1**Run Your Own Numbers**

Pull last month's delivery app revenue. Multiply by 0.25. That's what you paid in commissions. Annualise it. Write the number down. That number needs to be visible.

MOVE 2**Add a QR Code to Every Bag**

Print a simple insert or sticker: 'Order directly at [yourrestaurant.ca] — skip the fees, earn loyalty points.' Low cost. Zero disruption. Immediate impact.

MOVE 3**Collect At Least One Direct Contact Per Day**

Email at pickup, loyalty sign-up at the counter, a text-to-join prompt. Ten customers a week is 500 a year — a list you own completely.

MOVE 4**Set Up One Direct Ordering Channel**

A Google ordering link, a simple branded page, a WhatsApp order number. Give customers a path that doesn't go through a commission-charging middleman.

MOVE 5**Send One Re-Engagement Message**

To anyone you already have contact info for. A simple 'We miss you — here's 10% off your next direct order.' No tech required. Just a message that reminds them you exist.

You don't need more orders.

You need to stop leaking profit from the ones you already have.

In 30 minutes, we'll show you exactly how much you're currently losing —

and what a realistic shift to direct ordering looks like for your specific volume.

No pitch. Just math.

No upfront cost Live in 48 hours No long-term contracts

Book your free demo:

iOrders.ca

Canadian support team. Real people. Real results.