KEYDATE ADVISORY · RESTAURANT EDITION

The 30-Day Pre-Opening Cutover Checklist

40 things that have to be true before a multi-unit restaurant technology cutover — and the 9 that most teams miss.

> **How to use this.** Print it. Walk it with the person who actually owns each item — not the person who reports on it. Any line where you can't name a human being and a date is a risk, not a task.
>
> Timings are counted back from the opening or cutover date. If your date is inside 30 days and most of this is open, you don't have a checklist problem. You have a schedule problem, and it's better to know that now.

T−30 · Confirm and freeze

Everything downstream inherits the errors you leave in this section.

01 ☐ **The date is confirmed by three parties, in writing** — operations, the general contractor, and the landlord. One party's verbal date is a hope.

02 ☐ **Certificate of Occupancy target is checked against the jurisdiction's actual inspection backlog**, not the permit timeline on paper.

03 ☐ **Circuit order verified by circuit ID with the carrier** — not by an account rep's assurance. Confirm the LOA/CFA and the physical demarc location.

04 ☐ **Failover path is physically diverse.** Two circuits from one provider on the same fiber run is one circuit with two invoices.

05 ☐ **Scope is frozen** — menu, floor plan, lane count, kiosk count, drive-thru configuration. Changes after today route through one named approver.

06 ☐ **Hardware bill of materials reconciled against the final floor plan** — quantity, model, and firmware target, including spares.

07 ☐ **One named owner for each domain:** network, POS, payments, AV/music, security and CCTV, drive-thru and KDS, back office. A person, not a department.

08 ☐ **Escalation matrix built with after-hours numbers** — and every number test-dialed once, today, while it's cheap to find out it's wrong.

T−21 · Provision and stage

Staged wrong is worse than not staged — it looks finished.

09 ☐ **Hardware received at the staging site and physically counted** against the BOM. Not the store. Not a tracking number.

10 ☐ **Every device imaged and updated to the target firmware**, with the version recorded against the serial number.

11 ☐ **Payment terminals key-injected and confirmed against the correct merchant ID** for this specific location.

12 ☐ **MID and TIDs created, and tender types on the terminal match tender types in the POS** — including tip adjust, EBT, and gift, if they apply.

13 ☐ **Store record built in the POS host** with correct tax jurisdiction, tip policy, price zone, and hours.

14 ☐ **Menu and item database reviewed by the operator** — the person who will run the store, not the vendor who built it.

15 ☐ **Network configuration built and documented:** VLANs, SSIDs, firewall rules, and where the PCI segmentation boundary sits.

16 ☐ **Low-voltage cabling walked with photos of every drop**, labeled and mapped to the floor plan.

T−14 · Validate

"Installed" is not "tested." This section is where that distinction gets expensive.

17 ☐ **Circuit delivered *and tested*** — throughput, latency, and failover proven in both directions.

18 ☐ **Firewall or SD-WAN on site, configured, and reachable** from whoever supports it at 2 a.m.

19 ☐ **Wireless survey performed after fixtures are installed.** A survey of an empty shell is a survey of a different building.

20 ☐ **Every terminal, KDS screen, printer, drawer, scale, and scanner powered and communicating.** Every one, counted.

21 ☐ **Test transaction on every terminal for every tender type** — including a refund and a void, which fail differently than sales.

22 ☐ **Offline mode tested by actually pulling the WAN.** Run a transaction, restore the link, confirm store-and-forward settles.

23 ☐ **Every integration validated end to end, individually** — online ordering, delivery aggregators, loyalty, gift, labor and scheduling, inventory.

24 ☐ **Printer routing confirmed under a simulated rush**, not a single test ticket at a quiet counter.

T−7 · Rehearse

The first time a crew touches the system should not be the first time customers do.

25 ☐ **Full-day mock service run with real staff on real hardware** at real volume assumptions.

26 ☐ **Managers and shift leads trained — and a named backup trained for each role.** Someone will call out on day one.

27 ☐ **Cutover runbook published:** sequence, timing, owner per step, and written go/no-go criteria.

28 ☐ **Rollback plan written, with a decision point and a named decision-maker** who is authorized to call it.

29 ☐ **Day-one support model confirmed:** who is on site, who is remote, and for exactly what hours.

30 ☐ **Spare kit staged on site** — terminal, printer, router, cables, receipt paper, and the key-injection contact.

31 ☐ **Written sign-off from the general manager** against the runbook. They are the one who lives with it.

32 ☐ **Communication plan issued:** who gets notified at go, at each milestone, and at exception.

T−1 · Cutover day

33 ☐ **Go/no-go call held at a set time with every owner present.** The decision is recorded in writing.

34	☐	**Final data sync completed and verified** — pricing, employees, tax tables.
35	☐	**First live transaction executed and settled *before* doors open.** Not after the first guest is standing there.
36	☐	**Batch settled at end of day one, and funds confirmed at the bank** within the expected window.
37	☐	**Exception log opened and manned from the moment doors open.**

T+1 to T+7 · Hypercare

38	☐	**Daily standup for seven days with a written exit criterion.** Hypercare without an exit becomes the operating model.
39	☐	**Every day-one exception closed or assigned with a due date** before hypercare ends.
40	☐	**Post-opening review completed and the defect list fed into the next store's staging checklist.** This is the only item that compounds.

THE SHORT LIST

The 9 most commonly missed

If you only walk nine lines, walk these. They share a trait: each one looks complete until the day it isn't.

1. **Failover that isn't diverse.** Two circuits, one provider, one physical fiber path into the building. It passes every test you'll run and fails the one event it exists for.
2. **Key injection and merchant ID alignment.** The terminal powers on, takes a card, and prints a receipt — while routing to the wrong MID, or with tip adjust disabled. Nobody catches it until reconciliation, and by then it's a week of transactions.
3. **Offline mode that was assumed, not tested.** Almost every team says the system handles offline. Very few have pulled the cable in that store, on that hardware, and watched store-and-forward settle.
4. **A wireless survey done before fixtures went in.** Metal shelving, walk-ins, menu boards, and drive-thru canopies change the RF environment completely. The pre-fixture survey was accurate about a building that no longer exists.
5. **Integrations tested as a group instead of one at a time.** Teams test "the POS" and declare victory, while seven downstream systems — loyalty, gift, delivery, inventory, labor — were never individually exercised. They fail one at a time, starting at the lunch rush.
6. **Printer routing under load.** One test ticket routes perfectly. Eleven concurrent tickets across three stations expose a routing rule nobody wrote down.
7. **A rollback plan with no named decision-maker.** The plan exists. It's well written. At 6:40 a.m. on opening day, everyone on the call is waiting for someone else to be the person who says stop — so nobody does, and you open broken.
8. **Settlement confirmed at the terminal but not at the bank.** A batch closing successfully is not money arriving. The gap surfaces days later, usually as a finance escalation rather than a technology one.
9. **Hypercare with no exit criteria.** Support drifts indefinitely, the day-one defect list is never formally closed, and store number two inherits every single problem store number one had.

WALK RECORD

Who walked it, and when

Fill this in on the floor, not afterward. An item with no name against it is the item that moves your date.

Site or store number

Date walked

Walked with (name and role)

Opening or cutover date

Items with no owner and no date

Next walk scheduled for

NOTES

What you found

Item number, what's actually true, and who owns closing it.

If you can't name an owner and a date on five of these

That's not unusual, and it's not a reflection on your team. It's what happens when a rollout is staffed by people who also have day jobs, and nobody's full-time responsibility is the date itself.

That gap is what the **KeyDate Audit** exists for — a fixed-scope, two-week review that returns every material risk to your opening date with an owner and a mitigation attached. Independent. No vendor commissions, ever.

Find fewer than five material risks and you don't pay the second half.

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Deon Coleman — 18+ years leading multi-site technology rollouts for restaurant and retail brands, including programs led inside Shake Shack, Macy's, Under Armour and Carter's/OshKosh, store cutovers across 2,200 locations for a major retailer, and venue deployments delivered at SoFi Stadium, Gillette Stadium, UBS Arena, State Farm Arena, Globe Life Field, Hartsfield-Jackson ATL and Brown University.