



FRIGHTDAY

Tales from AI: Glitches & Gigabytes

McDonald's Canceled Its AI Drive-Thru

What went wrong with their 3-year automation bet?

After 3 Years, McDonald's Ended AI Ordering

2021

Partnership with IBM

100 US Locations

Deployed at drive-thru restaurants

Goal

Faster service, simplified operations

2024

Pilot program ended



When AI Goes Rogue



Ordered: 1 sweet tea

AI Added: 9 sweet teas



Ordered: Ice cream & water

AI Added: 2 butters + 4 ketchup packets



The Result

Viral TikTok videos showed the chaos

Fighting with McDonald's
robot

TikTok
@thetradivlog

Why AI Still Struggles With Drive-Thrus

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Background Noise

Engine sounds, multiple voices, and environmental interference



Accents & Speech

Regional accents and varied speech patterns confuse AI systems



Complicated Orders

Custom modifications and special requests are hard to parse



Understanding Context

AI struggles with conversational context and corrections

This Isn't Goodbye



Voice ordering will be part of our restaurants' future

— McDonald's Statement

- ✓ Still exploring AI solutions
- ✓ Decision expected by 2027
- ✓ Continuing IBM partnership



The Fast-Food AI Race Continues

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Chipotle

500+ "Chipotlanes" digital drive-thrus since 2018 +
"Chippy" robot making tortilla chips in kitchens

Taco Bell & Pizza Hut

"AI-first" strategy with generative AI automating
customer interfaces and kitchen operations

 **Labor cost savings driving industry-wide
AI adoption**



3 Lessons for AI Adoption

1

Test Early, Fail Fast

Pilot programs reveal what actually works in real-world conditions

2

Perfect \neq Ready

Even small error rates create major customer friction at scale

3

Humans Still Win

For now, people understand people better than AI does

What's Your Take?

Is AI ready for customer-facing roles or do we need more time?



Comment below with your experience