

McDonald's Tests Using Call Centers For Drive-Thru Orders

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OAK BROOK, Ill. (AP)--McDonald's Corp. (MCD), the world's largest restaurant chain, is testing the use of remote call centers to handle drive-thru orders in an effort to improve service.

Company officials said the idea, being tested at a small number of restaurants in the Pacific Northwest, is aimed at reducing the number of mistakes at the drive-thru window.

"If you're in L.A. and you hear a person ... with a North Dakota accent taking your order, you'll know what we're up to," McDonald's Chief Executive Officer Jim Skinner said during a presentation to analysts Thursday in New York.

The strategy would help process orders faster and allow McDonald's employees to focus on delivering better customer service, the company said.

"You have a professional order taker with strong communications skills whose job is to do nothing but take down orders," said Matthew Paull, the chief financial officer.

Paull said a "heavy percentage" of complaints the company receives are from drive-thru customers who got the wrong order.

"Even if 95% of the time it is right, those 5% are very upset with us," he said.

McDonald's spokeswoman Anna Rozenich said Friday it was too early to say whether the outsourcing strategy would be implemented systemwide.

McDonald's shares declined 10 cents to \$32.65 in midday trading on the New York Stock Exchange, near the upper end of their 52-week trading range of \$25.05 to \$34.56.

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