



# How Stonehouse Catering Cuts Proposal Creation Time 30+ Hours Each Week with Curate

**30+**

Hours saved on  
proposal creation  
each week

**50%**

Reduction in  
client questions

## Case Study



“Using Curate helps me focus on why I started my business, rather than trying to learn new software.”



**LISA STONEHOUSE,**  
Owner, Stonehouse Catering



Stonehouse Catering is a custom caterer in White Bear Lake, Minnesota.

## Highlights

### Challenges

- Creating visual proposals for clients
- Replacing Caterease, a complicated legacy platform
- Eliminating double-bookings

### Solution

- Working with Curate: a tool built for events professionals
- Calendar view to prevent double-bookings
- Proposals linked directly to the inquiry form on their website
- Rentals Tool to automatically generate a flatware packing list

### Results

- 30+ hours of proposal creation time saved each week
- 50% less time spent on client follow-up questions
- 2+ hours saved per event thanks to the Rentals Tool

## Challenges

### Managing a growing business

In the past 13 years, Stonehouse Catering has grown from a small operation started in Lisa Stonehouse's kitchen to a thriving catering business with its own event space.



"It's a whole different ball game now," Lisa says.

As Stonehouse Catering grew, fundamental processes became more complicated and time-consuming.

Manual procedures that had worked when they were a smaller company were no longer enough. Creating packing checklists and filling them out by hand meant they sometimes forgot a utensil or an ingredient, for example.



"We used to lay our menu down next to our checklist and go through each line," Lisa says. "Doing it manually made it too easy to miss something."

### Simplifying the proposal process

One of the most important manual processes that Stonehouse Catering needed to streamline was proposal creation. In the early days, Lisa would build proposals in QuickBooks and type her menus out manually.



"It was a lot of repetition and copy and pasting," she remembers. "It was a headache."

Unappealing or unclear proposals were more than just a headache, though—in the worst-case scenario, they could cost the catering company sales.



“Clear, concise proposals are an important part of the decision-making process for our clients,” Lisa says. “They need to be able to see exactly what they’ll get.”

Lisa tried to switch to Caterease, but the onboarding process was overwhelming and the platform was difficult to use.



“It wasn’t user-friendly or intuitive,” she says. “You could go to college for three years to learn how to use it. It felt like it was developed by someone who knew a lot about technology but didn’t understand the catering business.”

## Eliminating double-bookings

Caterease’s interface didn’t have a calendar view, which made it hard to see when events were happening.



“You couldn’t track or block off dates that were unavailable, and it couldn’t sync to our Google Calendar,” Lisa says.

Stonehouse Catering would face disappointed customers if they couldn’t honor the booking, or overworked staff if they did.



“It risked impacting our reputation if we couldn’t provide the level of service that our company is known for,” Lisa says.

Changing tools was daunting, but Lisa had hit her breaking point.



“I realized that I was spending more hours trying to figure out Caterease than I was actually using the software,” she says. “I needed a tool built for the events industry and catering professionals.”



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## Solution

### An intuitive platform built for event professionals

Unlike previous solutions, Curate’s user interface was simple, easy, and intuitive.



“It just made sense,” Lisa says.

In only a few hours, the Stonehouse Catering team was able to get set up and begin sending out proposals to customers through Curate.

Now, the inquiry form on Stonehouse Catering’s website automatically populates their proposal, eliminating the risk of errors and streamlining the process.

Curate’s dashboard and calendar view have completely eliminated the risk of overbooking dates.

Curate syncs to Stonehouse Catering's Google Calendar, which is shared with the entire staff. Anyone can see upcoming events, and Lisa can block out extra dates to give her team more breathing room during busy periods.



"Blocking dates is a simple click," she says. "If we're six months out and we're already looking busy, I can block out days to make sure our staff has enough time to recuperate. Since we started using that feature, we've been able to be proactive in guarding our staff and our quality."

Lisa and her team can easily create and print menus for each event based on the proposal their clients approve. They use the Rentals Tool to generate a flatware and utensils packing list, eliminating the risk of manual errors.



Lisa says, "It's precise. When we made those lists manually, we sometimes forgot something. Now, we don't have people driving back to the kitchen to get something that was forgotten."

Stonehouse Catering has also started using Curate's recipes feature to save their chef time planning meals and ingredients.



"It's going to lead to less wasted product, and less time spent. It's ultimately going to save us money," Lisa says.

With Curate, Lisa can focus less on the software and logistics and more on the things that actually matter: Catering a great event.



"You want to be able to focus on what you're good at, which is providing great service, great food, and a great event," she says. "Nobody cares what software you're using when you're catering. They just want to know that all of the details are taken care of. We want to focus on what our clients care about, and Curate allows us to do that."



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## Results

### 30+ hours saved on proposal creation each week

Today, proposals that used to take upwards of an hour to build go out in under 10 minutes, 80% less time. Lisa estimates that they save upwards of 30 hours on proposals each week.



“A lot of companies our size have an employee sending out proposals full time,” Lisa says.

The rentals tool saves Stonehouse Catering an additional two hours per event by building packing lists and helping Stonehouse Catering take control of rental inventory.

On top of that, employees can see the full details of an event in Curate, which saves everyone time and gives Lisa's staff more autonomy.



“Our chef can see the details of each menu item. We can add photos and information right into the proposal, and my staff loves that they don't need to come to me to confirm details,” Lisa says. “As the owner, everything comes back to you. So when you can put those answers right there in the proposal, you can focus on what you really need to get done.”

Curate more than pays for itself. In just one area of her business.



Lisa states that “Curate saves her and her team over \$5,000 just in recouped gratuities and venue fee calculations.”

“We can very easily click and unclick whether each fee applies to an event,” she adds.

Curate has also reduced customer communications and inquiries by 50% — everything is clear from the beginning.



“Curate means less frustration for our clients,” Lisa says. “It saves multiple steps when closing deals, because they have fewer questions.”

It makes things much clearer for Lisa and her team too.



“Curate is very accessible and intuitive. It doesn’t require much knowledge to use. Using Curate helps me focus on why I started my business rather than trying to learn new software.”



“Curate means less frustration for our clients.”



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