

Restaurant Forum

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Restaurant Technology Trends

A year ago in this magazine we wrote, in reference to POS trends, "Technology changes at a rapid pace, responding to industry trends and sometimes changing the way business is done." That pace certainly hasn't slowed in the past 12 months. So, we wanted to check back into new technologies that are having an impact on the hospitality industry and report on new developments and applications.

The bottom line: Today's restaurant technology is geared toward providing "better service, more satisfied customers, and quicker table turns means a win/win

Restaurant Technology Trends — 2006

Current technologies are designed with these goals in mind:

- minimize identify theft
- integrate enhanced staff/management capabilities with current POS systems
- improve guest relations and build customer loyalty
- increase online capabilities
- decrease paper

for customers and the management team," says David Shaw, President of Postec. He predicts all the changes are heading toward a "paperless kitchen," to assist managers with table turns, customer

expectations for service and better communications in the manufacturing facility (aka, the kitchen)." On these next few pages we take a closer look at what this means in today's restaurants. ■



Through a recent partnership with Ingenico, one of the largest developers of electronic payment systems worldwide, hospitality industry POS and management systems provider Squirrel Systems is offering customers an integrated pay-at-the-table solution. The integration of SquirrelOne technology and Ingenico's 7770/80 mobile payment system extends Squirrel's credit card pay-at-the-table capabilities to PIN-based payment, such as debit cards. The solution can be deployed in standalone and fully integrated modes, with a simple change of a few parameters in the standard application. Its ability to operate in a standalone mode is good news for restaurant operators, as it allows them to accept payments even if they're having difficulty with their broadband connection, POS system or interface. With PIN debit, credit, gift card and other payments, the pay-at-the-table product is capable of handling split-tender types, split payment, will print the guest check at the table and can even order a cab.

CUSTOMER PROFILE: The Oakwood Café

The Oakwood Café in Dalton, GA installed ASI's Write-On Handheld POS System almost two years ago. This wireless POS system uses handwriting recognition on Windows-based PDAs to make entering an order as easy as using a pad and pen. Servers jot down abbreviations like "BM" for a Bloody Mary or "EB" for Eggs Benedict and send the order to the kitchen or bar via a secure wireless network.

"Before we got this system, our servers could only turn four to five tables during our lunch rush," says Kasey Carpenter, owner of The Oakwood Café. "Now they can turn six to eight tables during the rush." Carpenter's 150-seat restaurant currently uses six Write-On Handheld units to process orders for nearly 700 people a day, most of whom come for lunch. "This results in higher revenues for the restaurant and better employee retention," explains Carpenter.

According to Staley Bryant of Computer Enterprises Inc. (CEI) in Marietta, which represents Write-On Handheld in Georgia, "In the past, the general consensus was that handhelds were only suitable for 'special' environments, like stadiums, outdoor patios, and other situations where there was a large distance between the customer and the fixed POS station and food preparation areas. The 'consensus' was based on the idea that handheld technology was too big, expensive, unreliable and very hard to use. This is no longer the case. The new generation of handhelds are smaller, cheaper and more reliable."

Carpenter has clear enthusiasm for the Write-On POS System: "The system is incredibly easy to use. When I hire new servers, they usually learn the technology in less than two hours!" He adds that it has had a positive impact on service, too, since servers are able to spend more face-to-face time with customers, versus running all over the restaurant to drop off food tickets, or wait in line at a touchscreen to place the orders.



The Write-On Handheld by ASI is a wireless POS system used by servers to process orders tableside and by managers to monitor restaurant operations and perform secured functions, such as discounting and voiding checks. It is currently the only handheld product on the market to take full advantage of the handwriting recognition capabilities built into the operating systems of pocket PCs, making it as easy to use as a pencil and pad, while adding all the recognized benefits of direct-order entry. ASI's Write-On Handheld with mobile payment processing adds the benefit of simple, secure tableside payment processing.

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