

# POS SYSTEMS HELP SOLVE LABOR PROBLEMS

## Restaurateurs optimize staff training by implementing a durable POS system

Since labor turnover in restaurants is a never-ending battle, training new employees remains an ongoing challenge for busy operators. Teaching consistent standards to new team members becomes even more difficult when using an outdated POS system — or none at all. That’s why it’s virtually essential to have a modern POS system that’s not only durable and intuitive, but also teachable to all employees, whether in a single restaurant or across a large chain. Service uniformity and long-term profitability depend on it.

### Consistency at the table

It’s up to servers to get orders correct to guests’ specifications. But when handwritten orders are the norm, servers tend to abbreviate menu items their own way, making systemization across a staff practically impossible. Things only worsen when handwritten orders go back to the kitchen to new cooks not familiar with each server’s unique spellings or lingo.

And while a basic, fixed terminal POS system can standardize orders printed in the kitchen, servers who handwrite orders still must recall every detail encrypted in their rushed penmanship on the walk



from their tables to the terminal. An advanced POS system utilizing mobile tablets is one way to eliminate that confusion since orders are entered into the system at the table. While facing guests, servers can confirm details quickly and accurately using the tablet. Such a system makes training a breeze since the entire staff is reading off the same page.

Three-unit Annie’s Café faced and solved that problem by migrating from a handwritten order system to a mobile POS solution, using industrial-grade tablets from Posiflex. Not only did the change simplify and speed up order taking, but it also increased accuracy, table turns and sales. According to co-owner Jan Vyse, the use of mobile tablets also improved service.

“Our mobile units have allowed our servers to not only take orders, but to stop for a few minutes to ask after customers’ wellbeing,” Vyse says. “From a management point of view we have found that fewer mistakes are being made, and as a result the average spend per person has increased.”

With mobile tablets stashed comfortably in servers’ aprons, guest-card payments are processed quickly and wirelessly at the table. That simple change shaves minutes off table wait times and, Vyse says, “allows Annie’s Café to focus on building our business with good food and great service.”

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## Consistency in the kitchen

While a special order may make sense to the server who takes it, it's not always understood by the kitchen crew — especially if a team member is new, and particularly if the details are shared audibly during peak times. Vyse says that in the past Annie's customers' special requests came to the kitchen directly from servers' mouths, disrupting the flow of service at both ends of the business. Servers were away from their tables and cooks were distracted by a voice other than the expeditor's.

Arguably worse, servers sometimes forgot to bill guests for special requests since they didn't always know what to charge for add-ons and odd adjustments. Adding mobile tablets, Vyse says, eliminated those problems.

"Those little extras that were previously requested by the customer via word of mouth are now being sent through the mobile units," Vyse says. "And the charge cannot be forgotten by a busy server."

## Durability and Flexibility of platform

All the great staff training in the world is useless if a POS system's software isn't stable and flexible, or its hardware isn't durable enough to withstand the punishing restaurant environment. Common computer hardware cannot withstand the beating of all-day use and abuse, whether fixed or mobile, and where consumer grade tablets are used, native iOS or Android software likely won't function with a restaurant's existing POS or back-office system. Without such integration a system will lack the flexibility needed for things like frequent menu changes or customer rewards redemption.

Tacky Jacks POS system regularly faced extreme durability issues. As seaside indoor-outdoor restaurant company, humidity and salt water corrosion were notoriously destructive to average POS terminals placed outside. Motherboards failed regularly, which created system downtime and angry customers and staffers. Owners knew they had to find a solution so the company

sought help from Posiflex. Ever since, the brand's ultra-durable equipment has performed optimally despite the unforgiving conditions endured along the seaside.

"We've been using Posiflex touch screen terminals since 2006 in all our franchises because we don't have to think about the POS, it just works," says Ken Kichler, chief financial officer of Tacky Jacks. One particular outdoor terminal in the company's system has worked for 12 years, Kichler says. Not worrying about POS issues, he says, "allows me to focus on our customers and franchise operations." ■

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