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POS Software 2011

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Before moving forward, sometimes it is important to look back. In our most comprehensive point of sale (POS) coverage of the year, Hospitality Technology reaches out to the POS vendor community to recap their biggest software innovations from 2010, while also providing a sneak peak at the innovations and big-picture trends that they expect to make waves in the year ahead. Meanwhile, our latest reader survey of more than 300 hospitality executives sheds light on their companies' top platform innovations and their 2011 POS purchasing plans (especially compared to what they said last year).

On all fronts, mobility is in the spotlight, as nearly every vendor we consulted added tableside or mobile phone-based POS to its list of "trend predictions" for 2011. Many are putting their money where their mouth is with plans to add or enhance such functionality in 2011. And it's a good thing, since hospitality operators overwhelmingly rate mobile phone and tableside POS functionality as more important than cloud-based or open source applications.

POS Reader Survey: In-Demand Features

What kind of difference can a year make on operators' point of sale purchasing plans? Hospitality Technology asked its readers to tell us what POS initiatives they have in store for the year ahead, and then compared their answers to the results from our January/February 2010 issue's POS reader survey ("POS Software Trends in 2010 (<http://hospitalitytechnology.edgl.com/magazine/january-february-2010/POS-Software-Trends-201055076>).") to get a clearer picture of technology buying trends.

Their ranking may be slightly different from last year, but an overall comparison of companies' interest in individual POS platform innovations shows little deviation from the previous year. Enterprise-wide/centralized POS, tableside POS for ordering and/or payment and mobile phone-based POS were again voted the top three most interesting point of sale platform innovations, at 41.7%, 39.2% and 31.4% respectively. Their high ranking can be a result of the business goals that operators can achieve through their implementation (i.e. efficiency, reduction of cost/labor, customer service, etc). What's more, the

increasing interest in tableside POS and mobile-phone based POS indicate that the restaurant industry is ready to respond to consumers' growing demands for personalized, high-tech interactions.

It is also important to note that while the majority of the numbers are down slightly from 2010, their comparative level of importance from 2010 to 2011 is fairly consistent. Online POS seems to be the one exception, rising 3.7% in interest from 24.8% in 2010 to 28.5% in 2011. Because the data for all of the POS innovations is similar year-over-year, it can be assumed that operators' interest remains, for the most part, unchanged.

POS Purchasing Plans

When comparing POS purchasing plans for 2011 to plans from 2010, a consistent trend can be seen across the board: less investment in the year ahead. From installing an entirely new solution to expanding the installation base; from adding a wireless network to focusing on PCI compliance; adding new features or researching a new POS; operators' plans have fallen by anywhere from 4% to 17%, depending upon the initiative.

There are two possible explanations for this slowdown: either those who indicated that they planned on completing a specific POS initiative in 2010 were successful in their efforts, or operators may be exercising caution when it comes to allocating money to their POS systems for the year ahead. Both possibilities are supported by the increased response among those who do not plan on doing anything to their POS in 2011 (up to 26.5% from 23.3%). Of those operators who are making investments in 2011, the bulk (19.7%) are looking to add functionality from their current vendor.

Vendor Innovations & Predictions

Action Systems (ASI, www.rmpos.com)

2010 Advancements: ASI focused on enhancing tableside ordering by beta testing its Restaurant Manager's Write-On Handheld software on Apple's iPod touch. ASI notes that the order taking and payment processes require minimal staff training because so many employees are already familiar with the iPod touch or iPhone.

2011 Predictions & Plans: Mobile devices will continue to improve decision making and fraud reduction through real-time access to management data, and restaurants will mitigate PCI compliance risks with payment technologies like tokenization and end-to-end encryption. ASI's Restaurant Manager v18 will facilitate better decision making via data mining tools, drive adoption of tableside ordering and payment on iPod touch, offer improved inventory control and enhance centralized frequent diner capabilities. Full commercial availability of the Write-On Handheld on the iPod touch is planned for Q1 2011.

Agilysys (www.agilysys.com)

2010 Advancements: To tackle labor management issues, Agilysys added the Tmx labor management solution to its InfoGenesis POS system. This solution can improve the productivity and efficiency of restaurants' workforce by integrating scheduling, time and attendance, human resources and labor forecasting functions.

2011 Predictions & Plans: Agilysys anticipates pay-at-table, tablet and touch devices, new platforms for mobile solutions and business intelligence to gain ground in 2011. Agilysys will continue to enhance its current pay-at-table device while also developing a new product that uses the iPhone for remote ordering (i.e. poolside). The company plans to integrate this technology into the Agilysys suite, and also to introduce a new reporting product in 2011 that supports both ad-hoc and cross-enterprise reporting.

Custom Business Solutions (CBS, www.cbs-posi.com)

2010 Advancements: CBS, Inc. released three new POS tools that put real-time, actionable data into the hands of restaurant managers. They are: a new release of NorthStar Live which delivers key operating data to a single display screen; a pair of iPod/iPhone apps that enables access to table management and break compliance data from anywhere; and two California Labor Code compliance tools for break compliance and time card adjustment that work with the POSitouch Labor Module.

2011 Predictions & Plans: CBS expects a number of innovations to pick up speed in 2011, including the use of tablets as manager workstations, handheld and wireless technologies, online ordering and in-store interactive ordering devices, and interactive marketing tools that increase wallet share (i.e. Groupon, Facebook fan pages and applications). CBS will focus on products that increase visibility to real-time predictive measures, enabling operators to take on-the-spot actions that ultimately drive profits in 2011.

Digital Dining (<http://www.digitaldining.com/>)

2010 Advancements: Menu coursing is just one of many enhancements that Digital Dining added to its Digital Dining Restaurant POS 7.4.A.1 solution in 2010. Menu items can now be entered by course, and items can be held and fired by course. An option also exists to send the entire check and then notify the appropriate prep areas when it's time to start each course.

2011 Predictions & Plans: Digital Dining identified social networking and mobile devices, specifically the iPad, iPhone and iPod, to be technologies to watch in 2011. In 2010 the company upgraded all its technologies with new graphics engines (.net, XML, etc.) and adopted the latest versions of Microsoft Office and Crystal Report, and in 2011 will focus on enhancing features with these technologies.

MICROS (<http://www.micros.com/>)

2010 Advancements: MICROS added several new enhancements to its Restaurant Enterprise Solution (RES) 4.7 in early 2010. In April, MICROS added fully-integrated Digital Menu Board functionality to clearly present relevant information.

2011 Predictions & Plans: As the economy begins to recover, operators will cease deep discounting and look to online ordering, loyalty, and marketing solutions to positively influence top line sales, predicts MICROS, while labor, inventory, hosting and security products/services will help fortify the bottom line. The rapid growth of mobile devices will continue and have a direct impact on the POS market. MICROS' product strategy is influenced by current hospitality and technology trends, and tells Hospitality Technology that 2011 will be no exception: the company plans to enhance existing products and release new products that help hospitality operators capitalize on the fast-changing business environment.

ParTech (<http://www.partech.com/>)

2010 Advancements: Conversational ordering and line busting options now enable operators leveraging PAR's EverServ QSR POS software to benefit from increased sales, staff efficiency and order speed.

2011 Predictions & Plans: PAR identifies the following trends: mobile self-service and payment; evolving loyalty and revenue generating approaches; and a shift from store centric systems to fully connected business enterprise systems. In the first quarter of 2011, PAR will launch POS software designed for the QSR segment: PAR EverServ QSR. Built from the ground up using SOA architecture and an enterprise approach, EverServ QSR is designed on four core principles: adaptability, modularity, scalability and usability. PAR will also make several enhancements to its table service restaurant POS software, PAR EverServ TSR.

pcAmerica (<http://www.pcamerica.com/>)

2010 Advancements: Version 12.5 of Restaurant Pro Express (RPE) and Cash Register Express (CRE) focuses on improving sales, reducing costs, and boosting efficiency. Customers can now order and pay online thanks to a new online interface. With CRE and RPE, restaurants also can set up a terminal enabling customers to order their own food. pcAmerica's POS can also e-mail receipts to customers and purchase orders to vendors.

2011 Predictions & Plans: pcAmerica will continue to enhance its online web portal for restaurant operators that are looking to technology to access and modify sales reports, menus, employee time and attendance and other information remotely. In addition, the company will integrate wireless ordering and payment technology for restaurants, a long-discussed objective that is expected to see increased adoption in 2011. pcAmerica will continue to give social networking and digital signage strong attention in 2011.

Radiant Systems (<http://www.radiantsystems.com/>)

2010 Advancements: Aloha POS version 6.5 adds token replacement, enhanced password security, and control settings to employee security options, and clock-in and clock-out messages to solicit a response from employees at check-in-and check-out.

2011 Predictions & Plans: As new technologies continue to emerge around the ordering experience and more focus is placed on the consumer, Radiant sees the role of the point of sale evolving. POS software will remain at the core of operations. However, it will also start being leveraged as a point of connection that enables operators to add functionality targeted at engaging consumers both inside and outside the restaurant, building loyalty and

driving revenue growth. In 2011, Radiant will continue to enhance existing technology and develop new technology that helps operators maximize their operations, build their brand, and connect with consumers.

SilverWare POS (<http://www.silverwarepos.com/>)

2010 Advancements: The addition of real-time Web reporting to SilverWare POS is empowering operators to make on-the-spot business decisions by analyzing restaurant data through the Internet or on a mobile device such as an iPhone or BlackBerry.

2011 Predictions & Plans: Theft reduction and cost control are the main areas of focus for 2011. The SilverWare POS Web Cam Surveillance will simultaneously video record staff and screen capture for controlled and defined events. Operators will be able to curb theft through a Web Cam integration that captures staff sign-in/out, voids, discounts, transfers, and all functions requiring a manager's approval. Details will be viewable locally and via the Web through the SilverWare POS Enterprise Reporting System.

SpeedLine Solutions (<http://www.speedlinesolutions.com/>)

2010 Advancements: Flexibility and scalability are two important issues that SpeedLine Solutions addressed in its SpeedLine 6.2 release this past fall. More than 70 individual restaurant chains and operators requested new capabilities that resulted in more than 400 new tools and enhancements. The release adds partnerships with Monetra Payment Services and Paytronix Loyalty Systems. Also, a new electronic receiving interface creates an easy way for restaurant suppliers to connect with SpeedLine Inventory and save time with electronic receiving. Other features focus on training new staff quickly with more than 50 online videos and tutorials.

2011 Predictions & Plans: Remote ordering and direct marketing are changing how restaurants connect with and relate to guests. In response, more restaurants are replacing the standalone register with a more connected POS at the hub of these new technologies. Delivery/carryout restaurants will explore new ways to connect with consumers in 2011 via smartphone and tablet ordering, mobile and social media marketing. At the same time, discounting and value pricing has many restaurant companies engaged in 'coupon wars,' straining already tight margins. To offset this, they will seek new and better tools in 2011 to track and control food and labor costs. Both of these trends are driving new developments at SpeedLine.

Squirrel Systems (<http://www.squirrelsistemas.com/>)

2010 Advancements: Affordable, streamlined, and bundled are the operative words to describe the latest version of Squirrel Systems' Squirrel in a Box POS solution. An updated user interface for both front- and back-of-house software makes this product easier to use. The database also has been upgraded to enhance security and performance.

2011 Predictions & Plans: In 2011, Squirrel Systems will focus on expanding support for mobile computing, loyalty programs and PCI security. Squirrel expects the hospitality industry will increasingly follow these trends to improve operational efficiencies, reward loyal customers, and protect cardholder data. Squirrel's POS mobility support will provide the same user experience whether taking orders on a POS terminal or tablet. Restaurants will continue to gain valuable insight on their most loyal customers using Squirrel's enhanced loyalty application. Finally, tools such as pay-at-the table and encryption at the magnetic stripe reader will help businesses reduce their PCI scope.

Wand Corp. (<http://www.wandcorp.com/>)

2010 Advancements: This year's updates included single-shift employee training for NextGen POS users. Wand boasts that this feature can significantly reduce the cost and time involved in new hire training, while increasing employee job satisfaction which in turn reduces employee turnover.

2011 Predictions & Plans: In 2011, Wand expects to see the enterprise integration of digital menu board technology with the POS. Specifically, there will be further use of transactional-level data. The POS will also become more involved with the planning and execution of marketing campaigns. Lastly, Wand expects that the POS will be more intertwined with nutritional information as the requirements of the 2010 Health Care Law are specified and enforced. For its part, Wand will continue to expand its suite of QSR enterprise software offerings, the Digital Restaurant, with a focus on analytics. Analytics will tie all applications together and create a truly closed-loop marketing tool.

Xpient Solutions (<http://www.xpient.com/>)

2010 Advancements: Released in the summer of 2010, Iris 3.8.0 is Xpient’s fully-validated PA-DSS 1.2 package. It includes an intelligent discount engine and significant enhancements for customer loyalty, including real-time integration with social Web platforms (i.e. Facebook, Twitter). In addition, Xpient boasts that its new Iris user interface simplifies implementation and management of kiosk applications.

2011 Predictions & Plans: Xpient sees 2011 as the year of customer loyalty. While one in three retail customers reported their next purchase is influenced by a loyalty program, only one in ten QSR customers feel the same. Of these, only 17% express satisfaction with their current QSR loyalty offerings. The POS system is critical to allowing restaurant enterprises to capitalize on this opportunity. With this in mind, the company expects operators to more aggressively embrace loyalty in 2011 and the company says that it is positioned to deliver on that front with its just-released Loyalty 2.0.

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