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## Top POS Software Trends

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Point-of-sale (POS) trends in quick-service and fast casual restaurant segments tend to follow the demands of restaurant customers, defined these days as fast-paced and busy. Now more than ever customers are looking to get in and out as quickly as possible as they multi-task their way through their lunch hours. As such, Web-based applications and self-service ordering and payment solutions, as well as integration with other applications in the restaurant, are gaining ground in the restaurant space, whether via actual rollouts or simply through growing interest levels.

On the cutting-edge front, some restaurants are even looking at accepting payment via SMS or text message, a nod to the youthful Millennial Generation (also referred to as Generation Y), whose sophisticated use of personal technology from a very young age is permeating new business trends.

Systems are also moving from in-house to abovestore, migrating to .NET Web technology. For many years, POS was an in-house application with machines in the restaurant, says Steve Harris, president of Colorado-based Vision Hospitality Consultants ([www.visionresults.com](http://www.visionresults.com)). Any required changes were made through a PC.

"The trend, more and more, is above-store technology where you can administer the site remotely from the Web and poll data to a Web site," Harris says. The .NET Web technology collects data from all its locations and stores it in a centralized SQL server database. Management has real-time access to information rather than waiting for next-day reporting. Multiple units can access data on any location from anywhere with Web access, says Harris.

*Hospitality Technology* breaks down these and other top trends that are making their mark in the restaurant POS technology market.

### TAKE-OUT TECH

Radiant Systems ([www.radiantsystems.com](http://www.radiantsystems.com)) recently launched a new software module targeting take-out orders that integrates with existing POS systems. Pei Wei Asian Diner, a quick-casual restaurant operated by P.F. Chang's China Bistro, added this new module to help streamline its take-out orders and ensure highquality take-out food. This solution is implemented in two of Pei Wei's 143 locations, with another two targeted by the end of 2007.

One of the biggest pieces of the Pei Wei project was creating an accurate algorithm to correctly determine when the take-out order will be ready for the customer. This mathematical equation is based on several factors, such as number of workers in the kitchen, orders in the system, and time to cook entrees. Take-out orders account for about 20 percent of sales, so Pei Wei certainly wants to quote an accurate wait time.

"There is logic built into the equation now, and it takes the guesswork out," says Heather McIntosh, director of training at Arizona-based Pei Wei. "Food isn't sitting there waiting for the customer, so it improves the food quality. So far it's been perfect."

The TakeOut module also helps Pei Wei capture guest information, such as past orders, future orders, and a guest database with addresses and phone numbers. Customers with food allergies feel more assured their order will be right when Pei Wei remembers their past orders.

"The new solution also makes it less intimidating for new managers," McIntosh says. "It makes them feel more confident that they will meet the time promise they make to the guest."

### REMOTE CONTROL WITH .NET

Visibility for management is one of the greatest benefits for Taco Bueno after it completes its roll out in December. This quickservice Mexican restaurant is adding XPient's ([www.xpient.com](http://www.xpient.com)) Intelligent Restaurant Information System (IRIS) POS application to its 153 corporate and franchise locations in eight states.

The new solution incorporates BOA.NET technology, where data will be updated every 15 minutes and stored at a centralized server. Having that access to information is critical for restaurant managers to stay on target. The new system also helps with cost management, speed of service and accuracy.

"The locations that are fully implemented are raving about the real-time access to data," says Ramon Torres, senior vice president of operations at Taco Bueno in Dallas, Texas.

Taco Bueno is also working with Exit 41 ([www.exit41.com](http://www.exit41.com)) for other progressive technology that integrates with its POS. OrderPerfect is a solution for drive-through orders to be centralized in a call center offsite, which provides more order accuracy. The restaurant already realizes an 8 percent to 12 percent improvement by taking the orders offsite in a call center environment. In the future Taco Bueno will add multiple channel ordering through Web and text messaging.

### TXT MSG PMNT

Customers at McDonald's in Boulder, Colorado, have a new payment option available to fit their tech-savvy lifestyle --mobile text payment over their cell phones through Mocupay or MOBILE CASH PAYment ([www.mocupay.com](http://www.mocupay.com)). Cash or credit are no longer the only choices.

Aaron Holland, owner of five McDonald's restaurants in the Boulder area, added the Mocupay payment solution in September 2007 to three of his locations. With University of Colorado students throughout the city, Holland said it made sense to give the technology a try.

"Cell phones are a part of their lives, and it's just another natural payment transition for convenience," Holland says. "I can see how it can be useful to all customers across our company."

After creating an account, customers ready to purchase at McDonald's (or the 250 other area merchants) text their four-digit PIN to Mocupay, which then texts back a transaction code and

balance. The customer gives the transaction code to the cashier and receives a receipt. Holland says the process is just as fast as credit card transactions and saves the merchant money on credit card transaction fees, which amount to only 19 cents per mobile text transaction.

Text payments through McDonald's Mocopay are almost exclusively through word-of-mouth at this point, Holland says, but people get inquisitive when they see others using it. "If you fall into the category of a tech-savvy customer, you'll want to try this," Holland relates. "Customers think it's cool!"

Mocopay executives admit the company targets Millennials -- those born from around 1980 to early 2000. This "text-savvy" group is already sending 3,000 to 6,000 text messages per month and using their phone for data two to three times more than voice.

#### **EASY SELF-SERVICE PAYMENT**

DiSalvo's Pizza and Italian Restaurant, a family-owned restaurant in Florida with six locations in Broward County, upgraded its POS technology significantly in the last few months. It transitioned from an old-fashioned line at the front cash register to SoftPay, a self-pay kiosk by SoftTouch POS ([www.softtouchpos.com](http://www.softtouchpos.com)).

Maria Reiss and her husband, owners of the Coral Springs location, decided to add the self-pay solution in September 2007 to handle the check out congestion for dining tabs and pick-up orders -- rather than adding staff to their payroll. One of their customers' biggest frustrations was waiting to pay at the end of their meal. Customers today don't have to ask or wait for their check when they are ready to leave. They take the self-pay card from their table to the SoftPay kiosk and hold it near the machine to begin the process. Customers move through interactive touch screens to review their check, add tip, swipe their credit card, sign an electronic signature device and receive a paper receipt.

"We had a great response right away," Reiss says. "It caught on during the day so we transitioned it to the dinner crowd as well."

In just a few short months, the restaurant has reduced its cashiers from two to one during the week as a result of SoftPay. Reiss says customers are feeling the freedom to just get up and go when they've completed their meal. It also has helped separate the pick-up orders, who often bypass the cashiers now and head straight to the kiosk.

Reiss believes the payment solution offers her restaurant a competitive advantage, as well. If customers are choosing between four or five places to go for lunch, they'll select DiSalvo's if they believe they can get out quicker. It also offers a nice feature for large groups who like separate checks. **HT**

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