



# Get your house in order

Pubs that regularly review their electronic point of sale systems get the best cost and productivity benefits from this rapidly evolving technology

Words: Phil Devine

**Many pubs or bars have an electronic point of sale (Epos) system in some form or the other located in the bar servery area or on a serving island, while some operations still rely on a basic cash register.**

Whatever the choice of equipment, operators need to periodically review their systems as Epos hardware and software is like any other frontline technology – it evolves rapidly and more efficient and beneficial systems are rolling out each year.

Epos removes manual counting errors from many processes and allows for universal changes to prices – and price consistency – to reflect special offers and deals.

Any data that is collected by the system can be organised to produce meaningful reports and analysis to be used in monitoring the performance of marketing promotions, as well as for auditing and accounting purposes.

Paul Hudson is the business development director at J2, a giant in the manufacture of touch-screen monitors and point-of-sale hardware to the retail, hospitality and leisure industries.

He says that Epos is all about integrating a number of systems within an operation so that processes like stocking and ordering can be simplified, while operators or managers gain access to detailed information for auditing and planning.

An accurate stock report improves control of ordering and “helps a business respond efficiently to the peaks, and the troughs, in demand” Hudson says.

The automation of Epos allows a pub to respond quickly to customer behaviour patterns. When it comes to perishable stock, having this data to hand means stock systems and supply chains can adapt

quickly to changes and the effect on a pub's bottom line is immediate.

#### COST OF OWNERSHIP

Hudson says one of the biggest concerns voiced by operators is the need to have a modern, relevant system that also has the lowest possible cost

**“BECAUSE THE EPOS SYSTEM IS MODULAR, YOU CAN EVEN HAVE SEPARATE CASH DRAWERS”**

## THE PARLOUR TAKES A FRESH APPROACH

The Parlour Bar & Kitchen, located near Canary Wharf in London's Docklands, caters for a wide range of customers, from those looking for a business breakfast to patrons out for a late-night drink

The Parlour is the second venue from privately-owned bar group Drake & Morgan and was opened in October 2009.

Recognising the importance its customers place on service, Drake & Morgan installed CST's ConnectSmart Kitchen system to enable front-of-house staff to productively relay order information to chefs.

Touchscreens in the kitchen tell chefs what dishes to prepare and when. This means all the food for a table's order is ready at the same time, with the timings automatically worked out by the system.

The Parlour is open from 8am to midnight, with an all-day menu from breakfast to dinner. The emphasis is on fresh food, and includes locally-sourced seasonal dishes, fresh seafood, deli-style sharing boards and gourmet sandwiches and burgers. While food trade is steady throughout the day, the peak period is at lunchtime, when up to 350 meals may be served.

#### HOW CSK WORKS AT THE PARLOUR

Front-of-house staff take orders, which are keyed into the Epos system. CSK can interface with most POS and Epos systems on the market. The menu items are automatically graphically dis-

played on screens at different kitchen stations, including individual requirements such as how a burger should be cooked.

In the kitchen, the system automatically schedules the prep and cooking times to ensure all the food for a table is ready simultaneously. The screens tell each chef what to cook next – if they need a reminder, they can touch the screen to bring up specification cards that give the recipe and images of the dish.

For The Parlour's general manager Taskin Muzaffer, the system represents a major step forward from the traditional paper-based approach to kitchen communications. “It means chefs don't have to think about the timings of each dish, as they're alerted when they need to start cooking.”

#### ACCURATE TIMING

Programming The Parlour's menu into CSK also proved to be a good lesson on the realities of timings in a busy kitchen.

“We learnt that it's only as good as the timings you put in for each dish, and the CSK helped us to determine the true cook times for our menu items” says Taskin.

Having mastered the art of timing a dish, staff have adapted quickly. “The system is very efficient, so staff have taken to it well. It's also very easy to train new staff to use it.”

Drake & Morgan's managing director, Jillian MacLean, took the decision to implement CSK at The Parlour as part of the company ethos to use the latest technology and operating systems to deliver high standards of service.



system extremely reliable, and the added use of fanless models means silent operation and added hygiene, as cooling fans only serve to distribute dust and dirt.

## A PUSH FOR PRODUCTIVITY

For pubs, the advantages of a relevant Epos system are many. First is its effect on productivity. Trained staff working with a well-designed Epos system “perform faster and more accurately”, Epos.co.uk says.

“Time saving aids such as touch screens, food orders sent directly to the kitchen, and sufficient sales points so that staff aren’t in a queue to use a single till – all these design factors increase that all-important ‘rate of serve’ to maximise customer satisfaction, increase utilisation of staff and most importantly, increase profits,” it points out.

Epos also offers a huge advantage over traditional push-button tills when it comes to cash and stock control.

Epos.co.uk says: “Staff members can be individually identified to the system, using a touch-on Dallas Key or even finger-print recognition, so management know who is selling and who is not, and exactly what is being sold, in real-time if needs be.”

Hudson goes on to add: “Because the Epos system is modular, you can even have separate cash drawers for each member of staff if you feel the need to audit transactions on the basis of each employee.”

The system can also be set up to record each instance of the cash drawer being opened so that sales records, refunds and the like can be reconciled with frequency of access to the drawer.

## CONNECT WITH YOUR KITCHEN


Call Systems Technology (CST) group commercial director Ashley Sheppard says that the QSR Automations systems distributed by CST are designed to make savings by integrating front of house with the kitchen and back of house.

He says: “The QSR Automations kitchen automation software, called ConnectSmart Kitchen (CSK), links directly to a site’s Epos. Orders are sent to the kitchen where, using bump bars or touch screens and vivid, easy-to-understand graphics, CSK automatically assigns menu items to individual chef’s workstations, based on the prep times of each item on a particular order – so that all items for the order complete at the same time.

“CSK delivers faster kitchen preparation and delivery, enhanced food quality and reduced working stress. It saves on labour costs and reduces food wastage. There’s no need for printed recipe books or spec cards as all the information is available on screen.”

Sheppard points out that the average time for return on investment for a typical QSR system is six months, though it can be as little as four to six weeks.

The ConnectSmart Hostess table management software from QSR can be linked directly with the CSK. It predicts table waits and displays the current status of each table’s order. Optional software features allow it to handle reservations along with online wait lists and bookings.

“For staff, the main benefit is easier preparation and less stress. For customers and management, it’s better food quality and faster service,” he says. 



## CASE STUDY – GIRAFFE RESTAURANTS

Giraffe restaurants business development manager Jerry Marks was involved with integrating QSR’s ConnectSmart Hostess system in the group’s outlets. “It paid for itself in the first two weeks of summer,” he says.

“QSR’s ConnectSmart Hostess system easily adds 10% to our sales in our busiest sites by managing our table capacity efficiently. It’s very simple for the staff to use and very accurate in terms of wait time estimates.”

The system is supplied and serviced by Call Systems Technology and is focused on an intuitive interface located at the eatery reception.

The new Giraffe site in the Westfield shopping mall in Stratford, London, is typical of the chain in having several eating areas – in this case, the ground floor, upstairs and outside. “A greeter of the queue at the door simply can’t estimate table times accurately – for one thing, they can’t see all the tables,” says Marks.



“At first, staff here thought they could run the queue manually, but the manager from our Southbank site came to monitor it and found that when we were busy, we were losing one party in three. One in three! It was because the queue was long and estimated wait times were inaccurate, so people were moving on.

“It’s exactly that kind of issue that the Hostess system sorts out.”

Another bonus is the Hostess system’s ability to cope with different table combinations.

“When you’re really busy, the last thing the manager using a manual system wants to see is a big party of, say, eight or 10 people. How are you going to fit them in? Hostess copes with it easily, working out the best table combination to accommodate them and giving an accurate wait time.”

Some Giraffe sites use CST CustomerCall pagers alongside QSR’s ConnectSmart system.

Marks says: “The party arrives and they’re given a pager. They can go and window shop or have a drink in the bar. When the table is ready, the Hostess system sends an alert and the pager lets the customers know.

“The pager totally eliminates walkaways – it’s like a binding contract with the customer. Because you’ve handed them the pager, they feel duty bound to give you their business.”

# 2%

The immediate increase in revenue once an Epos system is installed

# 1%

Revenue lost due to keying and operational errors when an Epos system is not installed