

POS Hardware Combines Connectivity and Flexibility

Today's POS hardware needs to align with omnichannel shopping and mobile tech trends

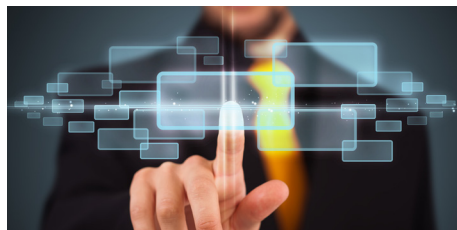
The point-of-sale, traditionally seen as the heart of the brick-and-mortar environment, is still a critical part of the store shopping experience in the age of mobility and omnichannel shopping. The difference today is that, more than ever, the stationary POS must “play well with others” for retailers to get maximum value from their hardware investment. With more and more shoppers' journeys beginning in non-store channels, the POS needs to be designed for real-time updating of sales, transactions, loyalty and other digital customer activity.

Connections and flexibility are also important within the store itself. For example, peripherals with dual interfaces that allow them to be controlled either by a stationary POS or remotely via network connections expand retailers' options around customer service and store layouts. Devices that offer common user interfaces for both stationary and mobile POS devices cut down on the training time needed to bring store associates up to speed. In addition, as the store technology stack grows more complex, a more flexible generation of POS hardware allows these stations to double as a manager's monitoring and control station for store operations.

Q: As brick-and-mortar stores become part of a seamless, omnichannel customer experience, what will be the biggest impact on retailers' POS hardware choices?

DOYLE LEDFORD: Because brick-and mortar stores (B&Ms) sometime present inconveniences that online stores don't encounter, such as long lines or inexperienced sales staff, B&Ms must take that ‘disadvantage’ and provide a

better overall positive experience for the customer. B&Ms can take this opportunity to equip their store environments with, for example, small-footprint POS pods strategically placed throughout the store that allow their staff to accommodate – and complement – the customer's need. In turn, this will increase store efficiency. We've come to a crossroads where POS isn't just about ‘ringing the order’. POS has to be an integral & positive part of the customer experience.



Q: How can retailers best prepare for the changes in POS hardware requirements that the introduction of new payment technologies will bring?

LEDFORD: A POS manufacturer must be forward-thinking and be able to produce equipment that can adapt to ever-evolving new technology. They must also be aware of multiple standards that can stifle companies with proprietary equipment, or pigeonhole themselves into one technology or standard. Retailers with international locations will find that needs and standards vary greatly. The selection of a POS vendor who can accommodate varying local standards is critical. Retailers must ask themselves, ‘Will I need my POS system to be able to accept changes in technology at a moment's notice? Or should I roll the dice and go with a POS system that will suit me for now, but may become obsolete soon and I have to buy an entirely new system then?’ I believe retailers would want the former.



Doyle Ledford
Vice President of Sales
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Q: How can retailers most effectively leverage their significant investment in existing POS hardware while offering customers new/more advanced functionality?

LEDFORD: We are in a point of time where new technology accelerates faster than ever.

Some are fads – they come and go, while some are here to stay. Is the investment you made in your POS capable of embracing and tapping into these new technologies? When investing in POS hardware, retailers should consider weighing their current requirements with their potential needs. They need to decide if they will be content with a POS system that is less costly and satisfies today's requirements, or if they want to invest in a system that can be multifunctional and adapt to new technology.

POS terminal hardware has grown far beyond being just a cash register. New and advanced functionality evolving to enhance the customer and retailer experience includes digital signage, time and attendance, way finding, inventory control and security. If their current system isn't compatible with these integral enhancements, they may consider the need to update their POS system and invest in a solution that is capable of adaptation and change. ■

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