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The latest point-of-sale (POS) products are more flexible than ever. Not just for retail establishments, these products are also used in places as diverse as restaurants, coffee shops, automobile repair shops and nightclubs. Even the small, neighborhood computer repair shop would benefit from a POS system.

Luckily,

more diverse products are available today, offering everything from basic POS functionality to extensive customization capability that includes touchscreens and integration with vital POS hardware peripherals such as barcode scanners, pole displays and receipt printers.

Unlike the cash registers of old, today's POS systems provide managers plenty of tools for safeguarding their profits, including the ability to require passwords and register log-ins. Many also feature an extensive audit trail, where you can see exactly who processed that unauthorized discount.

A 2004 study by the Gartner Group reinforces the positive benefits of these systems for small retailers, pointing out that among the key reasons these small businesses use an advanced POS program as opposed to a simple electronic cash register are improved inventory control, greater customer service options, and tighter cash management.

The Gartner report concluded that even base-level POS systems can greatly aid a business: "Business value can be achieved by capturing or calculating a few critical pieces of information: what is selling, how much is selling, when to buy additional merchandise, and who is the most likely customer for that merchandise."

This review covers a wide range of products focused on the following areas:

Ease of Use — While there are a lot of terrific products

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Scalability is equally important, particularly for those looking to grow substantially in the next year and who want to know if the software they purchase will grow with them.

Features/Functionality — This section explores what the program does and how easy/difficult it is to perform functions.

Integration — If a business wants a complete front/back office product, system integration can be very important. In addition to integration with related products, it's important to know if the POS product integrates with third-party applications.

Tracking/Reporting — Tracking is an essential function for retailer. The ability to track customer buying habits and item selling history can be a key benefit to retail businesses. Targeted marketing and analysis of a business' best customer's buying habits can enhance the ability to provide them with the items that they want when they want them.

Relative Value — Relative value is a gray area that is only relevant to the person purchasing the POS product. A product that performs the way a business needs it to is more valuable than one that does most of what is needed, even at a lower price. Obviously, pricing is an important aspect when choosing a POS product ... or any other software product. Smaller retailers and businesses may have a set spending budget; others may

be able to spend more. But if the product doesn't perform as needed,

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ICE

Retail ICE from CAM Commerce Solutions is the single-user version of Retail Star, a more comprehensive version of the product that is designed for multi-user, multi-location retailers.

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Cougar Mountain Software – CMS

Professional POS

CMS Professional POS is an ideal fit for smaller retailers that desire a complete front/back office integrated system. Although available to be purchased as a stand-alone product, CMS Professional POS operates at a higher level of efficiency when used with CMS accounting products.

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Intuit Inc. – QuickBooks Point

of Sale

QuickBooks Point of Sale Retail Management Software is an easy-to-use entry-level point-of-sale (POS) system that provides integration with inventory and sales data.

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PDG Software Inc. – PDG Shopping

Cart

SIDEBAR: Providing shopping cart and web store software since 1997, PDG currently boasts more than 10,000 installations of their

product in the past 10 years. PDG Software currently offers two editions

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SQL Enterprise for larger retailers with multiple locations — the product provides retailers with the functionality they need.

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[Sage Software – DacEasy](#)

DacEasy by Sage offers an affordable Point of Sale module designed for small to mid-sized retailers. The Point of Sale module can be used as a stand-alone product or integrated with the accounting module (for an additional cost) for complete front/back office functionality.

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[Specialized Business Solutions – Keystroke Point of Sale](#)

Keystroke Point of Sale – Version 6.21 from Specialized Business Solutions offers retailers of all sizes an excellent point-of-sale product that is fully customizable and able to handle multiple registers and multiple locations with ease.

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2008 Review of Point-of-Sale Systems — Comparison Chart

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