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It's no secret that the retail industry has struggled in this difficult economy. Yet *Advance Monthly Sales for Retail and Food Services*, as reported by the U.S. Census Bureau, show an increase in total sales in May 2011, up 7.7% from May 2010. While numbers were down from the previous month (April 2011), indicating that recovery

still has a long way to go, adventurous entrepreneurs continue to start new

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vary just about as much as the POS software products reviewed here.

While all of these products can easily handle basic sales transactions and much more, the similarities end there. Many products contain touch-screen technology for quicker transaction processing, and can handle e-commerce functionality — a necessity for those offering online shopping. Some products work only with a single store, which is perfect for those with no desire to expand. But retailers with multiple locations will need a more powerful system that offers integrated technology between locations.

The good news is that there's something for everyone in this review, from products for single-location retailers to those with 25 locations. We've consolidated many of the POS features into a logical sequence to help identify the products that most closely meet the needs of your retail clients.

Basic System Functions covers areas such as system navigation and relative ease of use. It also looks at how scalable the product is: If the business grows, can the software grow with it? Module selection is also noted in this section. User roles and security are vital areas, particularly for retailers with numerous employees. We also look at features such as multi-store support, multiple transaction entry options, and other advanced retail features such as warehouse management, e-commerce and remote sales.

Specialized Features & Services takes a look at areas such as touch-screen support, multiple tender options, customer data management, layaway and other special services, marketing tools, and loyalty and rewards programs.

Tracking & Reporting considers the variety of reports available, if reports are available in real time, and the availability of inventory tracking reports. It also notes

whether the product can identify best- and worst-selling items, in addition to

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considers how easy it is to get system updates, and how useful the company website is in supplying information to users. Product support options and availability is also noted here.

Possible PQ:

As the number of jobs continues to shrink in the United States, more and more people are turning to self-employment to make ends meet.

Technology

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