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Mary Girsch-Bock • Mar. 14, 2016

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I have always had a strange fascination with cash registers. Simple nine-button registers, custom-designed registers, the antique register from the early 20th century, I love them all. My obsession aside, the cash register served as the main tool in the arsenal of the retail business since the late 1800's. The original model simply recorded the amount of funds received during a transaction, but additional features such as an adding mechanism, multiple drawers, and automated change calculations. But as the retail industry grew, the need for better inventory management, quicker sales processing, and better customer management drove the creation of the first point of sale terminals in 1974.

Point of sale terminals are used by the sole proprietor as well as the billion dollar box store. They're used at the neighborhood coffee shop, the liquor store, the gas station, and restaurants large and small. With the creation of mobile technology, point of

sale products are now being used by the weekend crafter or other part time business

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[Keystroke Advanced POS](#)

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Point of sale products tend to be very industry-specific, meaning that the system used at my favorite restaurant is not the same system used at my neighborhood grocery store; or the boutique down the street. So where does one begin to look for a point of sale product that will suit their business needs? This magazine, for starters, along with the websites of the vendors, whose products we've reviewed. Many of these vendors offer free software trials or product downloads, enabling your clients to familiarize themselves with the features and the interface. Industry specification actually means that finding a product is much easier, with potential users able to eliminate some products that are not suitable for their business type.

In this review, we looked at the following areas that are important to consider when looking to purchase a point of sale software product. They are:

Basic System Function – This area examines ease of use, the ability to customize the

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selling products, and cashier activity. We also looked at the availability of an audit trail system available as well.

Integration/Import/Export – This area looked at the ability of the product to integrate with related products or third-party applications. It also looks integration capability with other point of sale functions such as integrated shipping capability and the use of hardware peripherals.

Help/Support – While Help/Support is an important feature to evaluate in any software product, it is perhaps the most important feature for point of sale system users. I've been in businesses more than once where the point of sale system has crashed, and workers are unable to process any transactions, in essence shutting down the business. Good, available help can be the difference between the store that continues to process transactions while the system is down, and the one that is forced to close their doors. Look at this category very carefully.

All of the products included in this review include back office functionality as well as point of sale processing. So while there may not be a 'one-size-fits-all' option available, the scope of the products included in this review are likely as wide-ranging as the needs of your clients. Take a look, try out a couple of systems, and put that old cash register in storage.

Or send it to me.

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