

Tips for choosing the right EPoS System for your business

Choosing an EPoS system is a major investment for any retailer, so before investing in an EPoS system you should determine what you want it to help you achieve. For example do you want to create a loyalty programme for customers and can the EPoS system manage this process? Below is some impartial advice that should help you choose the best EPoS system for your business.

1. Plan for the future

Don't just think about the here and now? You will have a vision for your business, an idea where you want to be in three to five years. How does that change from today? Can an EPoS system you deploy today cope with the changes you have planned for the business in two years let alone five years? Whether it is launching new sales channels (such as an ecommerce or mobile commerce site or selling on ebay or Amazon), implementing mobile PoS, opening new stores or introducing promotional or loyalty programmes.



2. Be single minded, not single channel

The internet contributes 8.3% of the UK economy, and was worth £121 billion in 2010. The number of people shopping online is still increasing, driven by people accessing the web via their tablets and smartphones wherever they want. Even if you don't have an ecommerce site yet, you may want to consider one in the future. Any EPoS system worth its salt should be able to integrate your stock in store to the stock on your website in real time, so you only sell what



you have in stock and equally important only stock what you need, to be able to fulfil sales. If, like many other retailers, you want to sell on ebay and Amazon it is worth checking the EPoS system can manage stock and sales in real time from these websites, for exactly the same reasons as above.

Tip! You may want to check that the EPoS system can link to more than one ecommerce site at a time. Some retailers diversify their offerings online and open additional ecommerce sites that will also need to link to the shop's EPoS system.

3. Best fit or Bespoke?

Your retail business is unique both in what you sell and how manage your business. So you probably won't find a system that meets every single requirement of your business. But you should be able to find a system that meets 95% of your needs. See what other retailers in your sector use. Ask any potential suppliers for testimonials and case studies. Go on site visits to see how other retailers use their system. Be warned if you pursue bespoke EPoS software ensure a) you have specified and project managed software development before;



b) ensure your developer will continue to develop the software once it is complete at an agreed rate. But if they stop ensure that in the original contract you have ownership of the software (and source code). In all honesty every retailer, I have spoken to, that chooses the bespoke route finds it fraught with difficulties, inordinately expensive and they eventually revert back to an industry standard solution.

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you will find an EPoS solution that meets your requirements. To help with the selection process see what solutions other retailers in your sector use and visit them to see how they use them. Ask any potential suppliers for testimonials and case studies. Of course you can have bespoke EPoS software developed for you but this can be fraught with difficulties including uncontrollable costs, unclear accountability and difficulty in upgrading to meet future requirements. In all honesty every retailer, I have spoken to, that chooses the bespoke route finds it fraught with difficulties, inordinately expensive and they eventually revert back to an industry standard solution.

4. Find a Partner not a Supplier

What can make the difference between a good system and a great system is the rapport between client and supplier. The calibre of training, support and customisation you may need comes down to the level of expertise and experience that your supplier can bring to bear. Do your homework and make sure that your supplier is stable, financially viable and very experienced. Confirm that you share a common business culture and agree how your relationship will be conducted. Then talk to as many of their clients as is practical and get a feeling for how support will work on a day-to-day basis.



5. Happy Ever After?

Before committing to any system check with the supplier about the training, support and software updates. It is no good investing in EPoS software and then not receiving adequate training for you and your staff. It is an expensive business tool you are investing in so the training needs to be thorough and extensive, not just a day or half a day. Also what are the on-going support costs each month, check this as costs do vary. Also has the provider increased these over the last few years and is any increase capped in the terms and conditions of the contract? You may want to check the support opening hours, it sounds ludicrous but some providers don't offer weekend support, which is often the busiest time for retailers. Finally, check what process the provider has in place for software upgrades. Are these done on your behalf or does the retailer have to run the upgrades, and what do they charge for upgrades and how often are they completed.

6. Pick the Right Moment



So you have decided which EPoS system you will buy. It is now important to plan the installation and training around you and your business. Choose a time when it is convenient for you and when it will cause minimum disruption to your business. This means in quieter times, staff can get used to having a new EPoS system as can you, running different reports, checking stock and so forth.

7. Congratulations



Congratulations you have invested in an EPoS system that will help you take your business to the next level. It will help you reduce your stock levels, so you improve your cash flow, it will also help reduce stock shrinkage and it will boost your profits. And these are just some of the benefits, but perhaps most importantly it will give you the figures you need to know at the touch of a button so you are able to make the right decisions at the right time.