

Volante POS Systems, CN Centre Announce New Sports Stadium Point of Sale Installation

Date: 04-18-2008 01:20 PM CET

Category: [IT, New Media & Software](#)

Press release from: [Volante POS Systems](#)

Agency: **Meade Internet Services**



With its leading edge peer-to-peer technology, and wireless flexibility, Volante POS Systems adds CN Centre to its growing list of North American stadium point of sale software installations.

Located in Prince George, British Columbia, CN Centre is a sports and entertainment complex, and is home to the Western Hockey League's Prince George Cougars. CN Centre was also recently nominated as the Facility of the Year (under 8,000 seats) by the Canadian Music Association. The Volante installation consists of twenty one (21) fixed POS terminals and six (6) mobile tablet computers spread throughout the stadium's Food and Beverage operation, which includes 14 private suites, four concessions, six food kiosks, and one beverage outlet. The stadium's food contractor, Eurest, is part of the Compass Group of Companies.

As CN Centre's previous POS system slid into obsolescence, it became apparent then that a reliable and modern system was necessary to meet both CN Centre's current and future operational needs. "The old system was quite antiquated," explains Brit McKinna, Operations Manager for Eurest Dining Services. "At the time of the initial installation, it was considered state of the art, but over time it had basically become an over glorified cash register. Also, the support was very poor." After sending out requests for proposals to several hospitality software companies, CN Centre decided upon Toronto based Volante Systems, given its reputation for reliability and advanced fault tolerant capabilities. "Volante was the preferred system for our IT people," says McKinna. "It was the most proficient, so that's why we went with them."

In addition to size and distance issues, large venues, such as sports stadia, often face other unique challenges when setting out to invest in point of sale technology. Issues such as network infrastructure, synchronized data communication and efficiently linking the many concessionaires, and other outlets, become major obstacles that need to be overcome. Currently, there is limited choice for stadium operators when it comes to hospitality technology, since most point of sale companies, in the market today, simply can't address the many challenges presented in a stadium environment. In addition, stadium operators are no different from other businesses in that they, also, are keen to find ways to enhance their customers' experience, increase accountability, increase profitability, and improve productivity at the same time.

In addition to stand-alone terminals, CN Centre has deployed Volante's mobile computing capabilities through the use of six (6) hand-held, wireless notebook units with excellent results.

"Our staff love the hand-helds," says McKinna. "They have tons of features. They also eliminate the need for paper and notebooks." The wireless hand-helds have dramatically increased efficiency and staff productivity, McKinna adds. "When the staff are taking orders in the private boxes, for example, they can just punch in the menu items in real time, and have it go to the bar and kitchen right away. Our suites run the entire length of the arena, so now when a server is ordering from one of the suites, their beverages are ready for pick-up when they get to the bar – this really increases speed of service."

Wireless debit and credit transactions have also allowed for a much quicker, easier, and more convenient customer experience. “We really like the credit reporting and debit features – everything is in high speed, so it’s better for customers when they’re using their debit cards, for instance.” McKinna adds. “Now we don’t have to worry about dealing only in cash, making change, etc.”

Volante’s wireless capabilities aren’t limited to typical hand-held units (PDA’s) and payment transactions, however. Volante takes a unique approach to wireless, point of sale processing by using tablet PC’s, which are not much bigger than a standard hand-held. The entire POS software is loaded onto the tablet, and it runs as a terminal with peer-to-peer communication, data synchronization and consolidated reporting. PDA’s do not work in this manner since they require writing to the unit (i.e., new code, separate product, etc.) every time the base POS system is modified plus they’re not robust enough for a wireless Food and Beverage environment.

Unlike the use of PDA’s, which have no fault tolerant and off-system capability, Volante’s approach is unique given that the wireless notebook/tablet computers can act as a back-up for the entire network if the main registers all fail simultaneously. This technology is without peer in the hospitality industry. Using notebooks/tablets in this way is not only ideal for an environment such as CN Centre, it’s also perfect for venues such as trade shows, casinos, arenas, race tracks and outdoor sales areas, such as roof top patios and remote sporting events, where conventional POS terminals aren’t practical nor feasible.

“Volante easily overcomes the many obstacles involved in a large, stadium environment.” says A. Ennamorato, VP of Operations, Volante Systems. “Concessionaires can run independently with the Volante enterprise backbone and profit centre design and the stadium can seamlessly consolidate all the sales into one "corporate" back office reporting system.”

Volante’s peer-to-peer component allows all terminals to be connected yet function independently, ensuring that operations will continue to run smoothly in the event of a terminal or server failure. It’s advanced data synchronization capability and transactional consistency is maintained on all terminals at all times resulting in maximum system availability and reliability. Volante also offers clear and concise data reporting, which is generated in real time.

“Volante is a very secure system.” says McKinna. “The other neat thing about Volante is that it’s ageless – it never clears itself. We can pull up reports from whenever we want, regardless of how much time has passed.” Accurate data reporting can translate into real benefits for the bottom line. “Volante is a much more accurate system, and our inventory assets are better protected now.” adds McKinna. “We have more detailed void reports, for instance, which we never had before.”

McKinna also liked the fact that menus can be updated as the need demands. “The beauty of Volante is that you can change menus during an event – in the past we had to wait until the end of the day to make any kind of menu changes. Now we can update menus on the fly.”

Other successful stadium point of sale installs for Volante include Falcon Stadium in Colorado Springs, Allentown Pennsylvania’s Coca Cola Park, and Toronto’s Woodbine Entertainment’s racing venues to name a few. For more information, visit www.volantesystems.com.

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Since 1993, Volante Systems has been providing open standards, point of sale solutions to the hospitality industry. Volante is the perfect software choice for venues requiring a flexible yet comprehensive enterprise POS solution.

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