

Linux POS Solutions 2009: Volante POS Systems Enhances Revenues Through Innovation

Date: 03-30-2009 07:46 PM CET

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

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

Agency: **Meade Internet Services**



The world of Linux POS technology has come a long way in recent years. Today's restaurant & hospitality operators are much more tech savvy than they've ever been, and the POS industry is slowly responding to this fact. The big players are still out there, and it's indisputable that they've enjoyed a large share of the market for quite a while. But a growing number of smaller players have emerged in recent years. During tough economic times such as these that it makes even more sense to invest in modern, efficient and flexible Linux POS solutions. With that said, here's the top features hospitality operators running Linux in 2009, should be looking for once they've decided to invest in a new POS system.

Data Reporting

The top two issues every hospitality-based business wants to get a handle on are food cost, and labor costs. Keep those things in check, and the chances of succeeding in such a competitive market are greatly increased. Modern Linux POS systems will help business owners get a handle on these profit killers by allowing managers access to important, easy to understand data on demand, and in real time. A POS system with state of the art data reporting capabilities will easily forecast business volumes, giving managers the information they need to fine tune scheduling and avoid unnecessary labor costs. Time and attendance can be precisely monitored. Real time and instant access to data also allows managers to spot problems quickly and make snap decisions to address discrepancies in cash flow and adjust inventory levels. The POS system will pay for itself many times over if it can help businesses get a handle on these two issues alone.

Back Office Management & Database Integration

Having all POS terminals linked together, combined with the ability to run reports, make menu and pricing changes on the fly, check inventory levels and consolidate payroll at one central location is crucial to running a business efficiently and profitably. The POS system should be able to do this quickly and easily, all from the back office. Database integration and back office management capability should be at the top of the shopping list.

Customer Relationship Management

Effective promotions can go a long way in boosting profits. Determining if coupon or gift card programs are working as they should, however, can be difficult. POS systems that can quickly evaluate which promotions are working and which ones aren't, can save time and money in spades. A POS system that can keep track of customer histories, their likes and dislikes, comments, etc. can provide valuable insight into what future promotions to put in effect, and which ones should bite the dust. Effective customer loyalty and points programs keep customers coming back. When it comes to CRM, the POS system does most of the thinking.

Wireless Mobile Computing & Handheld Devices

Wireless point of sale is imperative for businesses that operate outside of traditional, brick and mortar locations. Venues such as ski resorts, theme parks or even stadiums can greatly benefit from wireless POS systems (think concession stands or private suites for instance). In a more traditional environment, such as a restaurant, the benefits of having wireless, at the table ordering capabilities through handheld devices are many.

With wireless handheld units, serving staff save time by not having to line up to get access to the POS terminal, and therefore are much more productive. Managers can reduce staffing levels by scheduling just a few skilled staff, give them larger sections, and make their primary focus greeting customers, taking orders and up-selling. Non-serving staff can then be hired (at significant payroll savings) to dispatch food and clean sections. When serving staff are able to remain on the floor, the result is a superior customer service experience for patrons and increased sales through up-selling and faster table turns. Also, waste is cut down considerably, since placing orders at the table greatly reduces errors.

Wireless handheld devices have been greatly refined in recent years, with increased battery life for handheld units and improved ease of use for staff. The time indeed has come to embrace wireless POS technology.

Payment Security & PCI Compliance

Payment security is crucial in today's marketplace. With the incidence of fraud and identity theft reaching epidemic proportions, safeguarding the safety of client credit card data is vital. The PCI Security Standards Council is an open global forum for the ongoing development, enhancement, storage, dissemination and implementation of security standards for account data protection. It's imperative that POS systems today follow this standard.

Self Service Technology

Self service technology has created quite a buzz in recent years. Having moved beyond kiosks, POS systems now offer self serve options that give restaurateurs' the ability to delegate the food ordering process to customers themselves. Touch screen terminals are now intuitive and easy to use, and offer add on/up sell items items instantaneously, which boosts average check totals. The traditional "Server" is replaced by food runners, or counter staff, who can also do quality checks. Even the payment process can be taken care of by the customer, allowing for quicker table turns and increased cover counts. Self service technology may not be appealing for patrons looking for a fine dining experience, but it certainly is attractive for those who operate fast food or quick serve/casual dining establishments.

Enterprise POS & Multi Location Capability

For those who operate large and multi-location operations, choosing the right POS system has never been easy. Due to logistics and a host of other obstacles, businesses with multiple locations were forced to be creative in how they coordinated the collection of cash and data. Businesses such as these require enterprise wide POS systems that offer features such as client recognition capabilities, hospitality and retail sales, gift card processing, quick and easy debit and credit options, and more. They also require a POS system that can get around cabling and network issues, and preserve precious data in case of a system or network failure. For any company that fits in this category, a reliable and flexible enterprise POS solution is a must.

With the above list in mind, one might think that it would be challenging to find a POS system that offers all of the above and more, never mind finding one with the capability of running on Linux as well. One POS system, however, consistently stands out and is without peer in the POS industry. Toronto based Volante POS Systems offers a state of the art, modern and flexible POS system.

Volante has seamlessly embraced all the above features and more, and is fully PCI compliant. Volante is also cross platform compatible, meaning it will run on Linux, Unix or Windows. Linux POS solutions are very attractive to many businesses these days, since Linux allows business owners to cut costs by saving on Windows licensing fees, and is easy to use.

According to Eddie Stutz, VP of Operations for Woodbine Race Track in Toronto, Volante's flexibility has been key to ensuring smooth operations on a day to day level.

"We are a very complex company." Says Stutz. "Woodbine has given Volante much more exposure than anticipated, due to the fact that it can be used in many venues. It's an all encompassing system. I'm able to pull up any menu I want from any location, I can pull up a dining room menu, then switch to a lounge menu, for instance."

Other reasons for choosing Volante POS systems included Volante's array of other applications, including purchasing, rewards and retail, as well as the ability to integrate with Woodbine's player-reward application. Woodbine installed Volante at all their various venues (club, casual and fine dine, cafeteria and quick service), numbering some 200+ registers in a mixed Linux / Windows enterprise topology.

"Nowadays everything is about convergence and getting all systems into one", says Randy Folmes, director of IT at

Woodbine. "We want to get to the point where we can say 'how much did we sell today?' and run one report to find out".

Volante also utilizes peer-to-peer technology, which allows each terminal to be connected, yet operate independently, without being reliant on a main server. Volante's unique implementation ensures that operations will continue to run smoothly in the event of a terminal or server failure. In other words, if the system crashes, the POS terminal still operates without losing any data or interrupting service.

Volante is a perfect fit for many different types of hospitality operations, having been successfully installed in such venues as restaurants, hotels, stadiums, race tracks, ski resorts, universities, outdoor sales areas (patios), casinos, theme parks and pizza chains. Its multi location capability makes it a full enterprise POS solution. For more information, visit www.volantesystems.com.

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

Contact:

Annette Ennamorato
Vice President, Operations
Volante POS Systems
1188 Martin Grove Road
Toronto, Ontario
Canada
M9W 5M9
416.522.1825 (Direct)
sales@volantesystems.com
www.volantesystems.com

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