

Migrating to the future



POS technology is changing and adapting to the varying requirements of consumers and businesses. Wincor Nixdorf offers next-generation solutions designed to meet these needs.

Whether it is Ikea, Saturn, Billa or System U, more and more retailers are investing in self-checkout technology. In fact, it is now at the top of their list of planned investments, according to a study conducted by the EHI Retail Institute. The checkout solution of the future will be a mix of traditional staffed checkout stations and stationary self-service terminals, frequently enhanced with a mobile self-scanning unit. Its success will depend in large part on local shopping conditions and consumer behavior.

Cash management also promises significant improvements in efficiency. Cash handling can be automated in both self-checkouts and conventional point of sale (POS) systems. Medium-sized retailers, such as German food retailer Zurheide, is currently testing an automated solution in its Düsseldorf store.

Slim POS

These new automated systems have their advantages: they relieve store employees of routine tasks and eliminate inventory differences

by offering protection against errors in incoming and outgoing payments. They also protect against robberies and theft – an issue of particular importance to service stations and fast-food restaurants. And, last but not least, they help significantly reduce high processing costs generated by cash handling at checkouts. The fast return on investment (ROI) makes self-checkout technology especially attractive for retailers. Depending on the type of branch, they can achieve further cost benefits by automating their cash offices.

The systems are also attractive to large retailers. In this segment, however, the current trend is toward slim POS solutions. Demand is growing for PC-based entry-level systems, which, despite low processing power, have Web capabilities and can thus connect online with central systems.

This feature is essential as permanent, fast and reliable data connections are becoming increasingly important for branch operations. Daily reports are no longer enough; headquarters wants to have a near real-time view of sales. Another online benefit is that inventory and customer data doesn't need to be stored locally; it can be transmitted to the branch stores whenever required.

POS trends in specialty stores

The current trend in specialty stores is to use multifunctional terminals. Modern POS systems must be able to support additional applications, whether it is showing live pictures from surveillance cameras at checkout terminals, planning employee assignments, processing discounts and vouchers or interconnecting with other systems. Increasingly, retailers are investing in high-performance computer systems, such as the new generation of machines equipped with Intel dual core multiprocessors.

Not only that, they are buying low energy-consuming systems. More and more POS are being equipped with energy-saving technologies. Ultra-low voltage

processors, for example, consume nearly two thirds less energy than Pentium 4 processors. Standards such as 80PLUS also ensure lower energy consumption in power supply components for POS peripherals.

Increased computing power has helped flat-screen monitors become standard features in many stores. Further benefits include a highly flexible user interface and simple, intuitive usage. Also, retailers are installing displays that can be turned to face customers. Whether used to process sales, promote products or offer some other service, these new flexible, flat-screen displays enhance communications with customers.

Modern payment

Tomorrow's POS must be able to handle new forms of payment, such as biometric fingerprint identification. This process requires neither a card nor a PIN, and is quick, comfortable and secure. It will help drive customer acceptance of fingerprint technology at POS terminals.

Another new technology on the horizon is wireless payment. Near field communications (NFC) is the buzzword. The technology, which can work with credit cards, such as Master and Visa, essentially uses reading devices located at the checkout points to collect data remotely. The technology can also be embedded into cell phones, adding yet another function to portable devices. ■

Awards for environmental friendliness and customer satisfaction



In the first "handels-journal" competition for the best products for retail businesses, Wincor

Nixdorf's Beetle /NetX and Beetle /iSCAN systems were awarded gold and silver in the categories environmental friendliness and customer satisfaction.

The Beetle /NetX POS terminal meets three significant customer requirements: high system availability, low-cost swap service and environmentally friendly low power consumption. The use of rugged notebook processor technology, combined with leading-edge flash memory, lowers failure rates by 25 percent compared to conventional POS systems. The multi-modular design enables rapid, easy and thus cost-effective replacement of components. Thanks to its power-saving ultra-low voltage Intel Celeron M processor and energy-efficient 80PLUS power supply system, power consumption costs for the Beetle /NetX system, including peripheral devices, have dropped by more than 70 percent, compared with POS systems using traditional technology.

A key customer satisfaction factor is reduced waiting times for customers, particularly at checkout. The self-service POS system Beetle /iSCAN is designed to make shopping easier and more pleasant by giving customers greater control of the complete checkout process. All components are arranged in a way to ensure intuitive and user-friendly operation, even for customers with health restrictions. The unit's modular design allows for individual adaptations to meet a wide variety of self-service payment scenarios.

