

2012 POS System Buyers Guide

THE 5 MOST IMPORTANT THINGS TO CONSIDER WHEN COMPARING POS SYSTEMS



Setting up a professional Point of Sale (POS) System is one of the most important steps in creating a successful business. Few purchases can have as great an effect on your business as your POS choice. The right system will increase your efficiency, productivity and profits. Whatever industry you are in, it is vital that you have the best POS machine and setup you can get.

When making such an important investment for your business, it is important to take the time to carefully compare all systems available to you. Though it may take a bit of extra effort now, it will be worth your while in the long run.

Why bother?

Customers appreciate prompt and accurate service, so it goes without saying that an efficient POS system will vastly increase your customers' satisfaction and bring them back again.

Not only will the right system increase business capacity, it will also make managing your business far simpler. A well set up POS system is able to...

- ✓ Eliminate shrinkage
- ✓ Improve accuracy
- ✓ Give detailed sales reports
- ✓ Manage inventory and stock
- ✓ Reduce paperwork

The 5 most important things to consider...

When buying your POS system, there are many factors which you need to consider. Of course, every business is different, which is why you need to discuss your individual needs with the company before making a decision, but there are some considerations that are essential, whatever your industry.

1. Price

Needless to say, price is the most obvious consideration businesses take into account when seeking a new POS system. Costs are often varied, depending on the quality and quantity of the hardware, software and support you receive.



However, price should not be your main consideration when comparing POS systems. Whatever system you go with, it will easily pay for itself through decreased expenses and increased business. On the other hand, a cheap system will often drive business away, not to mention the complete lack of knowledge and support provided by discount suppliers. Also, avoid buying second-hand systems, whatever the discount may be. Second-hand machines are already personalized for the previous owner, and it can be difficult to make it work for your own business. They also often lack the licenses, warranty and support that you receive with new registers.

Therefore, the most important thing you need to consider is whether or not the system suits your business' needs, and not simply the cost.

In saying that, price is obviously an issue for everyone, particularly for small businesses. Luckily, there is a way to get the best price, whilst still maintaining quality and support of more expensive brands; purchase directly from a the manufacturer. Most suppliers are simply resellers and distributors, who have themselves bought from a manufacturer and are reselling the product at a jacked-up price. By going straight to the manufacturer, you will be leaving out the middle man and their price mark-up. For more information about the benefits of buying from manufacturers, see "6 Reasons to Deal Directly with the Manufacturer". One reputable POS Manufacturer is ACLAS Pty Ltd.

2. Quality

At first glance, it may appear that all POS systems are more or less the same, however nothing could be further from the truth! Like anything on the market, quality varies significantly across the board. It is important that you carefully examine the company and the products before you purchase anything. Though they may be easier on the pocket now, cheaper models will only end up costing you more time and money down the track.

Of course, not every business needs a "top-of-the-line" POS System, but it is vital that you consider the quality of the products and software. For example, the cash drawers of cheaper brands can often be opened without a key, or by applying a little pressure, which is obviously highly risky for your hard earned cash. Examine each part and accessory (such as screens, buttons, cables) and make sure they will stand the test of time. For software, PC based programs are generally far more reliable and are less likely to cause problems. And just in case something does go wrong; make sure you are prepared and covered by at least a basic warranty.

3. Accessories

A POS system is much more than just the point where the money goes in and out. It is called a 'system' because of the range of components that go into it. Almost every business will need basic accessories such as receipt printers and cash drawers, but depending on your specific requirements and arrangements, you may also need things like scanners, scales or display terminals. Hospitality may even require accessories like kitchen printers, kitchen displays and customer pagers. You can even think about integrating Security and Surveillance accessories into your POS system. In reality, it is the accessories that really make the system, so make sure you discuss with your supplier exactly what extras you will need, and the best way to set it them up.

When comparing POS suppliers, the range of accessories they are able to supply is one of the most important things you need to consider. The greater range they offer the better. The last thing you want is to have to search out each individual accessory with a separate company. Not only is the search more time-consuming, but purchasing individual components from separate brands will make the setup of your system infinitely more complicated as well. You will have to worry about compatibility and connections, and you will not have the same setup support and knowledge as if you dealt with a single supplier. Relying on a single company for the entire system is generally far easier and cheaper, so make sure you discuss accessories with your supplier.

4. Setup

Once you have selected your model and supplier, there are still many decisions to be made in regards to the specific setup of your system. No two businesses are the same; therefore you should not go with an 'off-the-shelf' system.

Talk to your supplier about the hardware and accessories you require, and make sure they are all compatible for your setup. However, that is only half of the setup process; the software is the area that will really make your system work for you. Although almost all programs can perform the same general functions, there is a lot of room for personalization. Your supplier should be able to modify the software to suit your individual requirements.

For example, think about the special discounts and promotions you offer- some software is unable to accommodate this, others will require the dealer reprogramming. Before you decide anything, think about your specific requirements, and make sure the software will be able to execute them.

This is another benefit of manufacturers. Most manufacturers can modify any function to fulfill specific requirements, and a good manufacturer can do so in a professional and efficient manner. They developed the product themselves, so a manufacturer will have strong technical knowledge and support, to be able to complete any reasonable modification request.

5. Support

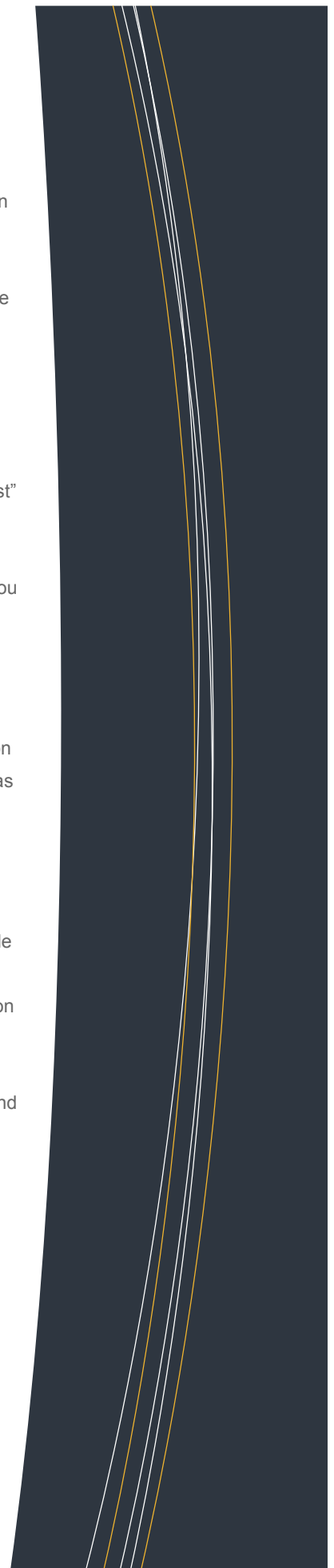
So you have done the hard yards and thoroughly researched your POS companies before you made your decision. You have found a quality product that was value for money and can fulfill all your needs. But what happens down the track, months later or even years later, if your POS Systems goes down? POS System breakdowns lead to chaos in the workplace - unhappy customers, lost sales, and huge headaches. Luckily, if you did your research before hand and purchased from a reputable supplier, this scenario is not likely to happen. The support policy offered should be one of the most important things in determining what company you go with.

One of the first questions you should ask a potential supplier is what support they offer; and make sure the explanation is in-depth! Support guarantees vary greatly, and there is no “best” policy. Consider what will be best for you if you have a problem and then compare the different companies' offers. Common policies include phone support, individual part replacement, on site technicians, internet access, loaner equipment and more. Make sure you also check what is covered by the warranty, and what is not (it is best to know beforehand if there is a cost involved).

If you are considering buying from a company that is not within easy access, make sure you check what remote-support you can receive. Probably the best option for distance support on POS is remote access internet support software. This is becoming more and more popular as it allows the technician to take control of your system from their own computer to diagnose and fix any problems.

Another thing to think about when comparing different support policies is the company's knowledge of the product. You do not want your system to stay down for days or weeks while the technicians try to diagnose the problem. The better the company knows their own product, the faster their response will be. Beware of resellers or suppliers who simply pass on another company's products but have very little technical knowledge to be able to complete repairs if something should go wrong. Although most have a reasonable know-how of the products they are selling, this knowledge might not translate when something goes wrong and is nothing compared to the knowledge of the people who actually make the product (the manufacturers!).

**Remember:
Not all POS systems were created equal!**





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