



# The 2019 Smart Decision Guide™ to Restaurant Management and POS Systems

Everything you need to know about next-generation restaurant management and POS systems – and how to maximize IT success



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# Introduction

Slow but steady. That may be the best way to describe the current state of the global restaurant industry in terms of overall sales and revenue growth. In the United States, the industry saw a 4.3 percent increase in revenues in 2017, according to the National Restaurant Association, marking the eighth consecutive year of real growth. The trend continued through 2018. In fact, the summer months were reported to be the fastest pace of any three-month annualized gain in more than a quarter century.

On the surface, there would seem to be plenty of reason to celebrate. Yet not everything in the restaurant world is as rosy as the numbers might suggest at first glance. Factoring inflation into the equation and also taking into account same-store sales performance, which has largely remained flat, the overall picture of the restaurant industry points to some big challenges. These challenges are particularly acute with respect to full-service establishments, which, on the whole, have experienced slower growth than quick service and fast casual establishments.

Putting a further damper on the party is the fact that, according to NPD Group, eighty-two percent of American meals are now prepared at home. This is significantly more than even a few years ago. Restaurant-going peaked in 2000, according to the research, when the average American dined out 216 times a year. That figure is now in the neighborhood of 185 times a year. Global restaurant chains have seen a similar percentage drop in guest counts. This shift in consumer behavior may be attributed to the advent of pre-made and subscription meal kit programs, the proliferation of online grocery delivery, and multiple other factors.

Whatever the reasons, and despite the upbeat growth figures, the reality of the situation is that most restaurant operators are under more pressure than ever to improve financial performance. This pressure is exacerbated by rising labor costs and higher real estate prices. Meanwhile, intense competition tends to put the kibosh on hiking up menu prices. Yes, plenty of people are dining out these days, buoyed by steady wage growth, high consumer confidence and low unemployment levels. But that doesn't mean the restaurant industry is booming.

Despite the upbeat growth figures, the reality of the situation is that most restaurant operators are under more pressure than ever to improve financial performance.

# Introduction

With more than one million restaurants in the United States battling it out for a larger slice of the pie, and tens of millions around the world doing the same, finding new and innovative ways to increase revenues, reduce operating costs (e.g., by streamlining back-of-house operations) and enhance the overall quality of the guest experience is top of mind for most restaurant operators. For them, the challenges loom large. The good news is that many of the challenges can be effectively addressed with a new breed of specialized technology solutions. In fact, according to research conducted for this Smart Decision Guide, 79 percent of restaurant operators believe that this new wave of advanced technologies is key to not only overcoming many of the biggest hurdles they face today but to driving continuous performance improvement.

The specific types of technologies that can help make it possible to achieve these lofty goals run the gamut. They range from mobile POS systems and workforce management solutions to predictive order management software and loyalty management programs. Solutions that automate key processes like inventory costing and menu development are proving out their value. Even futuristic approaches to kitchen automation, to the point of implementing "robot chefs" that operate in assembly-line food preparation setups, are making inroads not just into people's imaginations but into actual restaurants, and for good reason.

Increasingly, restaurant operators are also turning their attention to apps that guests can download and access on their smartphones or other mobile devices. Many of these apps are designed to automate the various types of interactions that ordinarily take place between diners and restaurants in a manual fashion and also empower guests by giving them greater visibility and control over the end-to-end restaurant experience. Some apps allow them to track meal progress in real time, from preparation to delivery. Some apps allow those in a rush to pre-order and pre-pay for meals for a more expedient dining experience. Some mobile ordering systems incorporate geofencing and other location capabilities; an alert is sent when a diner is a certain distance away, prompting the kitchen to prepare their order so it's ready the moment the guest steps foot in the door.

Finding new and innovative ways to increase revenues, reduce operating costs and enhance the overall quality of the guest experience is top of mind for restaurant operators.



# Introduction

Not surprisingly, given the world in which we live, restaurant operators are becoming increasingly focused on technologies that enable guest personalization. Of course, personalization has always been the main focal point for any business in the hospitality industry.

For their part, most guests would like to be able to request the same server with whom they previously had a positive dining experience, and who already knows their food, drink and table preferences, or to book a reservation at a restaurant that can create a personalized menu for them based on their past orders. Although personalization technologies are still in their infancy, a vast array of new solutions, from artificial intelligence-powered chatbots to voice-controlled assistants to facial recognition technologies are taking aim at making personalization a reality.

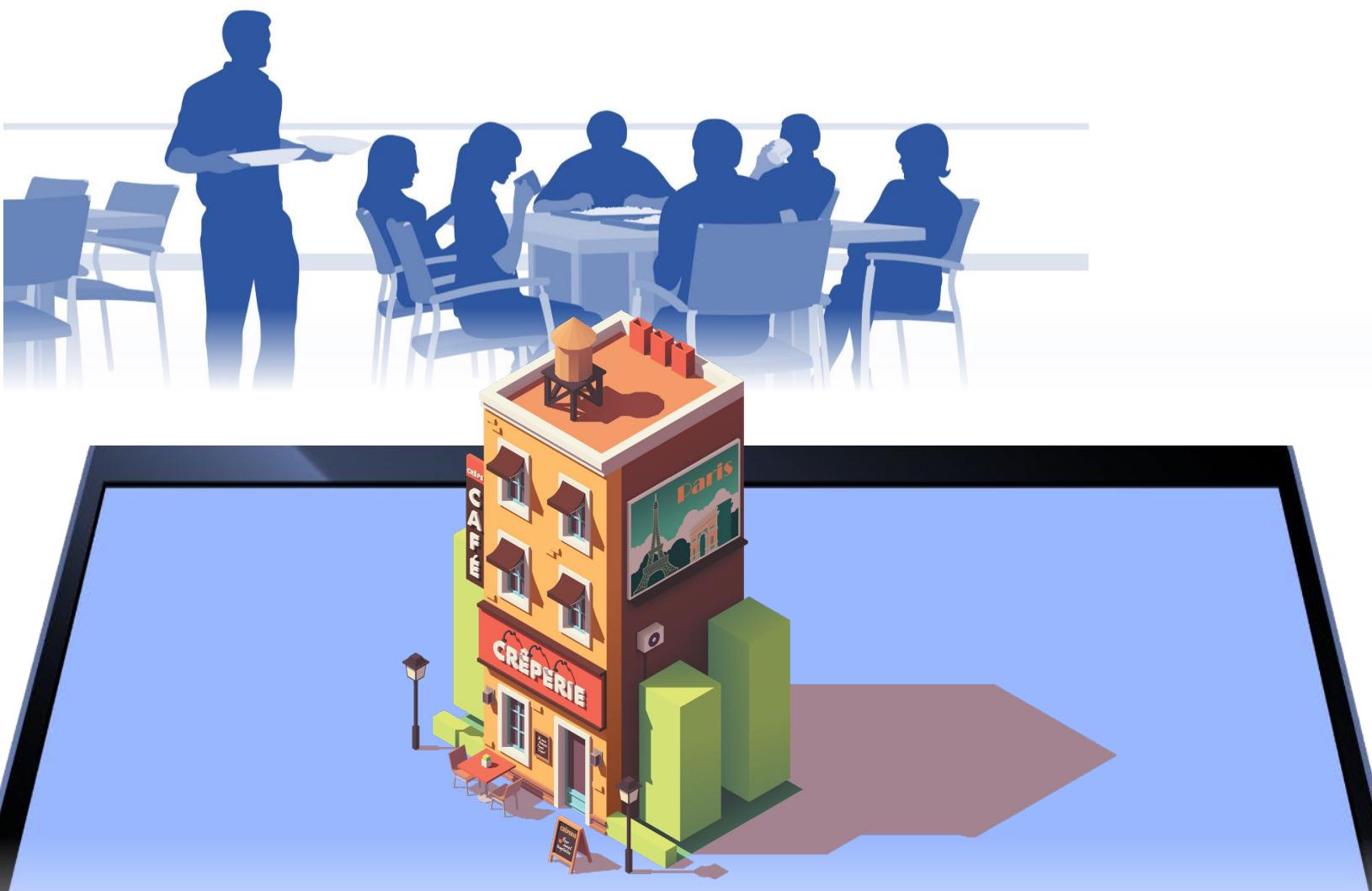
All of these technologies provide the opportunity for restaurants to capture mountains of guest data, either on an individual basis or in the aggregate. Through analytical modeling and reporting, the data can be used to generate actionable insights and further enhance the guest experience. And here one thing is clear: Today's restaurant operators need all the help they can get when it comes to meeting the growing expectations of a technology-savvy, mobile-engaged population.

That helps explain why so many of them are implementing enhancements to their existing platform capabilities, which have been evolving at an accelerated pace, and also deploying entirely new systems. According to the research conducted for this Smart Decision Guide, nearly one-quarter (24 percent) of restaurant operators who have not upgraded their core restaurant management and POS system within the past 3 years plan to do so in the next 12 months. For them, this Smart Decision Guide offers a roadmap to success. It includes insights for evaluating different solutions and practical guidance for making the right selection. It also includes pointers for maximizing the value of the investment over time and driving continuous performance improvement.

Today's restaurant operators need all the help they can get when it comes to meeting the growing expectations of a technology-savvy, mobile-engaged population.

## Chapter 1

# Topic Overview and Key Concepts



# Chapter 1: Topic Overview

Improving the quality of food, service, and atmosphere have always been — and no doubt will always be — primary drivers of restaurant success. Today, an equally important success factor is the quality of the “restaurant-going experience.” Consumer surveys point to the fact that more and more people, particularly millennials, prefer to spend their money on memorable and shareable experiences than on material goods. Needless to say, restaurants are a prime example of opportunities to create memorable and shareable experiences.

The fact that technology can improve and even fundamentally transform the restaurant-going experience is an important consideration for restaurant operators to keep in mind as they look for new and innovative ways to catapult their businesses to ever-higher levels of guest satisfaction as well as operational efficiency. Of course, these two goals tend to go hand-in-hand. Combined, they translate into decidedly positive financial outcomes. According to research conducted for this Smart Decision Guide, 84 percent of full-service restaurants, and 72 percent of quick service and fast casual restaurants, report that they achieved “significant” or “dramatic” improvement in revenue performance after deploying next-generation restaurant management and POS systems. Such results obviously make for a very compelling business case.

Some technology upgrades, such as those that protect against data theft, are necessary just to meet regulatory requirements. Restaurant operators must be able to accept new payment methods, including chip credit cards and e-wallet apps. Some upgrades are necessary to improve operational efficiency. Advanced ordering, payment processing, inventory control and labor management features can have a big impact on cost reduction. Some upgrades, such as guest relationship management capabilities, can make a big difference in guest satisfaction. Robust data analysis and reporting capabilities can also play a role in improving guest satisfaction and loyalty. In the end, all of these upgrades ultimately benefit the guest experience.

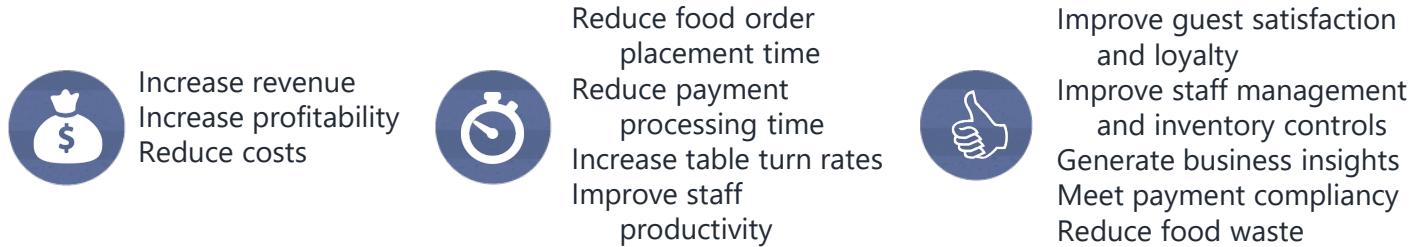
And yet some restaurant operators with outdated solutions remain reluctant to embrace new technologies. No doubt, some of them subscribe to the “if it ain’t broke don’t fix it” mantra. Some may simply not realize the full range of benefits a cloud-based, mobile-enabled next-generation system designed specifically for the unique workflows of a restaurant can deliver. This chapter explores some of these benefits.

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# Chapter 1: Topic Overview

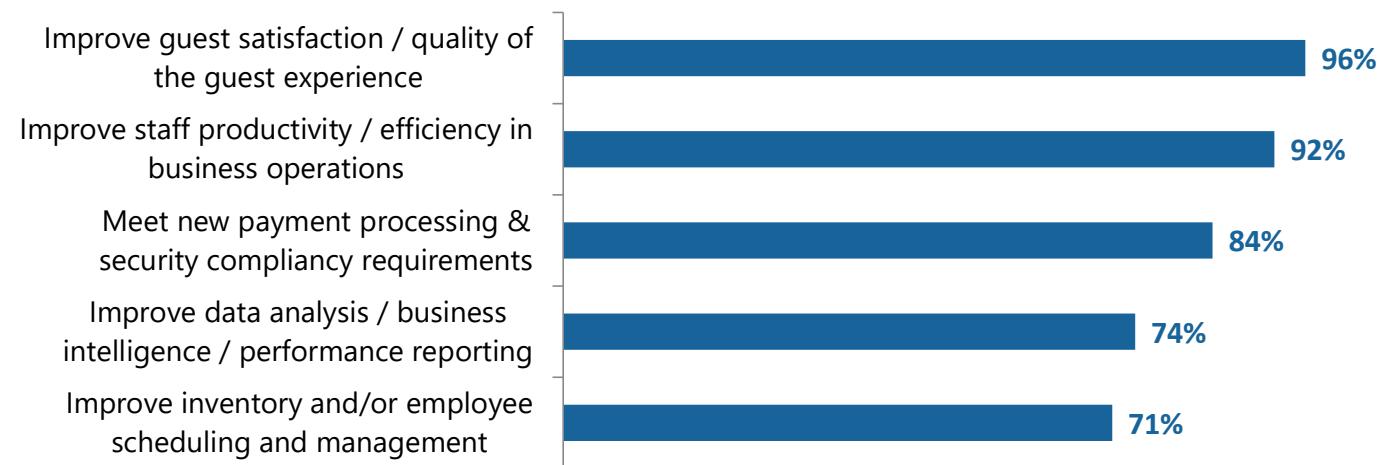
For starters, cloud-based software generally provides faster speed, greater scalability and lower maintenance costs than on-premise hosting. No longer is it necessary to carry out a lengthy and costly server configuration onsite with the launch of every new restaurant location. With cloud technology, a newly installed server is configured in advance and ready to connect to the cloud the moment it's plugged in.

Another key benefit is mobile enablement— e.g., utilizing tablets for order and payment processing. In some restaurant categories, POS mobility can go a long way toward increasing revenue and also reducing overhead costs. One need only consider the advantages that table service restaurants enjoy when servers can place orders directly from a tablet to the kitchen display. Rather than wait in line to punch orders into a stationary terminal, servers can spend that time interacting with guests and attending to details that enhance the dining experience. Faster order placement and pay-at-table processing removes some of the common barriers to guest satisfaction. POS mobility also makes it possible to turn tables faster and serve more guests over the same period of time.



## Research Data Point

**What are the biggest benefits one can expect to gain with the right restaurant POS system?**



Research findings are derived from the Q3 2018 survey on Restaurant Management and POS Systems.

# Chapter 1: Key Concepts

Mobility, flexibility and customizability are the hallmarks of next-generation restaurant management and POS solutions. So, too, are user-friendly interfaces, extended features and functionality, and fully integrated platform capabilities. Robust data mining, analytics and reporting tools, which are generally lacking in older solutions, have also now emerged as core components of next-generation systems. These tools are designed to provide restaurant operators with all the information and insights they need in order to make smart business decisions.

The following are just a few key concepts for decision makers to keep in mind when embarking on the journey to upgrade their restaurant management and POS solutions capabilities.

**Personalization.** Today's restaurant goers — and not just millennials — are willing and eager to make technology part of the dining experience. According to recent consumer surveys, nearly half of them use social media to research a new restaurant and compare options before making a reservation. It is only a matter of time before they use virtual reality devices to immerse themselves in the restaurant's décor and ambiance. Technology is also becoming a key component in how restaurants interact with guests. Increasingly, technology is enabling restaurants to interact with guests in a highly relevant and personalized manner. This is a milestone development in the annals of hospitality innovation. After all, most people would like restaurants to remember them from their previous visits. They would like to be recognized and greeted by name. They would like to be seated according to their table preferences and offered tailored food recommendations based on their personal profile, including their allergies and other stated dietary restrictions as well as their food and drink preferences. In the past, these types of personal touches were available only to a restaurant's most loyal customers and delivered by greeters and servers who stored all the data in their heads. Next-generation technologies that capture interaction and transaction data, and cloud data repositories that make the data available on demand at the right point in time, are now enabling restaurants to deliver these personal touches at scale to everyone who has a history with the restaurant and even across different restaurant locations.

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**Mobile order placement.** There is a quantum leap in efficiencies that table-service restaurant operators can gain when servers place orders from a tablet directly to the kitchen printer or display rather than from a stationary terminal. The leap can have a transformative effect on restaurant operations and guest satisfaction. This is especially true in eating establishments where the nearest stationary terminal may be located a considerable distance from where guests are seated. Servers would otherwise not only need to cover that distance countless times during their shifts, but, in many cases, thread their way through a maze of obstacles to place a food or drink order. Bottlenecks are par for the course, unfortunately, as servers line up in queue behind a terminal. When processing gift cards, rewards points redemption, etc., the queues tend to become even longer. Tablets change all that. No longer do servers need to travel back and forth like yo-yos between Point A, where guests are located, and Point B, where a terminal is located and then often wait in line for an indeterminable amount of time. Instead, servers can send orders to the kitchen quickly and easily from any location. As a result, they can spend more of their time attending to the wants and needs of guests. This fundamental shift in how servers spend their time is nothing short of revolutionary. Suddenly, the job of serving guests becomes less focused on taking and processing information and more focused on interacting with guests with high touch service and attending to other duties that can seriously up the ante on service quality and have a far more meaningful and lasting impact on enhancing the overall guest experience. Mobile order placement redefine the role of the server. It liberates the server. It gives restaurants the opportunity to migrate servers from playing the role of merely food-order-taking-and-delivery automatons to becoming brand ambassadors providing high-touch, personalized service and building enduring relationships.

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**Mobile payment processing.** Table-side order placement via tablets removes some of the most common barriers to guest satisfaction and restaurant loyalty. So, too, does table-side payment processing. In both cases, these common barriers are the significant wait times that guests frequently endure at different points of interacting and transacting with restaurants. Increased guest satisfaction invariably

# Chapter 1: Key Concepts

leads to more repeat visits and higher revenue. In fact, implementing POS mobility increases the average check size 10 to 15 percent, according to studies. Importantly, POS mobility can also enable a restaurant to turn tables considerably faster than before. In certain situations, that can make a big difference in the amount of money coming in the door during the busiest times of the day. In addition to upgrading their systems to accept EMV payment processing capabilities and meet new compliancy requirements, many restaurant operators are also purchasing hardware that can accommodate NFC payments for mobile. Increasingly, guests want to be able to use their own smartphones with the restaurant's POS system. They want to be able to pay their bills with an e-wallet app rather than with a debit or credit card. EMV payment processing tends to result in a suboptimal guest experience because it not only requires greater effort but it also has a significantly longer wait time than mobile payment processing (given the need for the technology to rewrite the security transaction of the card). In fact, EMV transactions where the guest inserts a credit or debit card into the POS device typically take upwards of 15 seconds to complete. In some restaurant categories (e.g., drive-thru windows in fast-food chains, where the key performance metrics are tied to number of cars per hour and customer service times), that latency can be hard to stomach. In contrast, mobile payments typically require only a few seconds to complete. While mobile payment processing and EMV are taking off at the same time (and operators can generally now accept mobile payments at the same terminal as EMV processing), mobile is fast becoming the preferred payment method. Solution providers are investing in contactless payments and support for the popular NFC mobile technologies that provide EMV processing at a much faster speed.

**Technology and data integration.** When it comes to the role of technology in improving restaurant performance, operability is the name of the game. The POS system needs to seamlessly connect with online ordering systems, guest-facing apps, kiosks, display hardware and any number of third-party modules and solutions, such as those related to inventory management, workforce management, accounting software, payment processors or payroll services.

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# Chapter 1: Key Concepts

In a hotel or resort location, the POS may need to integrate with the hotel property management system. Large, complex restaurants and chains may need to integrate applications across multiple locations, which advanced solutions generally allow. The POS system also needs to integrate with third-party CRM, marketing and guest loyalty and rewards management solutions, allowing restaurant operators to gain a deeper understanding of guest preferences and deliver more personalized messages and offers as well as tailored services, such as seating and beverage options based on preferences. The ability to customize communications based on purchases, frequency, dayparts, preferences, etc., depends on the ability to connect, interface and seamlessly share data. According to the research, 91 percent of restaurant operators "agree" or "strongly agree" that technology platform interoperability is a key success factor.

**Transaction data security.** For many restaurant operators, the main impetus for upgrading their technology capabilities has been EMV compliance, which is needed for processing chip card transactions. Non EMV-compliant restaurants are now liable for fraudulent charges. Compliancy provides better fraud detection and also accommodates guest preferences around EMV payment options. Transaction data needs to be protected at all times. This means securely encrypting cardholder data the instant a guest's magnetic strip is swiped or chip is read and keeping the data encrypted until the transaction is actually processed. Some systems store data on cloud-based servers, others on on-premise servers. Either way, the systems must be equipped to safeguard against risks of data breaches by complying with Payment Application Data Security Standards (PA-DSS) and Payment Card Industry Data Security Standards (PCI-DSS). Some systems monitor transmittal activity and send an alert if there is the slightest suspicion of rogue access points. In addition to safeguarding cardholder data against the possibility of outside theft, operators need to protect against the possibility of employee theft. One way is to automatically track all the cash that servers collect. With "blind closeout" capabilities, servers reconcile all cash across all drawers at the end of each shift without knowing the precise amount they are expected to collectively turn over, ensuring accountability.

The POS system needs to integrate with CRM, marketing and guest loyalty and rewards management solutions, allowing restaurant operators to gain a deeper understanding of guest preferences.

# Chapter 1: Key Concepts

**Workforce management.** With more than 14.7 million employees, the restaurant industry workforce accounts for approximately 10 percent of the overall workforce in the United States, with an additional 1.6 million new restaurant jobs expected to be created over the next decade. Other countries have a similar percentage of restaurant industry employees. Given the sheer size of the workforce, it's no surprise that restaurant operators are implementing specialized and increasingly sophisticated solutions to manage teams, track staff attendance, monitor performance and more. According to some reports, restaurant workforce management solutions typically reduce labor costs by 4 to 5 percent. Restaurant operators have long used software programs to hire, onboard, train, and manage employees. Today workforce management capabilities, some of which are tailored to the needs of different restaurant categories, are being integrated as a core component of next-generation restaurant management and POS systems. As a result, restaurant operators can schedule employees, manage payroll, and centrally orchestrate virtually all other employee management tasks without the need to purchase separate, standalone programs or modules. At the same time, restaurant staff-facing interfaces allow employees to access their work schedules, request time off, trade shifts, and even set alerts about when they need to work, all from their smartphones. This level of control can go a long way toward increasing employee satisfaction. Beyond making it easy to perform basic tasks like tracking employee hours and submitting payroll directly from the system, some advanced systems have financial management features designed to optimize labor utilization. These features can be extremely valuable in that they enable restaurant operators to automatically schedule shift assignments in a way that achieves the optimal labor-to-cost ratio when plotted against predicted sales, minimizing overhead costs and improving overall profitability. Using data-driven sales forecasting that utilizes historic data and labor planning tools, managers can also plan for the volume of business that is expected on a daily and hourly basis to determine staffing needs. They can also determine relative server productivity and schedule shifts accordingly. The benefits are easy to measure and can have a dramatic impact on the bottom line, which explains why advanced workforce management capabilities have become a strategic imperative.

Beyond making it easy to perform basic tasks like tracking employee hours and submitting payroll directly, some advanced systems have features designed to optimize labor utilization.

# Chapter 1: Key Concepts

**Inventory management.** "Waste not, want not." The age-old proverb is one that most restaurant operators cannot help but constantly mutter under their breaths. Often operating as they do with razor-thin margins, they need to minimize food waste, spoilage, theft, and over-production. They need to understand how adjustments to menus and recipes flow down to ingredients. They also need to track the variances between physical inventory and POS data to determine if there may be theft or portion measurement issues. None of this is easy. The good news is that, like workforce management capabilities, inventory management capabilities are becoming increasingly sophisticated. Also, like employee management features, these capabilities are becoming an integrated component of next-generation restaurant management and POS systems. The result is a more frictionless process for both restaurants and suppliers. Increasingly, using a single unified interface, managers can track inventory depletion in a real-time manner to help reduce food waste, monitor inventory levels and increase profitability. They can track raw materials from the time the kitchen receives a shipment through ongoing ingredient usage based on menu item orders. Some solutions offer automatic purchase order generation based on par levels and minimum order quantities. Some even offer multi-unit restaurant features that include resource sharing around food inventory management. With some advanced solutions, managers can upload a photo of each vendor invoice, where it is scanned and added directly to the P&L. According to estimates, this saves more than 50 percent of the labor to process an invoice. Some restaurants are also turning to more mobile-friendly ways of ordering restocks based on continually changing inventory levels. Software that constantly monitors food and drink stock levels based on real-time sales data and provides for a consolidated way to submit vendor purchase orders speaks to the future of restaurant inventory management and yet another way that next-generation technologies can help restaurant operators improve overall financial performance. Tracking inventory may not be exciting, but doing so effectively by utilizing an advanced solution is likely to have a very positive impact.

Software that constantly monitors stock levels based on real-time sales data and provides for a consolidated way to submit purchase orders speaks to the future of restaurant inventory management.

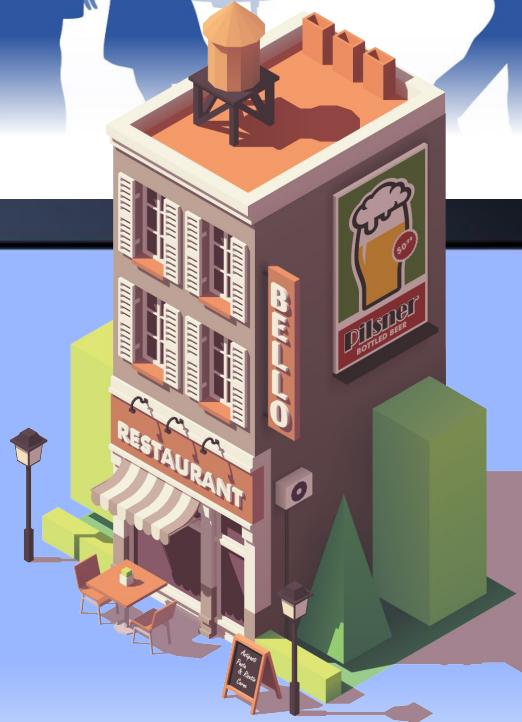
# Chapter 1: Key Concepts

**POS data reporting and analysis.** Restaurant operators are collecting, integrating and analyzing data from multiple sources, including POS transactions, loyalty programs and guest-facing apps, to better understand their guests at both an individual and aggregate level, to interact with them more effectively and to identify opportunities for improvement in their business operations. POS data reporting and analysis can also look at staff performance, menu item profitability and any number of other aspects of the business to generate actionable insights. Which servers are the most productive? Which are the least productive? Which types of guests are the most valuable? Which are the least valuable? Which dishes are the most popular? Which dishes are the least popular? Which are the most profitable? Which are the least profitable? Automated menu analysis can reveal the popularity and profitability of dishes and can help guide future selection of menu items and prices. It can help determine whether it makes economic sense to sell certain low-margin dishes with high demand and/or to remove from the menu certain dishes that are less popular but generate more profit. In the past, mining data to extract meaningful insights tended to be an onerous and time-consuming proposition. Many next-generation POS systems, by contrast, have built-in capabilities that make it possible to readily generate all types of actionable insights, oftentimes on an ad hoc basis. This gives restaurant operators the ability to make more informed decisions about all aspects of the business. Some systems can even open a window into the future and predict financial outcomes based on such factors as dining-out trends and seasonal dish popularity. In some cases, alerts can be set based on predefined triggers. These alerts can notify a manager when inventory is running low and needs to be restocked, for example, or when high-cost or high-risk food items like liquor are going out the door unaccounted for, indicating the possibility of theft. POS data reporting and analysis goes by many names, including business intelligence, encompasses aspects of a restaurant's operations, can be key to keeping up with and even staying a few steps ahead of the competition.

Some restaurant management systems can even open a window into the future and predict financial outcomes based on such factors as dining-out trends and seasonal dish popularity.

## Chapter 2

# Buying Considerations and Evaluation Checklist



## Chapter 2: Buying Considerations

No restaurant management and POS system, no matter how advanced, will save a restaurant with mediocre food, lousy service and poor ambiance — and, usually for those reasons, a scarcity of customers — from shutting its doors. For other restaurants, even those that are only moderately successful, however, integrated platform capabilities that increase efficiency and effectiveness in unprecedented ways can make a colossal difference in terms of a restaurant's overall financial performance.

There are many compelling reasons for wanting to migrate from a legacy system to a state-of-the-art system designed to meet the needs of restaurant operators today and into the future. Those needs typically revolve around being able to manage costs, production, inventory and employees with far greater control and precision than is currently possible. Today's technology features and functionality can enable everything from faster and improved order taking and transaction processing, menu management, invoice handling and workforce management to more accurate and comprehensive budgeting, forecasting and performance reporting and data-driven business intelligence.

Importantly, next-generation systems can have a major impact on the overall quality of the guest experience, particularly in the area of service delivery. No matter the size or category of the dining establishment, restaurant operators need to work relentlessly to offer flawless guest service. To a large extent, that means having technology capabilities that can, for example, reduce the wait time for seating a guest, serving the meal and processing the payment. Increasingly, it also means having technology capabilities that enable personalization – e.g., informing the server in advance that a regular guest has a certain dietary restriction.

When it comes to selecting a new restaurant management and POS system, the buying considerations are likely to vary depending on multiple factors, starting with restaurant category and size. As an example, full service restaurants may be most concerned with staff efficiency and guest service. Quick service or fast casual restaurants, on the other hand, may be more focused on maximizing the number of guests they can serve during the busiest times of the day.

Integrated platform capabilities that increase efficiency and effectiveness in unprecedented ways can make a colossal difference in terms of a restaurant's overall financial performance.

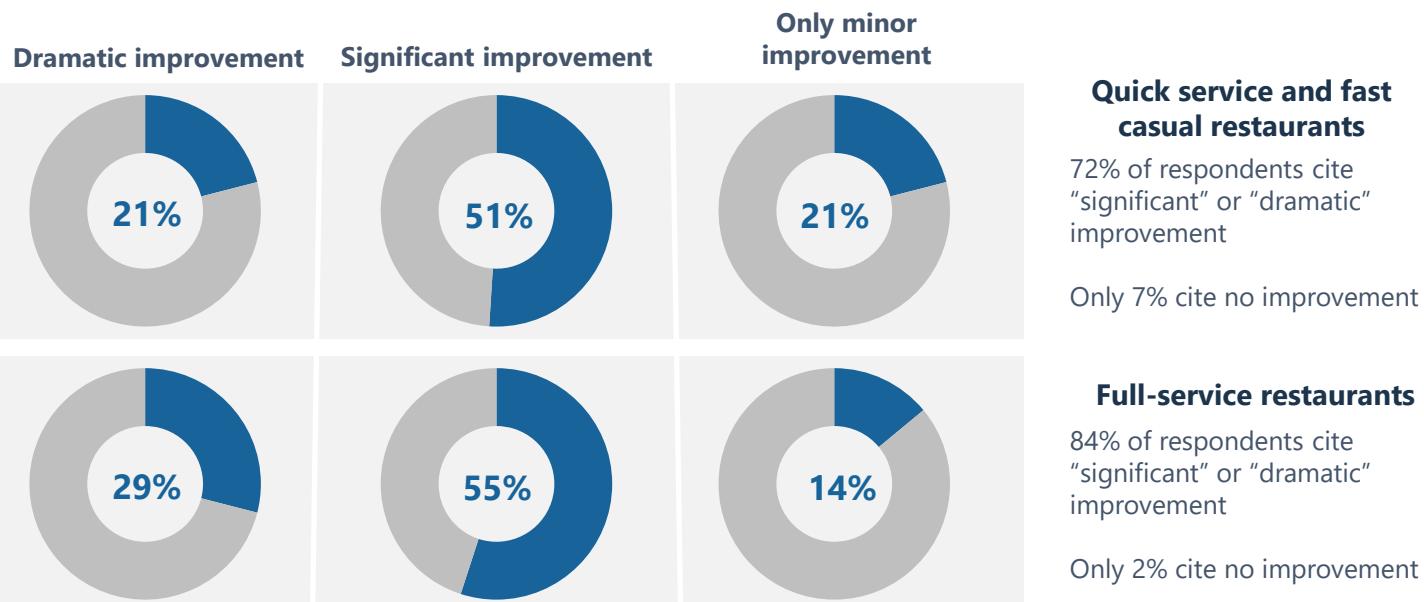
# Chapter 2: Buying Considerations

Different types of restaurants are also bound to have many common requirements. All restaurants need to ensure fast and secure payment processing, for example. They also need to analyze data in order to monitor business performance and staff productivity and to generate actionable insights into emerging trends and guest behaviors. Robust data analysis and performance reporting capabilities that have become instrumental in helping restaurants better manage their operations and identify opportunities for improvement. With so many solution providers actively developing, marketing and supporting next-generation restaurant management and POS systems that provide these capabilities, it can be hard to know where to start with the research and assessment process.

With new software releases boasting an ever-growing plethora of valuable features and functionality, combined with mobile-enabled interfaces that allow for anywhere, anytime access, most of the leading restaurant management and POS systems are impressive by any measure. This isn't to say the systems are identical. On the contrary, different solutions have different capabilities and competitive strengths, and, in many cases, are designed for different restaurant environments. So, how can restaurant owners, operators and other decision makers determine which solution best fits their needs and would be most likely to deliver the benefits they seek, with minimum hassle and expense? There are many factors to weigh, some of them carrying more weight than others, depending on the restaurant.

## Research Data Point

**"To what extent has upgrading your restaurant management and POS system (within the past 3 years) enabled your business to improve overall performance and financial results?"**



Research findings are derived from the Q3 2018 survey on Restaurant Management and POS Systems.

# Chapter 2: Buying Considerations

The following are some of the considerations that are applicable across the board for decision makers to keep in mind.

**Operational efficiencies.** The extent to which the new system would likely improve operational efficiencies is of paramount importance. Would the new solution streamline day-to-day restaurant processes? Would it reduce the amount of time spent on redundant and/or time-consuming tasks? Would it help cut costs in other areas, such as inventory waste? Reducing overhead and increasing margins by even a few percentage points can sometimes mean the difference between success and failure for an eating establishment. POS mobility is a good example of how a restaurant may be able to increase operational efficiencies through technology deployment. Consider: A server who takes a guest's order may intend to make a bee line to a stationary terminal. However, ten minutes could easily go by before the order actually gets entered if the server takes other guests' orders en route, as often happens. Another common problem is that the kitchen tends to get big spikes in orders. That's because multiple orders are coming in at the same time as opposed to trickling in at a steady pace. The peaks and valleys of order activity can put unnecessary strain on the chefs and other kitchen staff and cause additional delays with food preparation and delivery. Some restaurant operators are comfortable allowing servers to use tablets in front of guests; others may not want anything, not even a small tablet, to come between the guest and the server. They don't want servers to lose eye contact with guests or their attention to be distracted in any way. Even so, not more than a few seconds are lost in the process. With mobile POS, fewer mistakes are made because servers can more easily verify or correct orders, adding modifiers, extras, and special requests, before they are placed. Also, servers have immediate access to menu details, enabling them to provide guests with accurate dish information, including ingredients, on the spot and without having to check with the kitchen. In all cases, the added latency of ten, fifteen or twenty minutes before an order can be entered into the system no longer exists. The entire process is streamlined. Food orders hit the kitchen almost immediately after they are placed. In some categories (e.g., drive-thru windows in fast-food chains where performance metrics are tied to number of cars per hour), mobile payment processing may be the key to improved operational efficiency.

Reducing overhead and increasing margins by even a few percentage points can sometimes mean the difference between success and failure for an eating establishment.

# Chapter 2: Buying Considerations

**Advanced features and functionality.** According to research conducted for this Smart Decision Guide, more than three-quarters (78 percent) of restaurant operators cite the benefits of POS mobility as the top reason to upgrade their technology capabilities. While tablets, which can put full POS terminal functionality in the palms of servers' hands, have become nearly ubiquitous in certain restaurant categories, technology capabilities with less obvious benefits than the untethering of POS terminals may also rank as important buying considerations. Features that automate routine tasks — enabling check-splitting by item or number of guests, for example, or providing preset tip percentage options — may be viewed as must-haves. Some systems include built-in distribution and server payout calculators, making it easy to split tips at the close of business. Some systems can send guests receipts electronically via email or text message, making it possible to invite guests to join the restaurant's loyalty and rewards program. Some solutions offer interactive reservations tools that allow guests to not only reserve a date and time, but also their preferred table, server or section. Some systems include inventory control features, in some cases with dynamic menu monitoring for automatically counting down menu items, and even ingredients, that may be in short supply.

**Customization, flexibility and usability.** Because every restaurant has its own distinct set of wants, needs and preferences as well as its own personality, some degree of customization may be desired in a restaurant management and POS system. That can mean reconfiguring and reformatting the look and feel of some screens. It can mean integrating with third-party software modules and/or hardware components, such as existing kiosk or kitchen video display, that may already be in place. That can mean creating custom reports on an ad hoc basis. The degree to which a system allows customization can rank as a critical buying consideration. A related consideration is ease of use. The interface should be highly intuitive. Screens should be laid out in a logical and easy-to-understand format, whether they relate to placing orders and processing payments or any of the back-office functions, such as accounting, reporting and employee, inventory or menu management. Some systems have graphical layouts for tracking table status. Others have quick-feature icons that can enable faster order placement by dividing the menu into sections, styles, types of dish and even the color of the drinks.

Because every restaurant has its own distinct set of wants, needs and preferences as well as its own personality, some degree of customization may be desired in a restaurant management system.

# Chapter 2: Buying Considerations

**In-depth performance reporting.** Restaurant operators need to analyze all aspects of the business, from menu item profitability and table seating configuration to server productivity, and have the tools to make ad hoc queries and refresh dashboards using relevant data sets, over any time period, to get the answers they need. By systematically mining and analyzing the gigabytes of data related to guests, inventory, menus, employees, suppliers and various operational and financial aspects of the business, restaurant operators can generate all kinds of actionable insights and answer all kinds of questions. What does the revenue forecast look like? How can we improve it? How are diners finding our property? What channels are they using to book reservations? How well are we managing our labor and inventory costs? Today analytical modeling and reporting tools are being integrated as a core component of next-generation solutions. The tools are also becoming increasingly flexible and powerful, making it easy to track any number of key performance indicators in a user-defined manner. Some systems include trigger notification features – for example: “Alert me when voids are greater than 10% of sales.” Every operator needs to track basic financial metrics such as net sales to be able to, for example, compare current performance to past performance. But how many restaurants track such metrics as average table turn rates, occupancy rates, guest spending or other metrics that impact revenue?

**Setup, support and training.** Because purchasing a new restaurant management and POS system means entering into a potentially long-term relationship with a solution provider, buyers should select a company that offers a high level of customer support, from implementation to addressing any day-to-day operational issues that may arise. Most reputable solution providers will facilitate the setup process as well as oversee any required customization — helping, for example, to optimize the system according to the restaurant’s physical floor plan. Some will even test network speed and data backup processes. In addition to ensuring the availability of reliable support, preferably 24/7, buyers should ensure that employees will be able to receive the training they need to use the new system effectively. That means walking them through features and settings and showing them how to troubleshoot potential problems they may encounter down the road.

By analyzing data related to guests, inventory, menus, employees, suppliers and various aspects of the business, restaurant operators can generate all kinds of actionable insights.

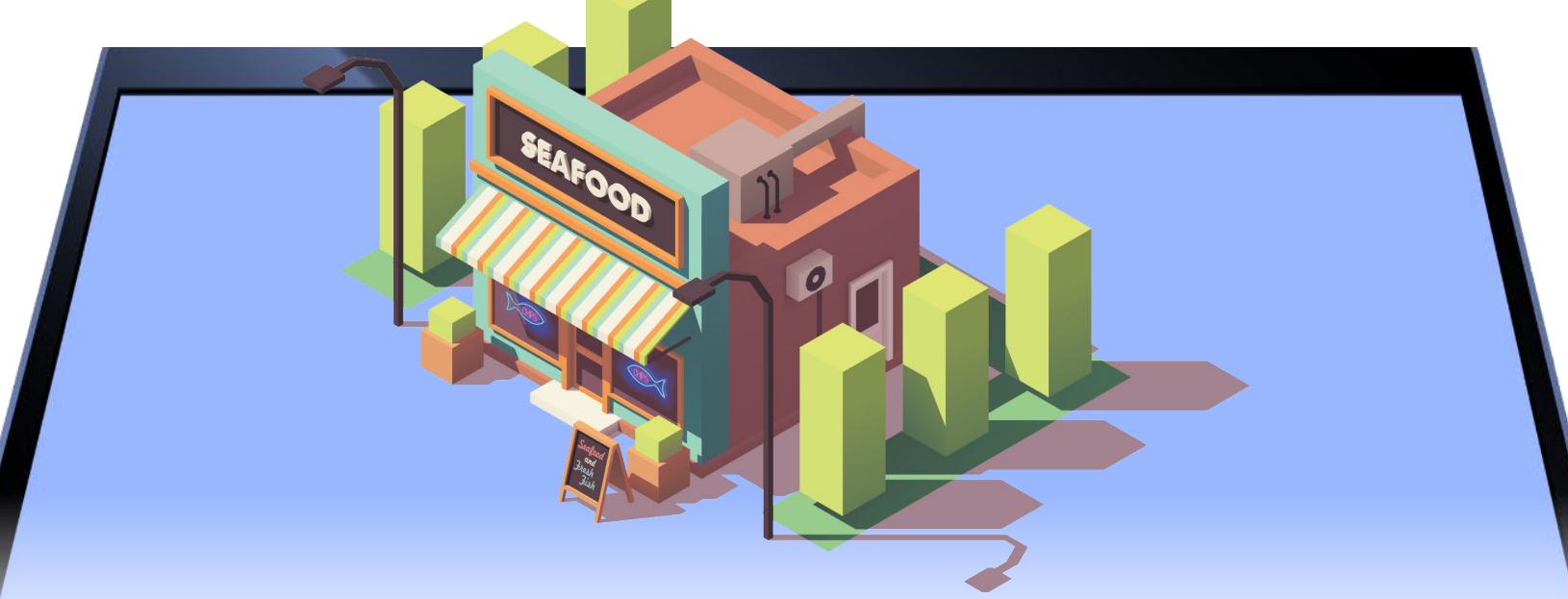
# Chapter 2: Evaluation Checklist

This Evaluation Checklist offers a framework for conducting an apples-to-apples comparison of restaurant management and POS systems using the buying considerations outlined previously. Other key considerations can be added based on individual buyer priorities. Relative weightings can be assigned on a scale of 1 ("This buying consideration has no bearing on our purchase decision") to 10 ("This buying consideration is a very important factor in our purchase decision").

Buying Consideration	Weighting	Vendor 1	Vendor 2	Vendor 3
1. Ordering capabilities				
2. Payment and security capabilities				
3. Terminal mobility (tablets, stationary, both)				
4. Performance reporting and analytics				
5. Type of hosting (cloud, on-premise, hybrid)				
6. Technology / data integration capabilities				
7. Multi-location management capabilities				
8. Customizability / user experience				
9. Setup, training and support				
10. Usability / reputation / client satisfaction				
11. Costs and expected ROI				
12. Overall features and functionality				
a. Marketing, guest loyalty management				
b. Inventory management				
c. Employee / labor management				
d. Cash drawer management				
e. Table, seating management				
f. Other _____				
<b>Overall Rankings</b>	N/A			

## Chapter 3

# Must-Ask Questions



# Chapter 3: Must-Ask Questions

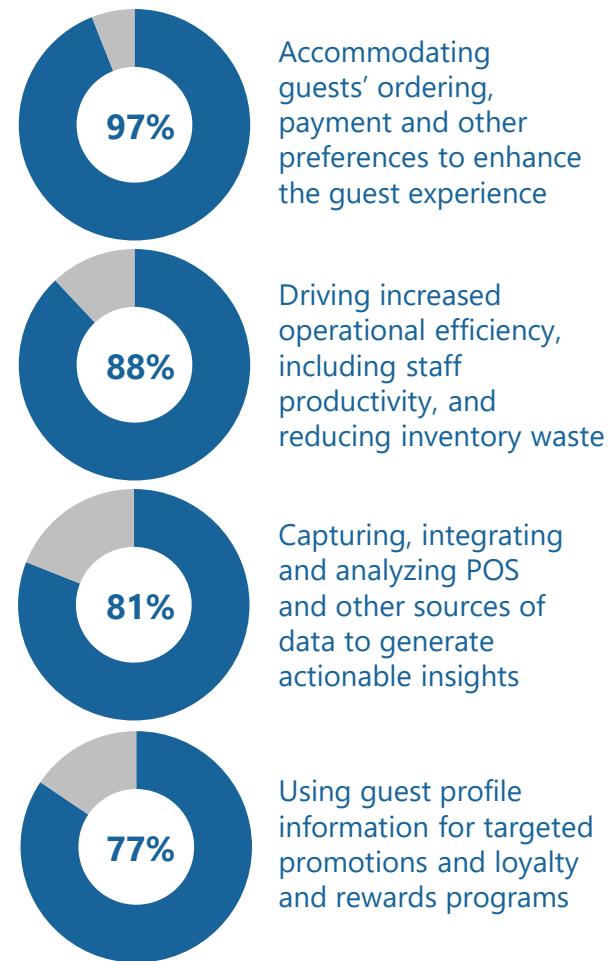
Restaurant operators in the past could have scarcely imagined a world in which mobile ordering and payment processing have become reality, let alone the technology advances taking place within the realms of guest relationship management and loyalty program management. Nor could they have imagined that they would be able to access all of the different platform capabilities in an integrated fashion, from a single, unified interface, as is now a reality with many of the leading restaurant management and POS systems.

The fact of the matter is that practically every major restaurant management and POS system on the market today is a mature software product, with reliable and robust functionality and new platform capabilities being added on an ongoing basis. At the same time, different solutions have different platform capabilities and deliver different customer benefits. By asking solution providers the right questions, restaurant operators can quickly rule out some options while narrowing down others.

When it comes to any technology investment, restaurant operators have two main objectives. The first is to streamline operations. Here the goal is to increase staff productivity, improve process efficiency and reduce waste, resulting in cost savings. The second is to enhance the quality of the guest experience, leading to increased satisfaction, loyalty, advocacy (including favorable reviews on Yelp and other popular ratings sites) and, ultimately, increased revenue growth. When asking questions of solution providers, it may be a good idea to keep these two objectives in mind.

## Research Data Point

**Percentages of restaurant operators who view each of the following success factors as “important” or “very important.”**



Research findings are derived from the Q3 2018 survey on Restaurant Management and POS Systems.

# Chapter 3: Must-Ask Questions

Just as the buying considerations related to the purchase of a next-generation restaurant management and POS system vary depending on the needs of the restaurant, so, too, are the “must-ask questions,” especially those concerning specific features and functionality. If the restaurant offers food delivery, then some questions may revolve around delivery dispatch and management features. Self-service ordering capabilities may be appropriate for fast casual places, but likely not for fine dining establishments. Restaurants wanting to migrate to tableside service capabilities will have questions about mobile ordering and payment processing, unlike those that wish to use centralized ordering and payment processing terminals. Managers who often work off-site or who manage multiple locations may be interested in asking about cloud-based reporting capabilities and remote access to, say, menu and table layout functions. If personalization is important, then restaurant operators might ask how the system can help servers better understand and anticipate the needs of guests and also better address those needs.

The following are just a few of the questions that prospective buyers may wish to explore with solution providers during the research and evaluation process.

**Does the solution offer flexibility in functionality, including data access and performance reporting?** Next-generation restaurant management and POS systems generally offer an unprecedented level of management control. To take full advantage, however, restaurant operators may have certain software configuration and customization needs that must first be implemented. As such, they may want to confirm that any solution providers under consideration can meet these needs. With respect to employee scheduling, for example, some managers may prefer to modify or create their own templates of work periods, if that option were to exist with a particular solution. Or, as another example, they may have a certain way of wanting to input menu modifiers. Most systems come equipped with a large number — in some cases, dozens — of standard dashboards and reports around operational and financial areas like sales and revenue, labor and inventory control that should meet most operators’ day-to-day performance management and analysis needs. That said, not all POS data queries and reporting requirements can necessarily be

To take full advantage of the management control of next-generation systems, operators may have certain software configuration and customization needs that must first be implemented.

anticipated in advance or be addressed with out-of-the-box dashboards. For that reason, buyers would be well advised to find out to what extent customized reporting is possible and, also, what is involved in the process of filtering and sorting data according to a specified set of parameters. With 83 percent of restaurant operators ranking the need to gain access to data and business insights — generally now available anytime, on any device — as an “important” or “very important” success factor, it only stands to reason that they would also want to ensure that any solution under consideration is able to meet these expectations in terms of POS data analysis and reporting capabilities. *Tip: Confirm that the solution is flexible in terms of keys areas of functionality, including custom report generation, and verify the solution provider’s claims, if possible, by speaking with existing clients.*

**What type of customer support is offered? Are there any extra costs? How quickly will questions be answered and problems be resolved?** Buyers should have clear expectations when it comes to customer support and problem resolution as well as the training that may be needed to get servers and other staff up to speed on the new solution. According to research conducted for the Smart Decision Guide, nearly three-quarters (73 percent) of restaurant operators agree that adequate user training ranks as a key success factor in maximizing the value of a restaurant management and POS system. Does the solution provider (or a certified subcontractor) offer an online or, better yet, in-person training program? Is it equipped to offer online troubleshooting and diagnostic processes and tools should technical issues arise? Are local, in-person service and support services on hand should there be an issue that can’t be handled remotely? Knowing that problems will get resolved fully, and in a timely manner, is critical for a restaurant that needs to run with minimal interruption and in which an issue with meal ordering, or even a 30-second lag in payment processing, may be enough to erode the guest experience. More serious technology malfunctions or outages can, of course, have a very negative affect on revenue performance. Decision makers need to understand what to expect should they ever get into a situation that requires immediate attention. *Tip: Ensure that resources are available to address training and support needs and resolve issues in a timely manner. Some solution providers guarantee specific response and resolution times.*

Because not all POS data queries and reporting requirements can be anticipated in advance or be addressed with out-of-the-box dashboards, buyers should ask about customized reporting.

# Chapter 3: Must-Ask Questions

**How long will it take for problems to be resolved?** Decision makers should have clear expectations around customer support and problem resolution as well as the training that may be needed to get front desk employees and other staff up to speed on the new system. Almost three-quarters (73 percent) of hotel operators agree that user training ranks as a key success factor in ensuring that a revenue management solution is utilized as effectively as possible. Does the solution provider (or a certified subcontractor) offer adequate training? Do the team members in charge of support and training have revenue management experience of their own from previous jobs at hospitality companies? Does the provider offer online troubleshooting and diagnosis should technical issues arise? Is local in-person service and support a possibility? *Tip: Make sure that problems will get resolved in a timely manner. Some solution providers will go so far as to guarantee response and case resolution times.*

**What is the total cost of ownership? Are there any “hidden expenses?”** While hardware and software costs run gamut, as do the requirements of different restaurant operators, next-generation restaurant management and POS systems on the whole tend to be considerably less expensive and require less up-front investment than their predecessors. There are many reasons for the shift to increased affordability, including the fact that installation is generally less complex and hardware is generally less expensive compared to, say, a decade ago. That is especially true for mobile POS / tablet-only restaurant operations. With a fast-growing number of systems, the POS data is stored entirely in the cloud, reducing (or, likely, even eliminating) the need for on-premise servers. Incidentally, most cloud-based POS systems also use a subscription “pay as you go” model, which generally means no long-term contracts and no upfront capital investment for the software. Cloud solutions are generally built to scale as the volume of business increases, so the costs are almost always in coordination with the size of the restaurant’s current operations and needs. This may be an important consideration, especially for smaller operations with a limited budget. In all cases, it is important to confirm which software features and modules, including future upgrades — as well as which hardware components, if any — are included in the

Decision makers should have clear expectations around customer support, problem resolution and the training that may be needed to get staff up to speed on the new system.

base (recurring) price that is quoted so as to avoid any unpleasant surprises down the road. *Tip: Ascertain that all associated installation, licensing, maintenance and ongoing service and support fees are included in the pricing. Also, check that the solution comes with a warranty to protect against hardware or software malfunction, what specific replacement or repair costs are covered, and over what period of time.*

**What return on investment (ROI) can be expected?** For most restaurants, the return on investment can be measured in terms of cost reduction, which is largely a function of increased staff productivity and resource utilization. It can also be measured in terms of revenue growth. This is largely a function of improved guest satisfaction and, in some cases, faster table turn times — and again, in certain venues, the ability to reach and serve a larger number of guests simultaneously. Additional selling points include the ability to improve financial performance with advanced inventory and labor management tools and better performance reporting capabilities. When it comes to projecting ROI, the first question to ask is: To what extent would the new restaurant management and POS system likely improve organizational and process efficiency across day-to-day functions, including those related to guests, employees and inventory? To what extent would the new system likely improve sales, revenue and profitability — by, for example, increasing table turnover rates and the number of guests that can be served simultaneously? Another key factor to consider in terms of ROI pertains to reduction in losses, including not only food waste but also losses related to data entry errors and technology integration costs with third-party hardware and software. An even more important consideration when it comes to making the business case for this technology investment is the extent to which the new system would be likely to enhance the overall quality of the guest experience, resulting in a greater number of loyal customers and a higher volume and intensity of positive reviews, including word-of-mouth recommendations. As any restaurant operator can attest, there is direct correlation between favorable guest reviews and positive financial outcomes.

The return on investment can be measured in terms of cost reduction, which is largely a function of increased staff productivity and resource utilization, and in terms of revenue growth.

# Chapter 3: Must-Ask Questions

**What is the solution provider's track record of success?** As with the purchase of any business technology solution, reputation and customer satisfaction are important factors in the decision-making process. Nobody wants to purchase and implement a restaurant management and POS solution that falls short of expectations due to known shortcomings in stability, reliability or promised benefits. No input may be more important to the buying decision than that which can be gleaned from existing solution provider customers, preferably restaurants that share some commonalities in terms of size, typography, category and existing technology infrastructure and requirements. A solution provider or consultant may be willing to provide one or more customer references. Some customers, particularly those operating in non-competitive markets, may be willing to share their experiences and perhaps even disclose results in terms of percentage increases the solution has helped enable them to achieve in terms of cost savings or, perhaps even more importantly, improvement in guest satisfaction metrics such as Yelp rating. Client testimonials and success stories can also be valuable sources of information. *Tip: Find out what performance issues may arise by talking to existing customers, preferably ones that are similar in size and existing technology infrastructure. Ask about the solution's product roadmap to gain an understanding of what planned upgrades, including new features and functionality, can be expected in the future, and over what timeframe, to avoid product obsolescence. Ultimately, restaurant operators should select a partner that shares their vision for success.*

No input may be more important than that which can be gleaned from existing customers, preferably restaurants that share commonalities in terms of size, category and requirements

## Chapter 4

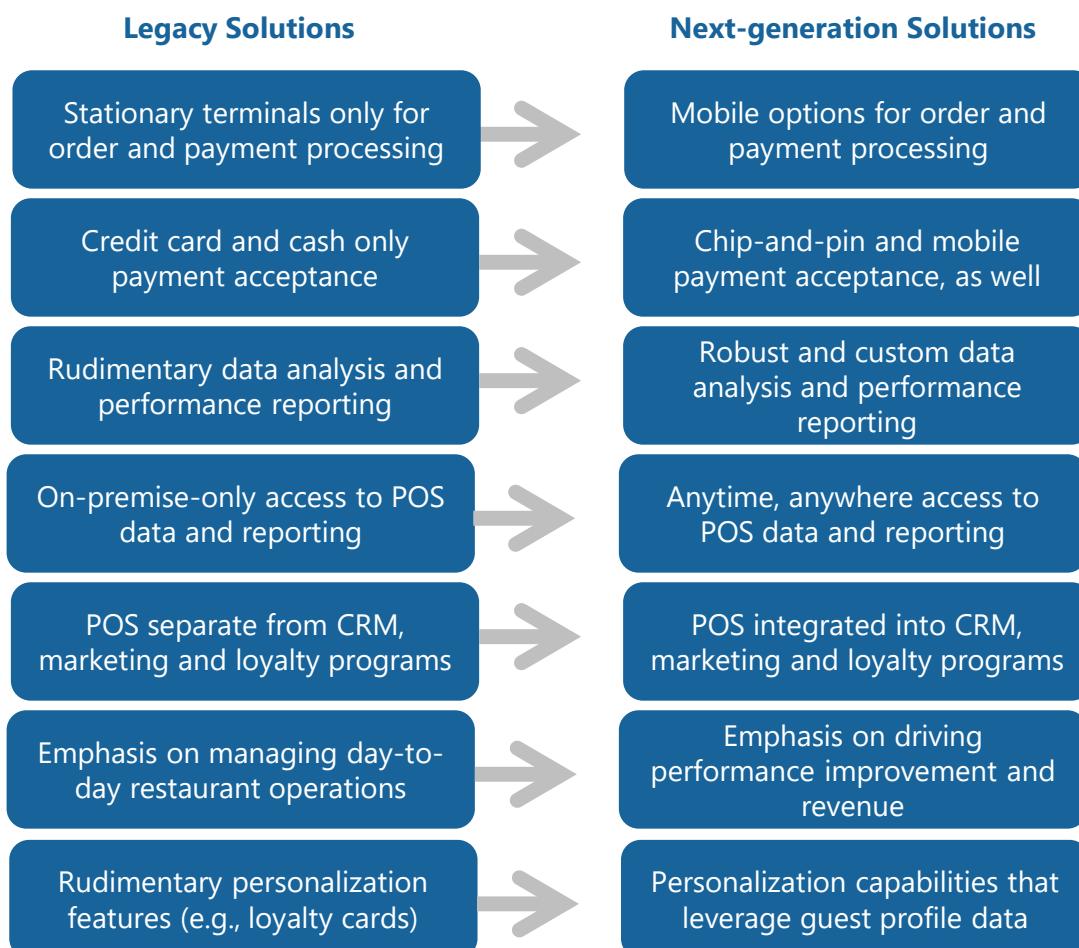
# Roadmap and Recommendations



# Chapter 4: Roadmap

More than just payment processing and ordering platforms, restaurant management and POS systems have evolved to become the epicenter of day-to-day business operations and strategic decision-making as well a key enabler of guest experience management. The advances that are fueling the evolution of features and functionality are largely enabled by the migration of software from on-premise installations to cloud-based deployment and, more recently, by incorporating data-driven personalization capabilities that can help restaurants deliver an exceptional dining experience, which often means enhancing rather than replacing the human touch.

This Roadmap Diagram offers a migration path for restaurant operators to keep in mind as they embark on the journey toward upgrading their technology capabilities.



# Chapter 4: Recommendations

With new restaurant technologies coming to market all the time, it is no easy feat to stay up to date with what's new, and, more importantly, to know which solutions can have a real impact in the context of a specific restaurant. Equally important to knowing what solutions are out there is knowing which provider will be the best fit. Partnering with the right technology solution partner can make all the difference in the world. Even if two competing solutions offer fundamentally the same set of features, functionality and benefits, the experience of working with one solution provider compared to another can vary dramatically. The following are a few recommendations for buyers to keep in mind.

**Take full advantage of POS mobility.** POS mobility represents a fundamental shift in how servers spend their time. Suddenly, the job of the server is less focused on processing information and more focused on attending to duties that can improve service quality and have a far more meaningful and lasting impact on enhancing the overall guest experience. With the evolution of POS mobility, restaurants have the opportunity to migrate servers from being food-order-taking-and-delivery-automatons to becoming full-fledged brand ambassadors. POS mobility gives them the tools and capacity to provide high-touch, personalized service and build enduring relationships with guests. Table-side order placement and payment processing via tablets are obviously not appropriate for many types of dining establishments. But for many restaurants, removing some of the common barriers to guest satisfaction – e.g., lack of server attention and unacceptably long wait times across multiple points of interaction and transaction – invariably results in more repeat visits and higher revenue. In fact, restaurants that have implemented POS mobility are reportedly seeing a 10 to 15 percent increase in average check size. Look for a partner who not only offers multiple options for payment acceptance but also one that offers the highest level of payment processing security. Look at transaction processing certifications and make sure the solution provider has a track record of success with data protection. Most data breach incidents are reported and made publicly available. *If the ability to instantly send orders to the bar or to the kitchen are essential to your restaurant and even retail businesses, find the provider who offers this capability. Some things to look for are PCI compliance and PCI-validated P2PE (point to point encryption).*

With the evolution of POS mobility, restaurants have the opportunity to migrate servers from being food-order-taking-and-delivery-automatons to becoming full-fledged brand ambassadors.

# Chapter 4: Recommendations

**Know your requirements.** Every restaurant management and POS system under consideration needs to cover the basics around food ordering, secure payment processing, etc. Every restaurant has its own set of requirements and priorities in terms of features and functionality. A multi-location restaurant operation, for example, will probably want to purchase a system that features multi-restaurant management capabilities — with single sign-on, for example, and unified data analysis and performance reporting. Buyers should try to gain a clear understanding of their own requirements and priorities early on and weigh them accordingly (see the Evaluation Checklist in Chapter 2).

**Harness the power of guest data.** Restaurant operators work tirelessly to identify opportunities for improvement in guest satisfaction. Any technology that can help to better manage and improve guest relationships is bound to be money well spent. Today, restaurants have the ability to capture an enormous amount of valuable guest information, from POS transaction data to guest feedback solicited through survey and reward programs to guest sentiment data from social media. By integrating this diversity of data, they capture into a centralized CRM repository, restaurant operators can take a more guest-centric approach toward managing their businesses. Ongoing analysis of everything from menu item popularity to server interactions to restaurant traffic flow can yield a plethora of actionable insights that can further improve the overall guest experience, ultimately translating into dollars and cents.

**Focus on personalization.** Increasingly, guests are coming to expect a special, personalized experience. While no technology can replace a maitre d' or server with years of experience and relationships with regular diners, technology can help enhance the quality of the guest experience, particularly in dining establishments where that sense of familiarity may otherwise be lacking. By knowing their name, food and drink preferences, servers can greet guests upon arrival and recommend dishes based on their past experiences. Keep in mind that while diners want the personalization benefits technology can offer in the dining space, it is advisable to keep the data-driven platform capabilities in the background. An overt show of technology can detract from the guest experience. When it comes to technology that drives personalization, restaurants should strive for an almost "invisible touch."

Any technology solution that can help restaurant operators better manage and improve the quality of their guest relationships is bound to be money well spent.

## Chapter 5

# Inside Voices and Outside Voices



# Chapter 5: Inside Voices

Restaurant owners, executives, operators and other industry practitioners with first-hand experience with next-generation restaurant management and POS systems tend to have a lot to say about the topic. Following are a few perspectives gleaned from individuals who participated in the survey that produced the research findings included in this Smart Decision Guide.

Having integrated reporting tools has been fantastic. The tools have helped us reduce overhead and improve efficiency in ways we could have never done before. We now have the ability to accurately predict sales of specific menu items. We can know what are the optimal shift schedules for servers, cooks and other staff. We can see sales and labor all merged together in a cohesive way. Restaurant staff can clock in and clock out in on the schedule. As the guy running the show, I can instantly notify everyone of any schedule changes with just a few keystrokes. That's something we couldn't do with our old POS system and it has made an enormous difference in terms of keeping everything and everyone on track and on the same page.

Senior executive, full-service restaurant

Make sure you know exactly what you're getting when you upgrade your restaurant technologies. There are things that our POS doesn't have that we assumed it would have. The biggest thing is data analytics and reporting. Don't assume when you invest in a new system it has everything already built into it. You need to do your research.

Manager, full-service restaurant

A lot of different trends and factors are shaping the technology needs in our industry. Rising labor costs is one of them. To reduce overhead, some restaurants would prefer that guests use their own mobile devices when ordering as well as when paying. This is something we're going to see a lot of in the future – guests sending their own orders directly to the kitchen display.

IT manager, full-service restaurant

Our POS technology partner has been super supportive and flexible. They understand our business and current challenges. They work with us to provide customized solutions that work with our unique operation. Restaurants don't fit nicely into a one size fits all model. Restaurants need to look for technology companies that take a consultative, people-based approach to their business and care about their success.

Marketing manager, quick service restaurant

# Chapter 5: Outside Voices

Following are a few additional perspectives from industry observers, including industry practitioners as well as consultants, trade publication editors and market researchers, with insights into next-generation restaurant management and POS systems.

Your POS system should have all the reports that assist you in your decision making. If there are reports that are missing, you will have to fill in the blanks with custom reporting that may be time-consuming and expensive. You know what is important to your business, and now is the time to make sure it is covered with the expectations of your POS system.

Reema Bhatia, "How To Find The Right POS System For Your Franchise," *Forbes*

While the right [POS] system streamlines processes and saves you time, the wrong system complicates simple tasks and becomes a source of frustration. You need a system that makes it easier to ring up sales, manage inventory, capture customer contact information, evaluate employee performance and generate sales reports.... Ideally, you want a POS system that lets you change one component – the software, the hardware or the payment processing service – without having to change all three. You want to work with a company that doesn't lock you in to a lengthy contract, make you purchase proprietary equipment or require you to use it as your payment processor.

Lori Fairbanks, "3 tips for selecting the best POS system for your business," *Business.com*

There has been an increasing adoption of mobile POS terminals in restaurants. Mobile POS terminals are integrated with mobile devices such as smart phones and tablets, which offer benefits such as reduced serving time, higher workforce efficiency, while improve customer experience. This solution allows users to keep a track of tables being served. Servers are provided with options of adding modifiers, making notes, customizing menus, and taking orders.

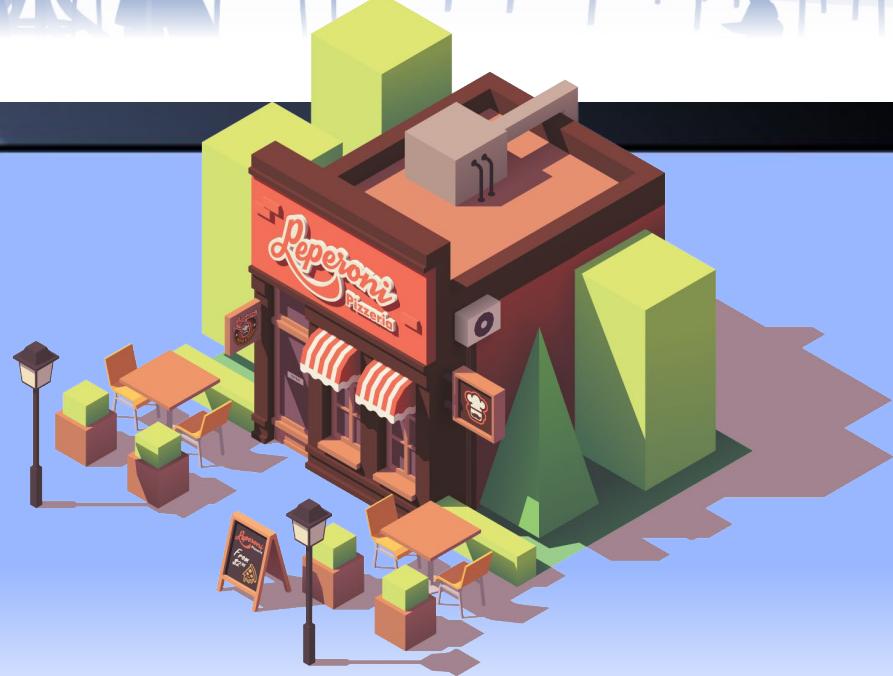
Polaris Market Research Group, "Restaurant Point-of-Sale (POS) Terminals Market 2018"

Demand for POS terminals has witnessed a significant rise in light of its multi-functionality benefits to restaurant owners, which in turn has driven the demand for POS restaurant management systems. The flexibility of POS systems, equipped with features including stock & inventory management, customer relationship management, and billing, help restaurant operators in making effective decisions and profitably carrying out their business operations.

Worldwide Market Reports, "Global Restaurant POS Software Market by Manufacturers, Countries, Type and Application, Forecast to 2025"

## Appendix

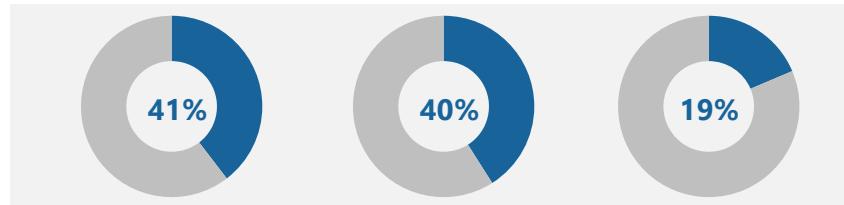
# Research Notes and Underwriters



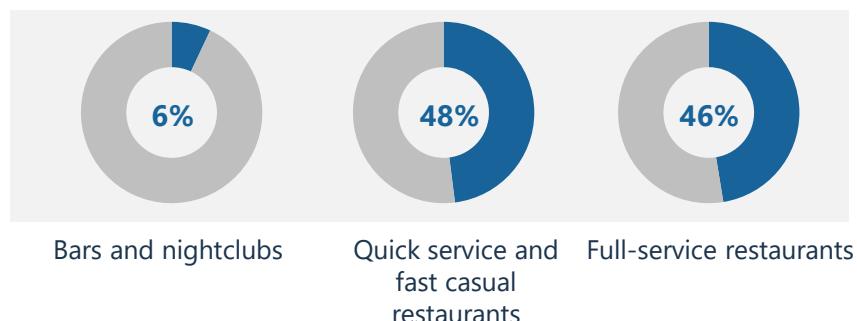
# Appendix: Research Notes

In Q3 2018, Starfleet Research conducted an online survey, consisting of both multiple choice and open text questions, to capture the perspectives of industry practitioners with first-hand experience with restaurant management and POS systems. Some of the research findings are highlighted in this publication. Following is some basic information about the 243 qualified survey respondents who participated.

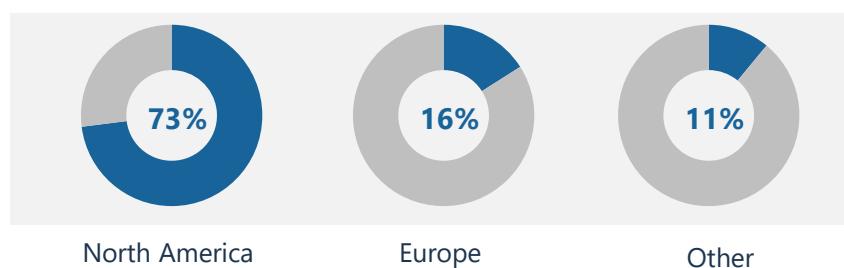
## Job level / role of survey respondents



## Size / category of survey respondents' restaurant employers



## Geographic location of survey respondents



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