The Ultimate Point of Sale & Back Office Management System:

A Checklist for Grocers and Supermarket Managers

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Managing a grocery store or supermarket is a challenge, especially in an environment of evolving consumer preferences and increasing competition. But there's an important tool that every grocery and supermarket manager should leverage to simplify operations: the point of sale and back office management system.

When selecting the optimal POS and management system for your grocery store, keep these seven key features in mind to make an investment that will result in maximum return for your business.

FEATURE 1:

Easy to Use, Easy to Learn

An overly complicated POS system interface can actually make checkout a less efficient process. Choose a POS system that reflects streamlined and optimized workflows based on industry best practices, as well as the ability to customize screens according to the unique way you do business. In addition, the simpler and more straightforward the system is to use, the easier and more efficient training new employees will be. This can be a significant cost-saving feature, especially if your store experiences high employee turnover.

Your system should also make managing your business quick and easy. Opt for a system that allows you to setup and maintain your database from one screen, so you can easily create products, track their costs from vendors and set your retail price.

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FEATURE 2:

Speed and Accuracy

Your customers value fast service in the checkout line. With a solution that enables line busting, you can have your associates scan purchases for customers, give them a receipt for the bill, and have them pay at the next available cashier. This simple, but time saving feature, will save your customers the irritation of long lines.

Your system can also help speed up the checkout process by enabling you to create custom images for your PLUs. This allows cashiers to quickly identify products, saving time and frustration.

Additionally, invest in a solution with customizable hot keys, so produce or bulk items won't slow cashiers down.

FEATURE 3:

Scale and Scanner Integration

Your grocery store or supermarket relies on seamless scale and scanner integration. Don't make the mistake of choosing a POS system that lacks these capabilities. Many new POS software platforms—especially "free" tablet POS options—claim to be suited to the grocery industry, but they often lack these features.

Be sure to select an industry-specific POS system that will provide you with integrated scale functionality for accurate pricing on weighed produce and bulk foods. Ideal software will be NTEP certified, so it's capable of reading weight on embedded barcodes, displaying weight on-screen from the scale, and obtaining exact measurements—speeding up transactions and reducing shrinkage. Another feature that's essential to grocery POS is the ability to assign a tare to any PLU, enabling you to have specific package weights which correspond to different sizes and types of containers used in your store.

Also ensure your POS system allows input from barcode scanners as well as a keypad or touchscreen, to facilitate quick, accurate checkout.

FEATURE 4:

Flexible and Secure Payment Options

Most POS systems allow for cash, check, and credit card payments. However, that doesn't cover all options a grocery store or supermarket needs. Your business also requires electronic benefit transfer (EBT) payment card processing for assistance programs, including:

- Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)
- Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)
- Women, Infants, and Children (WIC)

Your system should also include PA-DSS Validated EMV credit and debit card processing capabilities to prevent card fraud and its costly repercussions.

Gift cards and store loyalty cards are excellent marketing tools—don't miss out because your POS system can't process them. Additionally, make sure your POS system can accept manufacturer and store-issued coupons and promotions and verify age via driver's license scan for purchases such as tobacco products and some over-the-counter medications.

FEATURE 5:

Robust Inventory Management and Purchasing

Grocery and supermarket store managers need comprehensive inventory solutions to manage large, diverse inventory. Choose a system that has an essentially limitless database, as the average department can consist of over ten thousand SKUs—and mismanaging data can cost hundreds of thousands of dollars each year.

State-of-the-art POS and management solutions feature scientific ordering, so you can automate replenishment, purchasing and tracking of all products. It should also give you the ability to oversee vendor activity, including processing return to vendors (RTVs) transactions and receiving direct store delivery (DSD). When evaluating systems, also look for the ability to integrate with wholesalers' databases to make ordering easier.

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FEATURE 6:
Smart Analytics and Reporting

Accurate and customizable reports provide crucial insights that help you control costs and maximize profitability. Look for a solution that incorporates click-of-a-button reporting, so you can quickly and easily see what inventory is moving and what is just tying up cash.

Dashboard, emailed reports, and real-time web reporting, will give you deeper visibility into sales, profit, customer purchasing patterns, so you can make smarter, more informed inventory management and promotion decisions and market to segments of your customer list more effectively.

FEATURE 7:
Maximize Value

When you are comparing grocery or supermarket POS systems, you need to look past the initial cost to consider the total cost of ownership (TCO) of the system before making your selection. TCO takes into account all costs associated with your system, such as payment processing, warranty and maintenance, training, support, supplies, and certifications such as PA-DSS and NTEP. Your POS system investment will impact operations for years to come, so ensure you are investing in a system that provides you with all of the features you need, as well as one that will work with your budget long-term.

Where you purchase your POS system will also contribute to the value it provides your business. Look for a POS provider that is committed to keeping the system updated with frequent product enhancements and upgrades and to providing you with the support and training you and your staff need. Additionally, it is beneficial to select a system from a single software vendor that fully integrates operations from point of sale to back office.

Auto-Star's seamless POS abilities have been developed from more than 20 years' experience in the food retail industry throughout North America. Consult with a representative to see how a grocery or supermarket POS system can mean a healthy ROI for your business.