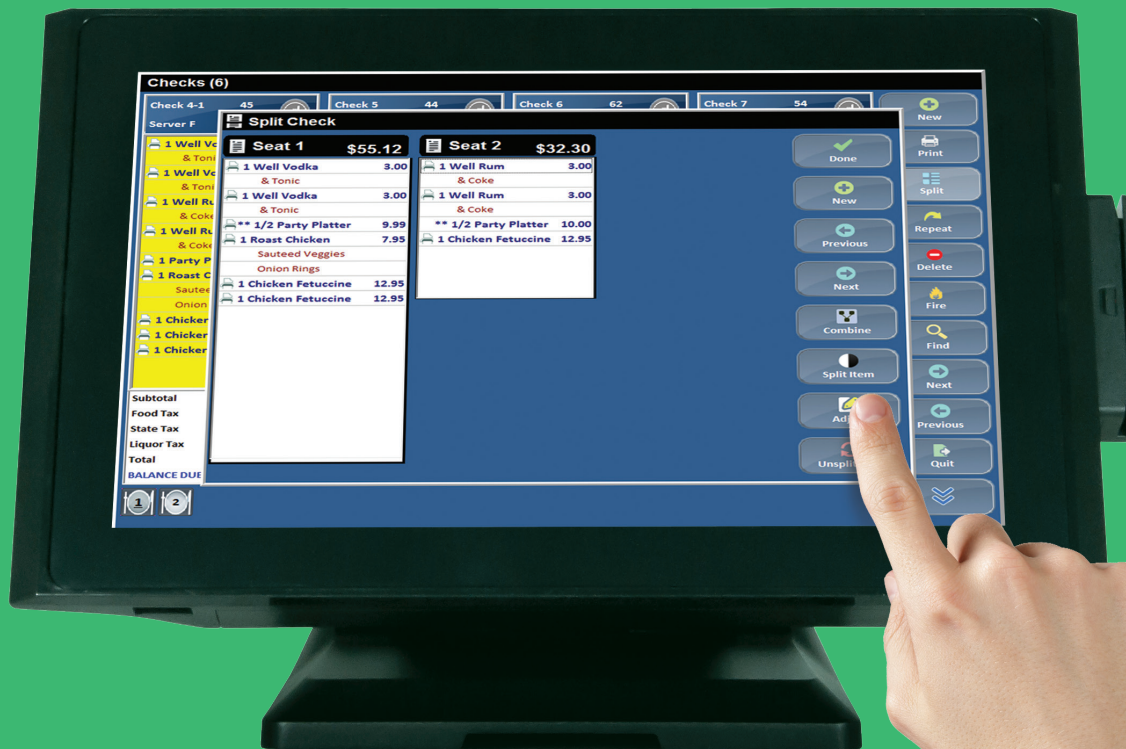


# POS Software BUYER'S GUIDE

*6 steps to help you choose the POS software  
that best suits your business*



**TOUCH**  
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# POS Software Buyer's Guide

POS software is a key component of every business establishment and plays a critical role in fostering the success of any business. This makes it important to select the right solution from among the many solutions offered by a seemingly endless roster of vendors. The process of sorting through these options to find the software that best suits the needs of your operation and will deliver optimal performance can appear daunting and sound like a chore, but it doesn't have to be. In fact, following the steps in this guide can make the process stress-free and help you to predict potential problems and open doors to arrive at the smartest possible purchasing decision.

## STEP #1 Determine your POS software “needs” and “wants”

*This is a potentially time-consuming first step. However, it is an important one because it's the best way to avoid investing a significant sum of time, money and resources in POS software, only to discover that the solution lacks critical features or has capabilities that vastly exceed the needs of your business. To get the selection process started:*

### **Identify your top five business pain points.**

For example, are employees making too many mistakes as they ring up customers' purchases? Does processing payments at the POS appear to take an unusually long time? Is it difficult to keep the right quantities of individual SKUs in stock, and, if you have multiple stores, to find out which of your stores or warehouses has an item available that is out of stock in another store? Are store associates unable to provide customers with information about merchandise availability and/or with details about the items on your shelves?

### **Elicit staff and customer feedback.**

While you clearly know your business best, soliciting staff and even customers for feedback can yield important insight into the type of POS software you should seek. Ask employees which POS software they've used at other jobs and which features are lacking in your current POS solution and would—if included in the new one—enable them to do their jobs better and handle their responsibilities with fewer headaches.

Find out, from conversations with customers, which POS software-induced improvements they would like to see in your stores. Examples include—but aren't limited to—faster checkout, enhanced merchandise availability, and the ability to find out more about prospective purchases while shopping, without using their own devices.

### **Determine business objectives.**

For instance, do you want to increase sales by leveraging your loyalty program to convey targeted offers to customers? Would you like to add an e-commerce component? Are you looking to expand your target market?

### **Use your list of pain points and business goals, along with employee and customer feedback, to create a roster of matching “must-have” POS software features.**

As an example, if out-of-stocks present frequent problems, put integrated inventory management and purchase order automation modules on the roster. If labor scheduling is a challenge, add an integrated labor scheduling module to the compilation. If you want to build your marketing program, include a loyalty program management component as a key feature of your future POS software.

### **Identify “nice-to-haves.”**

Make a separate list of secondary, less significant “pain points” your business may be experiencing and the POS software capabilities that may address them. Add to this compilation of “nice-to-have” features and capabilities to those that may make it easier to run your business, but cannot be considered critical components of any solution you acquire.

## **STEP #2** Check out the competition

*Investigate competing operations to learn which POS software vendor and solutions they use. Then, ask the following questions:*

### **Are competitors happy with their POS software vendor (provider)?**

If so, ask why. For instance, does the vendor respond quickly when there is a problem with its POS software and in instances where some other type of assistance (like answers to queries or the handling of requests) is needed? Does the provider readily assume responsibility for handling problems that are clearly software-related, or does it engage in “finger-pointing,” laying blame on the hardware manufacturer, payment processor, or another party? Does there appear to be an understanding of the competitor’s business as well as an understanding of its concerns, or did the company only emphasize “bells and whistles” when selling its software? Are software upgrades provided regularly and as promised?

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### **Is the competitor happy with its POS software as a whole?**

In other words, does the retailer find the solution to be not only functional, but also easy to use? How difficult was it to operate immediately after installation?

### **Does the software seem to be effective?**

Specifically, do its features deliver on their promise? For example, if the POS software is promoted as having the ability to generate detailed sales reports and/or enable rapid payment processing, does it really do so? Is a promised seamless interface between the POS system and back-office systems (like accounting) truly seamless? Does the loudly-touted integrated inventory management system afford insight into merchandise availability from store to store and throughout the supply chain? You get the idea.

## **STEP #3**

**Make a list of POS software solutions you want to investigate further, and obtain customer references from each vendor.**

*Ask references the questions listed in Step #2. Then, assess each vendor itself and narrow down your list to include only options offered by those that:*

### **Have a solid base of customers.**

Unless a software vendor has a respectable cadre of customers, it is unlikely to support its crop or invest in necessary upgrades to keep pace with the development of new retail technology as well as changes in the retail marketplace.

### **Understand your business and demonstrate this instead of emphasizing technology features.**

To gauge this understanding, share with vendors the major pain points you would like to eliminate and the goals you would like to attain using POS software, and ask them for specifics on how their solution will address these problems and objectives.

### **Have a working knowledge of your industry.**

The “right” vendor knows that operators in different retail and hospitality verticals have different needs. Assess such knowledge by requesting concrete examples of how the POS software in question suits your industry.

## STEP #4

## Nail down the vendor-provided “extras”

*Figure out the extras which, along with the caliber of the solution chosen, make or break a successful POS software implementation. Inquire about:*

### **Service.**

Few retailers and restaurant operators possess the time—let alone the expertise—to install and service POS software, and attempting to do so occupies valuable time and effort that can and should be devoted to growing the business. All of this makes an extensive menu of vendor services—from installation, to data conversion if you have an existing system, to remote and/or on-site resolution of bugs and other glitches—an absolute imperative.

### **Training.**

POS software can be very complex. Only the vendor can provide the training you need to truly learn all of the ins and outs of your solution and derive maximum value from your technology investment. For best results, find out whether training occurs on-site, off-site in a classroom, on the telephone, or in computer-based mode—and ensure that you’re comfortable with the way in which it will be delivered.

### **Support.**

No matter the caliber of the POS software you select, you’ll eventually encounter a problem during business hours and will need immediate telephone support. Depending on the severity of the situation, a lack of access to such support could interfere with customer service and sales, and negatively impact your business.

One additional caveat to remember here: Choose a POS software partner that offers not only service, training, or support, but all three. This way, you’ll have just one resource to contact and you won’t waste time attempting to figure out which entity to contact for assistance when an issue arises. More importantly, using a single resource for service, training, and support eliminates blame-placing—and possible delays in problem resolution—when something goes wrong with your solution.



## STEP #5

## Investigate hardware and software compatibility

*Whether you will be installing your new POS software on existing hardware or are also planning a hardware purchase, remember to:*

### **Always select software first.**

Not all POS software is compatible with every “make and model” of POS hardware on the market. You don’t want to make a significant hardware investment, and then learn that it won’t work with the POS software you’ve so carefully selected.

### **Training.**

POS software can be very complex. Only the vendor can provide the training you need to truly learn all of the ins and outs of your solution and derive maximum value from your technology investment. For best results, find out whether training occurs on-site, off-site in a classroom, on the telephone, or in computer-based mode—and ensure that you’re comfortable with the way in which it will be delivered.

### **Ensure that any POS software on your “final contenders” list has been tested and certified as compatible and fully able to work with your current or chosen hardware.**

Even if a solution is deemed “compatible” with your hardware, you may encounter operating glitches. Limiting your choices to solutions that have actually undergone testing by, and received certification of compatibility from, the hardware vendor is the only guarantee of an entirely appropriate, pain-free hardware/software “match.”



## STEP #6 Demo, demo, and demo some more

*There's no question that reading and hearing about different POS software solutions plays a valuable role in formulating a POS software purchasing decision. However, before signing on the dotted line, it's critical to learn how each solution functions in your particular store environment and whether you and your employees are comfortable working with it. To do this:*

### **Test-drive all the POS software options you are seriously considering for implementation in your store(s).**

A reputable software vendor or value-added reseller will provide a “demo” copy of its product free of charge.

### **Review “like” features side-by-side so you can arrive at a fair and accurate assessment of each solution.**

For example, compare user interfaces against each other. Do the same with integrated inventory management modules. Through these comparisons, you'll be able to determine with absolute certainty which solution you like the best and which will truly serve its purpose in your business. Moreover, even if you find that you're unable to decide between two POS software solutions before conducting the demos, perspective gleaned from dry runs should help you to break the tie.



## Conclusion

Whether you operate one store or restaurant, or multiple units, selecting a POS software solution that truly addresses the needs of your business is imperative in today's increasingly competitive environment. Following the steps outlined in this eBook should make the process a simple and painless one.