Making the Move to a Tablet Point of Sale Solution

*A research guide to choosing
the right Mobile POS for your business*

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Executive Summary

Over the past few years, improvements in mobile devices, Wi-Fi, and cloud computing have made mobile point of sale (POS) solutions effective and affordable for businesses of all sizes.

Tablets have emerged as the most popular platform for mobile POS solutions, and you may have already heard the buzz about them. There's a reason for all the hullaballoo. In addition to integrating payments and making retail transactions more efficient than using a traditional electronic cash register (ECR), tablet POS solutions can provide robust management data.

A tablet POS solution makes sense for many retailers, particularly if you're looking to:

- replace an ECR or want to have a mobile POS in place on opening day
- unlock new profit-making and cost-saving opportunities
- expand your business
- keep pace with ever-changing customer expectations

Figuring out which tablet POS solution is the best for your business may seem like a huge challenge. But don't worry. Taking the right approach, by using tools and partners to help you get the job done, makes the whole process straightforward and doable. And the reward—a POS solution that will help increase your level of success and profitability—will be worth the effort.

Experience has shown that the key is to **build a relationship with a trusted partner** who has experience with hundreds of clients. They will help design the right tablet POS solution for your business and be there to provide customer support and guidance in the future as technologies and customer expectations change.

■ **This white paper will:**

- Provide a brief overview of the basics of tablet POS systems
- Explain why finding the right partner is essential
- Explore the best practices in finding the right solution
- Suggest questions to ask potential solution providers

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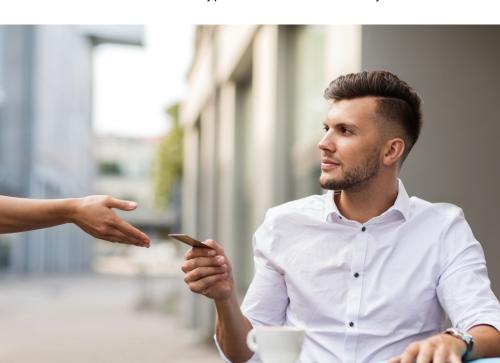Page 3

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Part I: Tablet POS Basics

A POS system manages retail transactions and payments. It can be as simple as a cash register or as full-featured as an internet-based software platform. A tablet POS solution has three basic elements:

1. *hardware:* Common components are tablets, stands, displays, barcode scanners, card readers, cash drawers, and receipt printers.
2. *software:* Application software carries out a wide range of sales, payment, and business management functions.
3. *service and support:* Initial and ongoing consultation ensure that a solution is a good fit for the business, and help desks and other resources keep the solution working properly. Hardware service ensures your business is back up and running if any equipment breaks down.

A tablet POS solution handles the customary elements of a retail transaction—from documenting what a customer is buying and directing employees how to serve the customer (picking inventory, preparing a food order, etc.) to performing the payment transaction and printing a receipt—and can provide instant access to valuable business data, such as sales, inventory and costs. Even better, some tablet POS solutions can make business recommendations based on real-time data. A standard ECR cannot deliver this type of data and functionality.

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■ Benefits of a tablet POS

A tablet POS solution improves a retailer's operational efficiency by:

- saving employees time and effort
- accepting payments wherever their customers are: at a table, on the sidewalk, or at an event or other offsite location
- integrating payments and sales into a single system, helping avoid many accounting headaches (not all tablet POS solutions integrate payments)
- reducing errors, whether it's cooking an order incorrectly or picking the wrong item from inventory

In today's competitive landscape, data analytics have become essential to profitability and success, and many retailers have already embraced using data to improve productivity. Some tablet POS solutions offer data analytics that allow you to see the complete picture and make better decisions.

These customizable tablet POS solutions provide integrated and easily accessible data that unlocks new ways to manage your business, so you can focus on running your key operations rather than wrangling data from multiple sources.

They show you which items are selling and which are not moving, help you identify your best customers, and enable you to stay on top of employee schedules. The

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software can even alert you when you need to reorder merchandise or supplies, based on current and historical data, and even order the items automatically.

A customizable tablet POS solution also allows you to create tools to analyze labor costs or manage customer loyalty programs. Some cloud-based systems allow you to manage your business from any location. For example, you can monitor sales, check inventory, and adjust employee schedules from your phone.

Finally, some tablet POS solutions help improve the customer experience. They provide customers a seamless checkout experience that is both efficient and secure and allow merchants to accept new types of payment, such as Apple Pay. Using these systems, an employee can be a much better source of information, retrieving a product's specs, checking whether a specific size or color is in stock, or keeping track of available menu items. It can also supply tools to create and manage customer loyalty programs.

▪ At work in the real world

Tablet POS solutions are already hard at work in many small- and medium-sized retail businesses. For example, Lavu is an iPad-based POS solution designed specifically for restaurants, bars, and nightclubs. Its purpose-built systems allow users to handle customer transactions, and its software offers a wide range of management tools.

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> **A server can take an order, adding customer modifications before sending the ticket to the kitchen display system.**

Using a Lavu-based tablet, a server can take an order, adding customer modifications before sending the ticket to the kitchen display system. Later, the server can use the tablet to split the bill for customers, accept different types of payments at the table, and print out receipts for everyone. Meanwhile, the on-duty manager can view live sales and inventory data, and the owner can use the Lavu app to access sales, inventory, and other data reports from an offsite location.

Part II: Adopting a Tablet POS Solution: First Steps

Making the move to a tablet POS solution may seem complicated. They have many components and offer a bewildering range of features and add-ons. Plus, you have hundreds of systems, vendors, and platforms to choose from.

> **Narrow your search to tablet POS solutions designed for your specific type of business.**

As you start to explore tablet POS options, keep these two key pointers in mind:

1. *Adopt the right solution that's tailored for your business.* Each business is unique, so some solutions will not be a good fit for you. Narrow your search to tablet POS solutions designed for your specific type of business. Avoid generic solutions because they likely will not address the needs of your workflow or provide the features that will help improve your bottom line.

2. *Build a relationship with a trusted partner who has real-world expertise in tablet POS solutions.* An experienced POS hardware and software reseller or a tablet POS solution provider can guide

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you to a smart initial purchase. They will also do more than just sell you a system. They will provide customer support to fix technical problems and offer ongoing consultation to help your business keep pace with changes in POS technology and in customer expectations.

▪ Take the first few steps

There's a mental step before the first physical step: You must recognize the need to modernize ECR and payment operations. The time has come to take advantage of the benefits that a tablet POS solution provides. Once you realize that there are better solutions than your current ECR, you can begin the journey.

Business advisor at *Vantiv*, Jim Roddy, recommends starting off with these initial steps when choosing to pursue a tablet POS solution:

1. *Familiarize yourself with the tablet POS marketplace.* Check out several POS reseller and solution provider websites to get a feel for common features and pricing. Then focus on solutions designed for your type of business.
2. *Take a deep look at your business and determine which problems need solving.* What are your current operational issues? What do you want to improve? What types of POS solutions solve your specific problems?
3. *Create a list of features you need.* What are your must-haves, like-to-haves, and don't-needs: a barcode scanner or printer, a cash drawer, a credit card reader, a signature pad, customer display, kitchen display, stands, label printers, a mobile receipt printer, a kitchen printer? Ask other business owners in your neighborhood who have a business similar to yours what POS solution they use. Would they recommend it? What are their solution's pros and cons?
4. *Identify potential resellers or solution providers.* Conduct online research to find local resellers and national solution providers. Search specific terms: not just "tablet POS" but "tablet POS fast casual restaurant" or "tablet POS clothing boutique" plus the name of your city.

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> *Take a deep look at your business and determine which problems need solving. What are your current operational issues? What do you want to improve? A reseller who specializes in your specific type of business can provide expertise to help answer those questions.*
> -Jim Roddy, Business Advisor - Vantiv
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■ Choose the Best Way Forward

Once you have identified your tablet POS needs, there are three basic ways to acquire a solution. You can do it yourself by researching the hardware and software, buying the components of a POS system from a vendor, then taking it upon yourself to integrate all the pieces and to service it yourself. A DIY approach is problematic because it's hard to make the right choice on your own, especially if you're unfamiliar with technology and all the new features that have become available through tablet POS over the last few years. For example, you run the risk of buying hardware that doesn't work with your tablet software.

If you're tech-savvy and eager to take on a greater level of ownership of your POS solution, the second option is to buy a whole POS solution. This approach will ensure that everything works together, but your may get little or no ongoing support from your solution provider.

If you prefer face-to-face interactions, building a relationship with a trusted hardware and software reseller may be your best option. Also known as valued-added resellers, these typically local or regional businesses offer a range of POS solutions and services to businesses. A reseller can guide you to the best system for your business and offer ongoing customer service and suggest add-ons and feature upgrades as technology evolves.

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Part III: Considerations

Once you've done your research and identified prospective solution providers, it's time to find your trusted partner. Start contacting the companies on your list. A sales rep will call you or make an in-store visit to assess your operations and needs.

Speak with at least three to five solution providers to see which solutions they recommend. The only cost to you will be your time. You'll be able to learn more about tablet POS solutions and get a feel for each of the companies.

■ Questions to ask

The key to finding the trusted mobile POS partner best suited for your business is asking resellers or solution providers the right questions. Here's a list of suggested questions to ask:

- What type of system would you recommend for my business?
- How does this system address my needs? Does it provide inventory control, employee management, customer loyalty (or whatever elements are important to you)? Does it integrate with my current payment processor? Which payment providers does your software support? Are you EMV Ready?

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• Is the system customizable to my business or is it generic? How long will it take to set up? How easy is it to use? How long will it take to train my staff to use it?

• What about service and repair? What types of customer support is included (help desks, online documents, on-site)? Do you have 24/7 customer service? (This is particularly important if your peak business occurs nights and weekends.) Do you provide on-site installation? Which parts of the solution are covered by the warranty? Is the warranty covered by you, the reseller, or the manufacturer of the hardware? Who supports the software installation, and who provides ongoing support? Are software modification requests a reality with the software provider?

• Have you sold similar systems to businesses similar to mine?

• What are the system's security features? How does it keep business, employee, and customer data secure?

• What factors make this combination of hardware, software, and service right for my business? How will it grow along with my business?

• How much will this cost me? What does the hardware cost? Can I use tablets I already have? Are software updates included in the price? What are the monthly charges and per-transaction payment fees? Do you charge for installation, training or customer service?

• Can you give me a proposal listing the hardware, software, service agreement, and costs of your recommended solution?

• Can you give me a list of references of your customers with businesses similar to mine?

■ Making the final decision

Analyze the proposals you receive and carefully consider what each company has to offer.

Estimate the total costs of the solution that each solution provider proposes.

Check their references.

Select the solution provider that you believe best understands your business requirements and will provide the right ongoing support for years to come. The tablet POS solution you choose will become the lifeblood of your business. Don't consider the task of choosing a new POS solution as just another equipment purchase. Give it serious thought and take the time to make the right decision.

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Part IV: The Right Choice

When transitioning to a tablet POS solution, it's essential to buy the right technology from the outset. A tablet POS solution is a long-range investment. You'll be using it for years, and it should be able to grow with your business.

It's usually best to avoid the cheapest options. They may be penny wise, but they're likely to be pound foolish and cost you money on the back end.

That's where the relationship with your trusted partner comes in. Your partner will steer you away from solutions that are not the right fit for you and won't work out in the long run. They'll hook you up with the hardware, software, and service that best suits your business. Trust the experts.

Epson solutions are already at work in millions of point-of-sale systems worldwide. We work with authorized solution providers, offering powerful POS solutions to complement and build tablet POS systems that work for your business. Epson has delivered innovative, cost-effective solutions, with more than 30 years of ensuring retail partners' success.

Find out more at pos.epson.com.

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■ **Another innovation from Epson Business Solutions.**
Find out more at Epson.com/ForBusiness

Epson America, Inc.
3840 Kilroy Airport Way, Long Beach, CA 90806

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