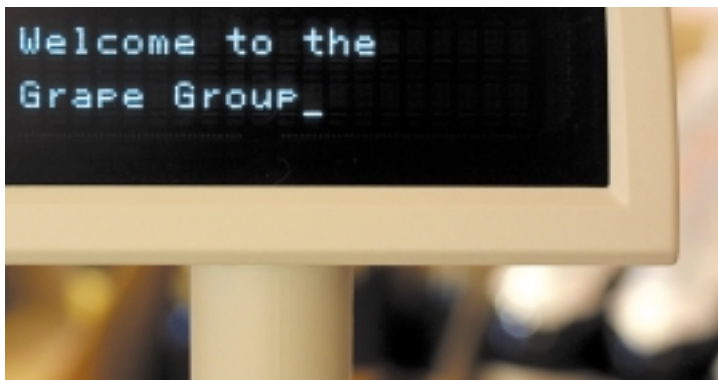


High Technology at the Counter

EPSON IR-310 INTELLIGENT REGISTERS



The Grape

Based in South-East Queensland and with 18 outlets, The Grape is one of Australia's fastest growing chains of liquor retail stores. Its reputation as Queensland's number one retailer of fine wines is enhanced by a constant focus on ensuring customers receive the best quality service at all levels. This high level service – supported in part by leading-edge technology – gives The Grape a definite edge in an extremely competitive industry.

The Challenge: Implement Broad-Function Point-Of-Sale Terminal Solution

By the beginning of 2002 The Grape was operating 18 retail outlets, a 150 per cent increase on the seven outlets it operated barely one-and-a-half years earlier. As the size of its operation grew so too did the need for a point-of-sale (POS) terminal solution that would provide the catalyst for innovative services.

According to The Grape's IT Manager, Mr Ivan Brebner, POS terminals or intelligent registers represent ready means by which improvements can be made in customer service, customer relationship management, stock control, staff management and even security. While intelligent register technology can assist in these areas, there are a number of underlying caveats with reliability being well in the forefront. "On a busy day during peak periods such as Christmas, one of our stores can have as many as 15,000 transactions," commented Mr Brebner. "We already had instances where registers from another company were unable to cope with such

heavy use. They'd simply break down, meaning customers were unable to redeem their membership points and IT staff were constantly on the road fixing problems.

"Before we could even consider using intelligent registers in a broad-function role, we definitely needed a product that incorporated supporting features and was totally reliable."

The Solution: EPSON IR-310 Intelligent Registers

Before committing The Grape to the purchase of new intelligent registers, Mr Brebner undertook a comprehensive review of various products on the market – one such product being the EPSON IR-310. "I quite literally took apart machines during the review stage," stated Mr Brebner. "One of the main features I was looking for was the use of standard components such as memory modules and hard drives. When we saw that the IR-310 was very much a standards-based machine which could easily run Microsoft Windows 2000 – the operating system we wanted to adopt – we recognised it as the best intelligent register of its type available."



Compatibility and Functionality

The IR-310's ability to run Windows 2000 without modification to the hardware ensured The Grape could run its sophisticated Mediaware Pro 5 register/POS software. "This is obviously the most important role of the IR-310s," said Mr Brebner, "and we had the developers at Mediaware verify the hardware/software compatibility."

Mediaware Pro 5, which is written entirely in FileMaker Pro, provides The Grape's EPSON IR-310s with full access to membership loyalty files, stock control and live updates to pricing. Mr Justin Ribot, Mediaware Managing Director, commented: "When The Grape came to us with their plan for implementing our software on the IR-310, we brought in a unit to ensure there wouldn't be any problems...and that was the result, not one problem. In fact, the unit presented us with enough flexibility to incorporate a number of other features."

One of the features commented on by Mr Ribot is the IR-310's integration with store security systems. Standard closed-circuit television (CCTV) cameras located throughout each store and connected to an access server can be controlled in full from the IR-310. Operators at each unit, which are networked via the in-built 10/100 Base-T/100 Base-TX Ethernet controller, are able to access the server and control the cameras simply by



"touching a button" on the IR-310's touch-screen.

"In stores, thieves typically wait until they see the staff member at the counter turn away from the standard security monitor before they steal items," explained Mr Brebner. "At The Grape stores, the IR-310's function also as a security monitor and even give staff the ability to move the cameras in order to track people acting suspiciously."

One Hundred Per Cent Up-Time

On the issue of maintenance and reliability, Mr Brebner commented the IR-310s deliver precisely every IT manager's ideal situation – 100 per cent up-time. "During the Christmas period before we brought in the EPSON terminals we had around seven of our systems go down every day," he said. "Of the 25 IR-310s operating over Christmas 2001, not a single problem was reported for any of them. It really has been a case of demonstrating that buying the best equipment gives the best results at all levels."

Installed on each of the IR-310s is Microsoft Internet Explorer, which provides operators with a direct connection to the company's intranet. This enables them to access and download files such as tasting notes for particular wines. Once downloaded in Acrobat PDF format, it's simply a case of printing the document to a local



printer for the customers to have their own copy. This takes a matter of seconds and for The Grape customers, represents a level of customer service they're unlikely to come across in many other liquor retail outlets.

Mr Brebner's insistence on intelligent registers based on industry standards has, with the IR-310, given The Grape's IT staff an enormous amount of flexibility in introducing new features. One of these is using the IR-310 as the in-store piped music player and controller. By taking advantage of a broadband network connection between each store and head office, IT staff had each unit installed with a standard PC sound card. Software on the registers intercepts a live audio feed from a head office server then plays it over the store's speaker systems via the sound card.

"Because we're able to treat the IR-310 as a client machine on the network, anything that a standard client PC can do, the IR-310 can do as well," said Mr Brebner. "Registers in the hospitality industry have come a long way over the years and from our perspective the EPSON products are leading the way."