

Sonoma Artisan Sourdough Bakeries

Epson Intelligent Printers for cloud-based versatility



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Craig Donovan
Retail Manager
Sonoma Artisan Sourdough Bakeries

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It was in March 2001, baking from a small warehouse space in the Sydney suburb of Arncliffe that Sonoma Artisan Sourdough Bakeries sold its first wholesale loaf of sourdough bread.

Since that time the business has grown to the point where it now has six retail outlets/cafés around Sydney, a dedicated catering service and supplies sourdough bread to many of the city's most high profile restaurants, such as Bennelong, Quay, The Bridgeroom and Pilu at Freshwater.

Challenge: More business value

Across its entire operations of six retail outlets, Sonoma had been running a relatively basic cash register system that did little more than tally totals and print receipts. For a business that is set only to grow – and at a strong and steady rate – that type of setup added little business value.

Craig Donovan, Sonoma's Retail Manager, explains the company's requirements: "We were looking for a system that was easy to setup and maintain, and gave us valuable business information on how each of our retail outlets was performing.

"We also wanted to minimise the costs and support overheads of too much technology. Essentially, a solution that gave us more business value than the typical Point of Sale [POS] system, but with less overheads and greater flexibility."

Solution: All in the cloud

The solution lay in the cloud – a solution that encompassed a fully Internet-delivered POS backbone that works in both on- and off-line modes, eliminating the need to purchase, install and maintain dedicated POS hardware and software.

So it was that in early 2012, in partnership with Sydney-based Kounta and supported by Epson Australia, Sonoma set out to trial a revolutionary new wave in retail point of sale.

Using Kounta's cloud-based POS software, Epson TM-T88V-i Intelligent Printers and the Apple iPad, Kounta rolled out a full POS solution in Sonoma's flagship Alexandria café, without the need for network cabling, POS terminals, servers or even client computers.

While the "fundamentals" of the system appear to be much the same as a typical POS solution, Kounta's cloud-based approach to everything from software to device connectivity carries with it major differences – and improvements. In commenting on the use of the Epson printer, Kounta's CEO, Nick Cloete, explains: "The entire

solution has been developed to take advantage of cloud, mobile and wireless technologies.

"From our perspective, the best possible printer is one that has the in-built intelligence to receive data directly from the web or a web-enabled device running our software, and function as if it is hard-wired to the network and running via print drivers.

"This is precisely what the Epson TM-T88V-i delivers; and we consider it to be the best possible receipt printer for a cloud-based POS solution."

Rapid rollout

According to Craig, one of the most immediate benefits is the no-maintenance requirement of the solution. "All that's required in setting up a new store is making sure we have a Kounta account, iPad, Epson printer and cash drawer."

In the Sonoma cafés, orders are taken by staff, each equipped with an iPad which is wirelessly connected to the café's local area network.

With Kounta's cloud-based POS software requiring little more than a network connection and web browser, each iPad functions as a dedicated, powerful – and highly mobile – POS terminal; and this is precisely where the Epson TM-T88V-i Intelligent Printer comes into play.

With its embedded operating system and dedicated processor, the TM-T88V-i receives its print commands directly from the iPad browser. Those commands are then interpreted and the resulting receipt is immediately printed.

"When we set up a new café, we're able to do so with virtually no hardware and software configuration," Craig says. "The big thing is that the Epson printers, while they're connected wirelessly to the network, aren't necessarily seen as printers. They're just connected devices, much the same as a connected computer."

Because of that seamless connection and network integration, the TM-T88V-i can be set up in just a matter of minutes without the need to install printer drivers.

Adding to the printer's versatility is its ability to communicate directly with – and control – ancillary POS equipment such as cash drawers and additional printers via a wired or wireless connection.



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Its inherent ability to handle all common ESC/POS functions provides the means by which practical and flexible printing solutions can be created with additional Epson TM models.

Cutting support overheads

The combination of the cloud-based POS software such as Kounta, iPad and Epson TM Intelligent Printers means that Sonoma cafés require an absolute minimum of IT support. Craig comments: "It's all three that come together to deliver a seamless and almost no-maintenance POS solution.

"We readily accept the capability of the iPad to run web-based applications, and we're increasingly accepting the enormous value of those cloud applications. But when it comes to the printing, especially in the retail sector, the Epson printer is the component that's really making the whole solution totally mobile and cloud-based.

"This means we don't have a hard-wired network that requires installation and support. Nor do our cafés require dedicated servers to run POS software. All we need are the iPad and Epson printers, both of which connect to the Internet and our POS software, and that's it!"

A clear demonstration of the solution's versatility is its ability to adapt. For example, if a sudden increase in customer demand required more staff on the floor yet there weren't enough iPads to go around, the extra staff would need only access the system via their smartphone's in-built web browser.

"Whether it was an iPhone or an Android-based phone, the entire system would be available, and that includes printing directly from the phone to the Epson printers," Nick explains.

Print versatility

While the TM-T88V-i printer delivers on the cloud and wireless requirements, its heritage brings with it significant benefits to Sonoma. These include high speed printing at up to 300mm per second, and graphics capabilities, which support full customisation – including logo and even special offers – of printed receipts.

"The entire solution is, from our perspective, ground-breaking," Craig says. "We have the low overheads of a cloud-based system, the functionality and data reporting capabilities of leading POS software, and, with the Epson receipt printers, the supporting means of being able to maintain an entirely server- and cable-free POS environment.

"For our business, it's a major step forward in having the freedom to grow without the IT overheads."

For more information about Epson POS Printers, please call
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