



Introduction

The Delfont Mackintosh Theatre Group has 'improved' its business management system thanks to the Toshiba – Pixelpoint system supplied by Cunninghams.

Background

Delfont Mackintosh Theatres, owned by Cameron Mackintosh, operates from seven theatres in London's West End. To enhance the theatre lover's experience, the Prince Edward, Prince of Wales and the Novello Theatre have all undergone major recent refurbishment and restoration, with the ongoing updating of the Noel Coward, Wyndhams, Queen's and Gielgud Theatres.

The Challenge

The Delfont Mackintosh Theatre group had been trading using proprietary cash registers, as the company expanded it became apparent that the tills were not providing the functionality required. With a total of 60 tills operating across the seven theatres, the company needed a flexible POS solution in each theatre that could be linked to its head office, whilst at the same time providing the necessary functionality for all areas of the theatre operations, including the bar, merchandise and confectionery areas with the capability to provide a restaurant system, for future – proofing.

The Solution

Cunninghams EPOS Solutions, experts in the POS Market, had been working with Delfont for a number of years, supplying cash registers and services. Ian Clark, Group Bars and Catering Manager commented on the relationship, 'We had been working with Cunninghams as our POS supplier for over two years, they were recommended to us as the best company to supply the type of system we required. We were happy with the service and liked their approach of listening to our problems and recommending a solution to meet our needs. We knew that we needed to develop a tailor made system that would provide uniformity across the group, but still allowing a certain amount of flexibility at each of the individual theatres.'

Cunninghams recommended and installed PixelPoint's POS software implemented on Toshiba's ST-60 integrated POS terminals linked to the back office in each theatre and to the Novello Theatre Head Office.

The proven quality and long term reliability, combined with the compact and spill-proof design of the Toshiba ST-60 terminals made the ST60 the perfect choice for all the different areas of the theatre environment. The flexibility and ease of use of PixelPoint's POS software ensured that a customised solution could be developed to meet the theatre groups' ongoing needs.

The Benefits

With the Toshiba / Pixelpoint system in place, the main benefit to The Delfont Mackintosh Theatre Group has been the ability to set uniform pricing across the group, whilst retaining flexibility at individual theatres. Communication for all of the sites are set up at the Novello Theatre Head Office giving pricing consistency with the flexibility to run special promotions at individual theatres, for example "Happy Hour", or setting up special offers, such as the special price on Disney Programmes for it's Mary Poppins production, at London's Prince Edward Theatre. Reporting improvements have been another key area where the group has benefited. The flexibility of PixelPoint's POS software allows fast data manipulation for detailed reporting on sales profit, cost and turnover. The Delfont Mackintosh Group is also able to interrogate the system to identify wastage, sales trends and peak times, allowing the company to manage stock more effectively. Commenting on this aspect, Ian Clark said, "Prior to the installation we were unable to analyse effectively the popular selling items during our two peak periods. We could not understand why the turnover was significantly lower during the interval period with the same volumes of customers. The till reporting flagged up that in general people drink more alcoholic drinks before the show but more water in the interval, so we used this information to stock more plastic bottles of water to speed up service during intervals".

With a seating capacity ranging from 1,100 to 1,600, the system has to be capable of dealing with a large number of customers in peak times. With only 20 minutes available at theatre intervals, it is vital the group has a robust POS system that is reliable and can cope with the heavy demand, whilst enabling staff to serve customers quickly.

The Toshiba ST-60 terminals, with their intuitive menu options, have proved invaluable in helping staff to provide a speedy service to customers. As the POS units are easy to operate, minimal staff training is required – especially important in an industry with a high staff turnover. The spill-proof design and easy clean touch-screens ensure the POS units can cope with the demanding bar environment and the compact footprint is ideally suited to the limited theatre bar space.

As most sales are made in either the incoming pre-show 40 minutes or 20 minute interval, the theatre group does not stock a large range of products. To

ensure that it can maximise potential sales, the Delfont Mackintosh Group uses the Toshiba / PixelPoint system to log requests for non-stocked items, using an alternative reference button on the POS to record details of the enquiry. Ian Clark explains, "With only a small number of products it is essential to have the right product mix behind the bar to satisfy customers demands, maximise sales and achieve the highest profit possible. We use the POS requests for non-stocked items, which are fed directly to head office". Ian continues, "The peak sales time will vary dependent on the type of production, for example sales of alcohol at the interval will be much higher for adult shows, such as Mama Mia, whilst confectionery sales in the 40 minute pre-show are highest for children's shows, such as Mary Poppins."

Another advantage of the Toshiba / PixelPoint solution, demonstrating the flexibility of the system, is the ability to run any till as a mobile unit in offline mode. For example, the small footprint allows use of the tills in the kiosks or foyer area. By simply connecting the till back to the network the information is downloaded onto the system for automatic update, allowing reduced queues at peak periods.

Various different agreements on sales of merchandise, programmes, prices and profits are set with the producers of each individual show, requiring additional functionality from the POS. The set up of the Toshiba / PixelPoint system allows each theatre manager to use two buttons for completely flexible products which is essential when additional products are required at short notice, with the option to use timed promotions for a specific period. As all the sales data is captured by the Toshiba tills, reporting is straightforward, with the facility able to export data directly into Microsoft Excel for quick and easy data manipulation.

Commenting on the benefits of the Toshiba / PixelPoint solution, Ian Clark said, "The robust, yet flexible POS solution provides the full range of functionality necessary for successful retailing to meet all the different requirements of the theatre".

When asked about the service provided by Cunninghams, Clark Said, "Cunninghams has worked closely with us to adapt PixelPoint's POS software, to deliver a tailored solution to meet the unique requirements of The Delfont Mackintosh Theatre Groups business operations. We will continue to work closely with Cunninghams to enhance the system for improved management".

**To find out more about Cunninghams, please contact us on
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