



Apley's Eureka moment

EPoS doesn't magically make a business successful, but used correctly it can boost the bottom line. ANDREW DON finds out how Apley Farm's system helps it integrate its businesses and reduce wastage

In an age when so many retailers have multiple profit centres – shop, restaurant, outside catering and so on – it is important to have a single point of control, especially where ingredients or products are transferred between each part of the business.

Apley Farm Shop, on Lord Hamilton of Dalzell's Shifnal estate, near Bridgnorth, Shropshire, uses Lakeland Computers' Eureka system to keep tabs on stock movements across its three retail operations. As well as its farm shop Apley, which opened in April, also runs the 110-seater Creamery café and a play barn. Each one is housed in a separate building.

Apley general manager Frances Bowen explains that Eureka allows her to track ingredients as they are transferred within the business and returned to their source in another form. "We have a full

of-house computer links to all the tills we have in the different parts of the business," she says. "The computer upstairs has information on everything we sell.

"That means that if we have a glut of bananas, they come into the shop, they get transferred at cost to other departments and they are run through the till like normal transactions, so the café

"The beauty of the system is that nothing slips through the net; all stock movements are scanned and recorded"

THINGS TO CONSIDER BEFORE YOU BUY A SYSTEM

- Be clear about what you need and what areas of your business you want EPoS to help with. Prepare a checklist of what is important to your business and what you want to achieve in the future.
- Get a 'proper' demonstration. A five minute run-through on a stand at a trade show is not enough. Try to spend several hours getting to grips with the system if possible.
- Seek advice from recognised industry groups, such as The Guild of Fine Food and FARMA.
- Talk to other retailers. Find out what systems they are using and what works well for them.
- Ask for references from the firm selling you the system and make sure you check them.
- Speak to your other suppliers (shop fitters, lighting firms and producers) as they will be able to share their experience of systems from other shop fit-outs.

Source: Retail Ready/LCCS/Bizerba

or kitchen effectively pay for the products instead of the customer.”

In this instance, the bananas are transferred, the kitchen works out the costs for making banana loaf cake on Eureka and the chefs make up the product. After that, the café till records that there are banana loaves ready to be sold back to the shop, which is charged for them at cost.

Bowen adds: “All the information goes through to the tills and is transferred to computers upstairs and I can see how many bananas were sold.”

The beauty of the system, Bowen says, is that nothing slips through the net, since all internal transactions and stock movements are scanned and recorded.

Apley Farm also has a loyalty card system linked to Eureka so the business knows, at a glance, where many of its customers come from. If Bowen runs a marketing campaign, she can look on the system to see the result in terms of new loyalty card sign-ups per geographical area.

“It has the ability to give you a coherent plan and shows you results that help you go forward and plan a lot better,” she adds.

Apley Farm invested more than £20,000 in four tills, two scales linked to the tills – one for the butchery and one for the deli – wedge scanners, a computer and a server.

Bowen says the investment probably paid for itself within the first two months of operation because of the resulting decrease in wastage. The business has just 0.4% waste – well within the “less than 1%” targeted for its second year.

Lakeland Computers managing director Nigel Bogle says the data produced by packages such as Eureka can not only be analysed to provide tangible financial benefits but also provides clarity on a variety of practical issues.

For example, they allow businesses to calculate the number of staff needed for each shift based on the level of footfall, the amount of shelf space to give a product in accordance with its rate of sale – even the size and number of shopping baskets required.

Bogle says: “Business owners are all acutely aware of costs these days and there’s definitely more of a shift towards getting proper control of things.”

www.lcs.co.uk

LIGHT BYTES

- Bizerba independent retail sales manager Steve Pemberton says delicatessens and farm shops are becoming more sophisticated in their use of EPOS. “There is a greater knowledge and experience coming into the industry. Managers are filtering down from convenience stores and supermarkets.” The firm’s latest system is the K-Class Flex, a modular white system combining scales and checkout equipment. It enables the retailer to freely combine individual EPOS components. The constituent parts are fully compatible with Bizerba scale software and RetailFramework software family. www.bizerba.co.uk



- Blacker Hall Farm Shop, in Wakefield, West Yorkshire, has added Retail Computer Solution’s customer loyalty and customer relationship management solution to its touch-screen EPOS terminals. It enables Blacker Hall to analyse customers’ buying patterns and target specific marketing campaigns at them.

RCS sales manager James Gillam says: “Retailing over the years has moved simply from traditional sales to a multi-channel approach.

“The most successful retailers are those who have picked up on this and moved with the times to maximise revenue streams.”

www.rcs-uk.com

- CSY has launched an electronic shelf labelling system to replace traditional paper shelf labelling. All of the product information, including the price, is taken directly from the EPOS system and labels are updated automatically using radio frequency. As well as reducing human error and man-hours, the system affords retailers an easy method of ‘dynamic pricing’ – so they can alter prices at different times of the day or month depending on footfall and seasonal demand. The labels are available in a range of sizes and use e-paper technology giving a battery life of at least five years.

www.csy.co.uk



- Open Retail Solutions is helping retailers protect their margins with colour-coded on-screen warnings about rising product prices. An orange or red warning is displayed on till screens or highlighted in back office reports whenever the wholesale price of a product rises above the target margin. Open Retail Solutions managing director Graham Stamper estimates that, at best, EPOS can deliver an extra 2-3% on the bottom line and at least 10% stock reduction.

Stamper adds that, at the moment, garden centres tend to be more sophisticated than deli and farm shops in their EPOS usage because they use promotions and loyalty schemes a lot more. But he says the fine food sector is increasingly starting to use radio handsets for stock counting. www.openretailsolutions.co.uk

North West Business Machines has launched EPOS Connect, a software package that connects its clients’ EPOS system with their online shops. The software integrates stock control across the business and can also be linked to loyalty schemes.

The firm’s customers include Lancashire businesses Bashall Barn in Clitheroe, Huntley’s in Sarnesbury, and Food by Breda Murphy in Whalley.

Managing director Anthony Hanson-Mahon says the level of integration “ultimately creates a slick and professional operation, eliminates mistakes and most importantly saves time and money”.

Bashall Barn, for example, has full integration

between its farm shop, restaurant and ice-cream parlour. Orders are taken via hand-held terminals at the restaurant table, ensuring all items are immediately added to the customer’s bill.

At Food by Breda Murphy, a single piece of hardware no larger than a standard cash register incorporates a touchscreen hospitality package for the bistro, an integrated scanner for retail sales, a weigh-scale for deli items, a label printer for adding barcodes to pre-packed meals, and integrated chip and PIN.

www.nwbm.co.uk www.bashallbarn.co.uk

www.foodbybredamurphy.com