

Making Your POS System Work for You

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In today's restaurant environment—where tight margins, changing labor dynamics, and rising guest expectations collide—your POS system is no longer just a cash register. It's the central nervous system of your restaurant. Yet too many operators use only a fraction of its capabilities, leaving valuable data, efficiency, and profits on the table.

A properly optimized POS can help you control labor, tighten food cost, improve guest experience, streamline training, and give you real managerial visibility. Here's how to make your POS truly work for you.

1. Treat the POS as a Management Tool, Not a Cash Drawer

Most restaurants use their POS only for ringing in orders and settling checks. But your POS should be:

- A labor-forecasting tool
- A food-cost watchdog
- A training and process-control platform
- A guest-experience tracker
- A revenue-optimization engine

Everything that happens in your restaurant passes through that terminal. Treat it accordingly.

2. Clean and Organize Your Menu Database

If your POS menu is cluttered, outdated, or inconsistent, your entire operation slows down.

Focus on:

- Removing dead items you no longer sell
- Standardizing modifiers (Yes/No, Add/No Add, etc.)
- Ensuring item prices match your menu and recipes
- Structuring categories so sales reporting is meaningful

A well-designed menu screen cuts ticket times, reduces order errors, and creates better data for decision-making.

3. Use Your POS to Control Labor Cost

Your POS already has all the labor control tools you need—you just have to use them.

- **Scheduling & Forecasting:** Use historical sales to build labor budgets and predict busy periods.
- **Punch Control:** Eliminate “early-ins” and tighten up breaks.
- **Job Coding:** Ensure each employee is clocking in correctly so you see real labor distribution by department.
- **Manager Dashboards:** Monitor labor % throughout the day so you’re not surprised at closing.

The best operators treat real-time labor readings like fuel gauges.

4. Leverage POS Reporting for Smarter Decisions

Daily sales, check averages, voids, discounts, item-level performance—your POS has every data point you need.

Key reports every manager should review daily:

- Sales summary
- Hourly sales & labor
- Top/bottom selling menu items
- Voids, comps, and promo activity
- Server performance
- Check-average trends

Weekly:

- Labor by job code
- Food cost by category
- Menu engineering reports (stars, plowhorses, puzzles, dogs)

Data doesn’t lie—and your POS gives you more of it than any other source.

5. Make the POS Part of Your Training Program

A system is only as good as the people using it.

Train staff to:

- Ring orders accurately and consistently
- Use correct modifiers
- Know upsell paths and suggested pairings
- Handle voids and refunds with manager oversight
- Understand how timing and seat numbers improve the guest experience

When employees understand why accuracy matters, they take ownership.

6. Integrate Your POS With Other Key Systems

Today's POS platforms allow seamless integration with:

- Online ordering/delivery
- Loyalty programs
- Inventory management
- Timekeeping and payroll
- Kitchen display systems
- Gift card platforms

When everything ties together, you eliminate double-entry mistakes, speed up operations, and build a complete picture of your business.

7. Use the POS to Improve Guest Experience

Your POS can help you enhance hospitality:

- Track guest preferences and visit history
- Identify VIPs and regulars
- Reduce wait times with table management
- Improve accuracy with kitchen routing and cook-times
- Offer digital receipts and loyalty enrollment on checkout

Technology should support hospitality—not replace it.

8. Audit Your POS Regularly

POS clutter accumulates over time. Every 6–12 months:

- Rebuild or refresh menu screens
- Revisit pricing strategy
- Reevaluate modifiers
- Update employee permissions
- Confirm integrations are functioning
- Archive promos and seasonal items

A periodic cleanup can recover lost efficiency and accuracy.

Conclusion: Your POS Is One of Your Most Underutilized Assets

Restaurants often spend more time picking out furniture than configuring their POS—yet no other system affects as many daily processes. When used correctly, your POS becomes a profit engine, a training platform, a guest-experience booster, and a decision-making tool that gives you unmatched visibility.

If you treat your POS as the business-management system it truly is, it will repay you in efficiency, accuracy, and profitability every single day.