



What to look for when choosing your first Point of Sale Service

As with all the decisions you make for your taproom or brewpub, selecting the right tools should always begin with questions. What is the experience I want for my guest? Is the experience of my taproom going to be consistent every day or do I expect to host events or have seasonal traffic that will impact day to day operations? Do I want my guests to go to the bar to order and pay or do I want my staff to have the flexibility to go to our guests? What will my taproom experience look like day 1, day 30, and day 365?

Let's start by digging into some of these critical questions when choosing a POS.

1. Guest Experience

Starting with this question of experience, and understanding how you want to utilize your space, is the first step in your Point of Sale (or as we like to say Point of Service) search.

Often the “default” for a new taproom is to offer counter service—guests walk up to the bar to purchase, similar to the retail or coffee shop model. Other times, often for brewpubs, the “default” is full service, similar to restaurant service. Yet another flexible option that is most popular in the beer world, is the “floating service” model. This structure allows you to adapt from counter to tableside service based on your daily or hourly staffing needs and availability. It utilizes your bartending staff as servers so your beer experts have more opportunities to interact with your guests and educate on your brand.

At the end of the day no one wants to put barriers between their guests and that next beer (unless, of course, they've already had 5). So think through if the POS you are considering will facilitate the different experiences you want to create in your environment or does it act as a barrier. If you are planning on lines, how can your POS help you move quickly through queued guests so they're not waiting long—is your POS going to be a line buster or cause more lines? Do you need one order station, several order stations, or lots of mobile stations? Do I pay more for multiple stations with the Point of Sale (some charge, some don't) and if so, will the money I make with the extra station make it worth it? Should I choose a mobile system, so runners can run beers and keep my highly trained staff more engaged with guests, etc? These are the questions that should be front of mind as you evaluate your options.

2. Contactless Payments

Again, start with the guest. Do you expect your customer base will want contactless options? If so, seek out a Point of Sale that allows your guests to pay in a way they feel comfortable—whether in an app, online or with tap and pay technology (either via Credit Card or with Apple, Google and Samsung pay). By doing so you're investing in your customers' happiness by giving them the flexibility to control their experience. However, we caution against stand-alone contactless offerings (that aren't directly integrated with the POS) as reconciling your reporting, tips etc. becomes more complicated.

3. To-Go and Curbside Sales

With the onset of Covid shutdowns in early 2020, many establishments pivoted to to-go and curbside for sales. If you're considering to-go and/or curbside as a part of your business, make sure your POS can support it with pre-purchase options and managed fulfillment. As with above, we again recommend a solution that's integrated with your POS because a separate system for off-premise sales makes managing your beer inventory pretty tricky.

4. Card on File

No customer likes the feeling of reaching for their wallet and realizing they left their credit card (and their open tab) at the last taproom; no business wants the liability of hanging onto their guests' credit cards in a rolodex. The ability to keep a card on file without holding onto the physical card changes the game. Guests feel confident because their card never leaves their sight; businesses gain a safety net in case a guest forgets to close out (without the liability of holding onto their card).

5. Pricing

There are 4 (sometimes 5, even 6) facets of pricing for a Point of Sale.

1. There may be a monthly fee for the software and/or support. Some additionally charge a per terminal fee for additional order stations. In addition to these fees, some Point of Sales charge for add-ons or extra features (like a loyalty program or accounting integration). When you're evaluating a POS, make sure you know what's included with the quoted price of software and what's additional. Be clear with asking these questions!
2. Credit card processing rates are the cost associated with each transaction. There is no way to get around these fees. Every merchant who takes credit cards pays them. Sometimes these fees are included with the price offered by the POS, other times you have to purchase processing separately from a 3rd party. Pay attention to if you're paying transaction fees once or *twice* per sale. Some CC processors consider the authorization as one transaction, and the settlement as another—that means you end up paying the "per transaction fee" twice. ASK! CC processors often do not volunteer this info. Also, if you're using a 3rd party CC company not associated with the POS be clear on who you call for support if/when payments fail.
3. You'll pay for the hardware upfront. Hardware can include expensive options such as KDS screens and terminal stations or often more affordable tablet-based systems with mobile printers and card readers. Make sure you understand the differences you are considering.

4. **KNOW THE CONTRACT TERMS.** Often there are minimum commitments, like X years or you pay back penalties for early termination. Know these details. If you make the wrong software decision, getting out of these contracts can be costly. It's important to take all the factors of pricing into the total cost of ownership and compare apples-to-apples to understand the full cost of business.

6. Free and Fast Support Services

Your Point of Sale is central to your business and if you need help, you need help quickly and from a friendly and knowledgeable partner. Fast and reliable support services are essential for keeping your business (and brews) flowing without interruption. Reaching the support service for your Point of Sale should never be a hassle and should never incur added cost. Excellent support will understand where you're coming from and use their knowledge to make sure a) your problem gets resolved b) you're set up for future success and c) you hang up with a smile on your face!

7. Reporting MATTERS!!

Access to data about your business can be one of the most important, yet often overlooked, parts of the decision. Having access to data about what beers are selling at different times of day/week/year and in what sizes, can inform your production and sales processes and maximize your revenue. Having access to data about individual employee performance can help you maximize the potential of ALL of your staff. If you include tax in your beer prices, is it easy to pull back out for filing or did you just add 2 hours of work (that costs you)? Can you get true hourly sales data so that staffing decisions can be based on volume and not guessing. So many things that can help you run an efficient business. Make sure you understand what is, and isn't, available to you before making a commitment.

There are many decisions you have to make when optimizing your taproom or brewpub. The correct tools will help make your vision of the ideal guest experience and smooth running operation come to life. Find a POS partner that will help you grow your business and flex to meet the needs of the day.

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Arrayved is a Point of Sale solution for the Craft Industry. Everything you need to serve up a great customer experience, both on premise and online. www.arrayved.com