

Standing out

Several stand-out EPOS implementations have been completed over the course of this year. Duncan Jefferies reports

Empire Cinemas initiated an EPOS programme which has seen PC-based touch screens from J2 Retail Systems installed throughout their 17-venue, 142-screen estate. Empire Cinemas was created in 2005 and acquired cinemas from the merged businesses of Odeon and UCI, and Cineworld and UGC. Four different operating systems supported by four different suppliers were initially in operation across the chain. Consolidation was clearly needed to reduce support costs, which is where J2

anywhere within the cinema," says Julian Timm, IT director at Empire Cinemas. According to Heitmann, the whole implementation was rapidly completed. "Once we got everything rolling, it was a matter of about six months," he says.

The J2 560 machines are fitted within the self-service kiosk in each cinema lobby. Here, customers can purchase tickets and collect those previously ordered via the Empire website or telesales operation. In future, concession goods will be available for



came in. They supplied Empire with their 560 model, which features 15" touch screens and flexible mounting.

"They wanted a machine that was free of maintenance and the J2 unit they took, the 560, is maintenance free," says Richard Heitmann, national sales manager at J2. "We're talking less than 0.1 per cent breakdown. We also give a three year return to bench warranty on parts and labour; the total cost of ownership of this particular machine is very low."

The same software and hardware is now used across Empire's entire estate. "We used to have separate off ticket sales away from retail sales, that's no longer the case, we can do those kinds of sales

kiosk ordering and payment. "All the electronics are built into the head of the machine," says Heitmann. "That gives users the ability to mount them in any way they please."

At Empire's flagship Leicester Square venue, the hardware has been mounted on a pole to allow for greater flexibility. "If the customer wants to see exactly where they're sat in an auditorium, you can turn the screen round and show them where exactly their seat is going to be," says Timm. Whilst previously only accepted in the box offices, chip and PIN cards can now be processed at every PoS. "Previously at some locations we couldn't take card transactions on retail stands, now we can across the board."

HSS Hire Service Group, a tool and equipment hire chain with over 400 outlets in the UK and Ireland, also recently overhauled its EPoS hardware. Servebase provided them with a central server credit card payment system, enabling their outlets to accept all standard card schemes as well as the industry specific TradePro card. "Implementing chip and PIN was obviously the initial priority," says Andrew Brooks, chief operating officer at Servebase. "HSS wanted to handle all the customer not present transactions as well, so they needed extra security features such as card security code and address verification."

Around 1,000 Verifone SC5000 chip and PIN devices were installed in all the HSS outlets, connected to the HSS EPoS system via Servebase's PEDKit application and using their PC-EFT solution to communicate to HSS chosen bank acquirer. "It was quite a long project involving dedicated teams from their side as well as ours," says Brooks. "There was a development and project stage, a testing stage, an accreditation stage with the acquirer, and then a planned roll-out across the store estate."

PMC were responsible for overall programme management, user acceptance testing and staff training.

After successful pilots, roll-out started in January 2007 to 106 stores and was completed on 15 March 2007. Once the project was underway, extra pressure was placed on a successful outcome after Wyevale made two acquisitions part way through the implementation. Despite this, the project delivered a new EPoS system on time and to budget. "The project's success is undeniable. It met all the stated criteria, achieved 100 per cent success and moreover delivered above what was initially proposed," says Sarah Ratcliffe, finance director, Wyevale Garden Centres.

Wyevale now has a system that meets its retailing demands. Reliability and business management have improved, and the system supports future growth plans. "Recognising that we did not have enough resources or experience to deliver a project of this complexity, we decided to work with those who did. We coupled our knowledge of our business with their retail systems



Although the implementation went as planned, it was not without challenges. "Enabling chip and PIN on their systems involved bringing the banks and card schemes in on the implementation in order to complete the accreditation process, so it was quite a complex project in all," says Brooks.

Wyevale Garden Centres has over 110 stores nationwide – ranging from smaller traditional centres to large destination stores. After deciding to update their ten-year-old till system, a project management team involving Wyevale, RBS (Retail Business Systems) and PMC (Paul Mason Consulting) was set up. Wyevale chose IBM SurePos tills and Retail-J software, provided by RBS.

and technical expertise to deliver the best EPoS solution for Wyevale," says Ratcliffe. "The immediate benefit is an EPoS system that meets our retailing demands now and in the future. We have good system reliability, significantly improved business management and growth potential. Also, we have the long-term benefit of building on the functionality within Retail-J, such as time and attendance to improve staff management, stock management, discounting and loss prevention."

With testing economic times ahead, fellow retailers in the UK would do well to make sure they have a similarly robust EPoS solution in place.