

# Evolution of point-of-sale systems

The evolution of the point-of-sale system (POS) from clumsy cash registers to self-serve checkout lines has led its adoption by the world. Most people pass through a POS at some stage in the day, without thinking about the systems behind the POS.



While you might think that some software programs are clearly complicated, at least you will have an easy time using them. The same cannot be said for many older POS devices of the nineteenth century. The Incorruptible Cashier register that James Ritty developed in 1883 has many small knobs and a rotating dial to show what cash is owed and what has been paid for. It would have been useful at the time but it was also susceptible to damages and wear and tear.

The development of the mechanical cash register helped by having more buttons and an easy to read display. However, it could also break down rather easily as individual parts start to wear. Today's POS options don't have mechanical parts outside the mechanism that opens and closes the cash drawer.

## Electronic model made changes

The development of the first electronic POS models was huge for the industry as a whole. In the 1970s, IBM and other companies started to offer electronic units with simple digital code displays and a series of buttons that could be pressed to enter in numerical values and to create shortcuts to different items.

This model was useful but an extensive amount of training was required when it came to entering in the shortcuts that could be used on the pad. This was somewhat inconvenient, as some guesswork had to be used when entering in such values. After all, the display unit only had one row of numbers to display on many early models.

This was around the time when credit cards really became in vogue. It would be much easier for credit card totals and receipts to be recorded and sent electronically to different credit bureaus when such electronic models were used. The fact that you could just swipe a magnetic link in your card through a reader also helped, as there wasn't a need to use a machine to get a rough pressure-forced paper copy of a card ready for the transaction.

## Software became big



It would not be until the 1980s when software would be used in point-of-sale systems. Gene Mosher's first software system helped to create a clear setup where it would be easier for a user to programme different values for specific items in the program. In addition, this allowed the variety of entries to be made to expand over time. There was no longer a need to be limited to very specific entries on a singular keypad thanks to this kind of program. Naturally, some training would be involved but it would still be easy for anyone to use when they began to understand the program.

## New trends have made things easier

Many new trends have helped to make point-of-sale systems evolve even further:

- The development of touchscreen-based controls for such systems has helped make it much easier for the employee enter in information. The software used here can also be adjusted based on the products and services that are being offered at a given time.
- Mobile options are also worth finding. These can include tablet and smartphone-based items that have attachments that can read credit cards. These are added to make the process of getting money from others and to complete sales a little easier to manage as the point-of-sale system has practically become mobile at this point.
- Units can be linked to a Wi-Fi network at any time of the day. This means that the information on one's credit card balance and other features will always be on hand so transactions can be made as accurately as quickly as possible.
- Point-of-sale systems have evolved to a point where you don't need an employee to help. The self-serve checkout lines at grocery stores are a great example of this.

The evolution of the POS is a truly amazing thing to discover. One can only hope that with the advent of new technology that the evolution of point-of-sale systems will not diminish any time soon. For more information, go to [www.impos.com.au](http://www.impos.com.au).

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