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SOFTWARE

How to Know if Your Cashless or Food Service POS Isn't Cutting It:
5 Questions to Ask

Your cashless system is important — but that doesn't mean it can or should be running all aspects of your business. Read on to find out why the marriage of a tightly integrated point of sale plus a cashless system is the best way to propel your FEC forward.

Today's technology makes running an FEC easier than ever – and now it's possible to improve efficiency even more. If you're currently using your cashless system or food service POS to provide functions that they weren't designed to do, then you're not really reaping all the benefits of technology that are available to you.

POS systems are great at running certain aspects of the business, but they aren't always the best choice for supporting your entire facility. Here are a few questions that can help determine if your POS is actually meeting your needs today and enabling you to grow your business tomorrow:

- Are you struggling to compile and organize data from multiple systems?
- Is your party planning process disconnected and disorganized?
- Are you unable to run proper accounting?
- Do you find yourself changing your business operation to match the limitations of your system?
- Do you regularly encounter errors caused by manual entry?

If you answered "yes" to any of the above questions, then it may be time to seek out a new solution to managing your FEC. While cashless systems are certainly valuable, they aren't necessarily meant to run your entire operation if your needs are more complex. Your existing systems should never be driving business decisions; instead, you should make business decisions and then find the best solution to address all your needs.

> **Just as you wouldn't hire your accountant for legal advice, you should never count on your cashless system to provide features beyond its intended usage.**

A comprehensive facility management software solution can help to streamline and improve everyday operations. Using the most feature-rich systems to service all the different areas of your business provides many major advantages. Combining integrated solutions such as the CenterEdge software suite with your cashless system will help take your facility to the next level of efficiency.

This guide will delve more deeply into 5 specific ways an integrated software system can help to solve all the problems that a standalone cashless system or restaurant POS cannot reach.

#1 Achieve Centralized Revenue Management

There are a lot of things happening under one roof in an FEC – including admission and ticketing sales, memberships, food and beverage, party reservations and games, just to name a few.

When you use several different systems to handle all of the revenue and transactional data being gathered throughout the course of a normal day, you put your business at risk for errors and waste time coordinating reports and data from all the different systems involved. Opting for a consolidated facility management solution guarantees that your accounting department receives accurate, reliable data every single time.

A centralized revenue management system provides your FEC with a hub of all in-store and online revenue transaction data including:

▶ Admission & pass sales   ▶ Food & beverage

▶ Party & group sales   ▶ Attractions

▶ Memberships   ▶ Games

▶ Merchandise

With an integrated solution, all of your end-of-day and end-of-month data is easily accessible, allowing you to make business decisions in real time. No more hunting down reports and risking the possibility of missing a crucial detail – with facility-wide management software, it's easier than ever to get the information you need.

Right on Schedule

Keeping all of your information streamlined in one place can even help you to control and analyze labor costs. CenterEdge software, for example, incorporates a native scheduling portal, which provides meaningful data to help you forecast for busy times and staff accordingly.

#2 Unify Your Party and Group Event Processes

Parties and group events are an integral part of your FEC, and ensuring the booking process goes smoothly is vital to their success – not to mention drivers of excellent recommendations from your guests and opportunities to create repeat business.

Once the initial deposit for an event is made, your facility probably starts prepping and planning for the event. If you're operating on a cashless system or a combination of cashless plus a restaurant POS, you'll need to decide which you'll use to ring up sales and be the gatekeeper for your inventory. The lack of communication between systems can cause confusion and offers fewer features overall.

Sometimes the party is scheduled with a third party online booking widget. In this scenario, the entire party will need to be re-rung into your cashless system or restaurant POS later on – meaning add-ons and deposits may be missed due to accidental manual entry errors. Manual entry can also pose a security threat if you're not handling the reservation with a tightly integrated solution. There is also a greater opportunity for misuse or theft.

Choosing an integrated system that covers all the areas of your facility can alleviate all these problems. Sophisticated software can break down revenue from the party packages and allocate it to appropriate areas, which helps with future accounting. Advanced software also provides enhanced upselling prompts, allowing for customized packages and better detailed descriptions of those offerings.

With an integrated software solution, one system owns the reservation process from start to finish. You can manage everything from online booking to deposit accounting, package preparation and fulfillment such as game cards and wristbands, tab management, final payment and A/R management for larger group or company events.

With CenterEdge, specifically, the reservation is made, finalized and updated all in one system, which keeps inventory updated in real time and eliminates the need to manually enter changes. Any add-ons are automatically recorded and available to your entire guest services team.

MINI CASE STUDY

Action City & Chaos Water Park (Metropolis Resort)

This indoor/outdoor FEC with adjacent water park in Wisconsin was using a cashless system along with a separate food system and party reservation system.

Challenges

▶ Existing systems weren't integrated well and could not accommodate the needs of new attractions that were being planned for the facility

▶ Upselling opportunities were limited due to constraints of existing systems

▶ The facility needed a system that connected all parts of their location so guests could purchase all admission options and packages from any terminal

▶ Capacity management, liability waiver integration and class scheduling were needed to handle the demands of their new trampoline and adventure oriented attractions

Solution
CenterEdge was deployed throughout the entire facility and the online sales platform was launched to facilitate admission sales, party and class scheduling, waiver management and gift card sales. The software was integrated with the existing cashless system.

Results
The facility can now properly accommodate the sale and scheduling of their new attractions and benefits from the improved guest experience, simplified personnel training and centralized revenue reporting.

#3 Run Accurate Deferred Revenue Accounting

When cashless systems and the primary facility management system are not tightly integrated, the accounting behind a "load and go" philosophy can be compromised, leading to inaccurate accounting.

An integrated software solution like CenterEdge used in conjunction with your cashless system has the ability to track upfront sales of cashless cards or other media with value associated with it at the time of sale. So you could follow the path of a $20 play card and see where the value is being spent.

A properly integrated system will track sales from self-service kiosks and will accurately account for sales to and usage from that card. This allows you to run reports on the actual value consumed and is a critical component to revenue accounting.

A comprehensive software system also allows you to sell more sophisticated package offerings and keep revenue management in a central location, so you can properly associate the corresponding benefits to the guest account during the sale.

Here are some examples of advanced offerings to consider:

▸ Add-on attractions, such as specific games or categories
▸ Time-based play
▸ Combo food and play packages

With a comprehensive, central POS system designed specifically for FECs, you always know where the money is being spent from behind the scenes without the need to check multiple sources.

MINI CASE STUDY

The Zone

This upscale, modern entertainment venue in Virginia was using another provider that wasn't meeting their needs in cashless, food service and party reservations, and was not living up to expectations when it came to system stability and support.

Challenge

▸ Find reliable systems that met their operational needs while not creating any disconnect in guest service and business reporting.

Results

CenterEdge was deployed in conjunction with a cashless system to deliver a best in-class solution. The facility benefited from CenterEdge's ability to handle both the food service side of the business as well as the entertainment side.

The integration allows the facility to offer food and play combos to drive sales, and also allows for centralized revenue management so the business doesn't have to chase important sales information across various system reports.

#4 Access Extra Features to Help Run Your Business

eCommerce

These days, eCommerce offerings are a must-have, and in order for your FEC to keep up with the competition, you'll need to offer a wide range of options available for purchase online. Admissions, capacity tickets, passes, packages, retail merchandise and gift cards are all examples of items that should be available for sale on your website. Don't miss out on these key elements just because your current system doesn't offer you the ability to sell them.

Operators benefit from online sales because the process helps capture revenue in advance, creating the opportunity for additional revenue with online booking convenience fees and even helping to reduce labor costs.

Memberships & Rewards

Memberships are another great way to boost revenue and encourage repeat business, and these programs can even be driven by automated recurring billing. The benefit of a comprehensive membership and rewards program is that it can incentivize a guest for all purchases in a facility, not just purchases that involve cashless system media. Memberships are dependable revenue streams for facilities and are also beneficial to guests looking for benefits and incentives.

Party & Group Scheduling

Look for software that offers extensive, user-friendly group and party scheduling features that include automated upselling prompts. Dynamic pricing ensures that package price points are upheld as certain package quantities or contents are changed. An RSVP and e-vite system captures marketing data not just from the host and guest of honor, but from all party attendees, easily growing your future marketing list with minimal effort.

Other systems often focus on the fixed room or space but do not take into consideration the various attractions that can be impacted as part of the booking process. It's common that during a reservation, physical event space plus an attraction space (such as ten guests in the 1PM game of laser tag) need to be reserved. An integrated software solution like CenterEdge doesn't just focus on physical event space, but also on all the attractions, areas and resources needed for the event.

Food & Beverage

Even if your food and beverage sales comprise a substantial chunk of your overall revenue, relying on just a food service POS – or even one in conjunction with a standalone cashless system – creates operational gaps and can severely limit long-term growth potential.

Food service POS systems provide only basic interface abilities and simply don't offer adequate support for admission, membership management, online sales and event reservations, attraction capacity management and comprehensive game room cashless system integrations.

When it comes to running an FEC, CenterEdge spent a lot of time thoughtfully building out their food and beverage software component so that you don't need a separate program to run your FEC's restaurant. You can effectively streamline your kitchen operations with the use of features like kitchen display system operation, enhanced ordering modifiers and graphical seating.

> **Offering special price discounts for online booking is a great way to encourage guests to use this feature, which helps facility managers plan ahead. Convenience fees for using online services also offer a fantastic additional revenue stream.**

#5 Prepare for Future Growth

The way your business works today is not the same way it will operate five years from now. Successful FECs are constantly reinventing themselves and adjusting their features to keep up with the times. So while a standalone cashless system or cashless with a restaurant POS may be adequate to support your needs today, will it be enough to grow your business a few months or years down the road?

A marriage of both – an integrated software solution plus your cashless system – is a smart and future-proof business decision that will help to promote business growth and give you the best ROI. While cashless system vendors excel at game reader hardware, self-service kiosks and various game and attraction controls, CenterEdge software has all the features to make managing your business easier, including admissions, memberships, recurring billing, extensive food and beverage options, reservations, admissions, group sales and party reservations, online bookings, scheduling and reporting. Implementing a comprehensive software solution as early as possible helps your FEC business to avoid growing pains, and reduces the hassle that comes from learning a new system further down the road.

At the end of the day, you could choose to operate your FEC with a basic cash register – but why would you want to miss out on key features that would allow your business to run smoothly? An integrated software suite like CenterEdge allows you to manage all aspects of your facility in one location and use all the data available to make smart business decisions that will help your business grow and grow.

If your business would benefit from any of the following features, it's time to consider CenterEdge:

CENTEREDGE SOFTWARE SOLUTIONS		
Advanced Event Reservations	Advanced Tab Management	Best-in-Class POS Solution
Biometrics	Capacity Ticketing	Centralized Event Booking
Centralized Revenue Management	Classes	Consignment Ticketing
Deferred Revenue Accounting	Digital Signage	Employee Scheduling
Employee Time Clock	Full Service Food & Beverage	Graphical Seating
Kitchen Display Systems	Liability Waivers	Memberships
Nested Modifiers	PA DSS Validated Payment Application	Recurring Billing
Revenue Allocation	Robust E-commerce	Season Passes
Split/Combine Check	Tokenized Tender	Upselling Prompts

About CenterEdge Software

CenterEdge Software offers the best management solution for the amusement, entertainment and FEC industries. Grown directly from venue operations, CenterEdge delivers real world solutions to meet the everyday needs of facility owners and managers. Backed by a team well versed in the industries they serve, the CenterEdge product suite offer solutions for point of sale, online sales and reservations, labor management, capacity scheduling, food and beverage sales, attractions management and mobile transactions. Headquartered in North Carolina, CenterEdge Software has been redefining the successful operation of family entertainment centers, trampoline parks, water parks, museums, roller skating rinks and large-scale amusement parks across the country since 2004.

centeredgesoftware.com

Contact us at info@centeredgesoftware.com today to learn how CenterEdge can streamline your operations!