

Systopia Resource

Technology Changing the Face of Contract Catering

“With everything getting faster and simpler, customers’ expectations are growing and it’s more important than ever before to keep up with the pace of change, which is why cashless systems are becoming an integral way of doing business. More and more organisations are beginning to understand the benefits of cloud technology and how this can be applied to give them leading edge. Over time, cashless and mobile payments will become the preferred and possibly ONLY methods of payment for the majority of purchases and transactions, with cash fast becoming outdated.”

That’s according to **Chris Lyons, MD of leading cloud payment technology company, Systopia** that works closely in partnership with many contract caterers.

We, as a society, are undergoing a payment revolution; cash is no longer king, cash payments are in decline and there have been big developments in the way people pay for their goods. The last few years have marked a significant shift from cash payments to cashless transactions that take place in milliseconds. Fumbling for loose change and forgetting pin numbers is swiftly becoming a thing of the past.

Statistics from The Payments Council in February last year revealed that just 10 years ago, three quarters of our shop purchases used cash. Their prediction that the wallet may be obsolete altogether as more payments become electronic and our phones become the hub of our financial transactions, is fast becoming a reality.

A growing number of organisations are realising the benefits that cashless payment systems can offer to them and are getting on board with the ever-advancing technology. Whether it’s creating a more efficient business or providing an easier way to manage buying behaviour cashless payment systems, offer bespoke and flexible cashless payment solutions, there are bespoke solutions available to operators working in B & I, education, leisure and beyond...

These systems are revolutionising the way operators work. For example, those who use ‘cashless’ will have a single, central database providing real-time analysis of sales data, trends and total control of article prices. Through harnessing this data for easy consumption (either at HO or regional level), the team can identify which are the most popular meals, plan menus effectively and order stock in accordingly, essentially cutting down on products that

simply end up in the bin, helping with stock management and ultimately reducing waste. In fact, one of Systopia's own customers cut down on wastage by 16% as a direct result of running a cashless loyalty scheme.

Cashless payment systems are not only beneficial to the operator; such systems are equally as advantageous to customers who can experience a more personalised service. For example, you can create a more personal experience through the use of loyalty schemes, which are a popular choice amongst many operators. These loyalty systems can be utilised in numerous ways, from driving sales of a particular product to encouraging repeat custom.

Such a scheme can in turn help to reduce the businesses' carbon footprint, by actively encouraging customers to make choices that help support a better waste management system. For example, customers can be rewarded for making 'the right choices' when it comes to using crockery, rather than disposable containers. Every time a customer chooses crockery [which ultimately means the operator is creating less disposable waste], they can be rewarded. The rewards take the form of points on their loyalty cards which can be redeemed against hot beverages, or a snack, whilst also making them feel good about their decision making process.

As well as having the ability to analyse data, cashless payment systems can be easily integrated with existing access control cards, with an aim of providing a one-stop card for multi purposes, such as security access and payment for food and beverages; a fantastic advancement in the technology. An example of how this can be brought to life has been demonstrated by UK Short Break Operator Center Parcs. For the first time ever, Center Parcs' guests are able to use discreet wristbands to pay for food and drink on site whilst also accessing lockers and lodges. To use the cashless payment system, guests register their credit/debit cards to their wristband, with purchases credited to their account throughout their stay, and then pay on departure. This removes the need for guests to carry cash, which has long been a challenge and a source of inconvenience for them.

A cashless payment system is a serious investment for any business, but with the increasing demand for convenience from consumers and the constantly evolving technology which can adapt to each and every businesses' changing needs, the benefits are significant. Such a system offers a solution that gives you flexibility, whilst also being future-proofed for the inevitable modernisations in technology. With the growing desire for convenience and

customers' expectations higher than ever before, it's more important than it has ever been to keep up with the pace of change, to avoid the risk of being left behind.