

## **Affordable EPoS Solution takes Freeze'n'Spice out of the Chill and into well stocked aisles.**

**Local Bolton grocery store that specializes in the provision of frozen Halal and worldwide foods, adopts powerful, low cost EPoS solution from Casio, DGCS and CardSave.**

### **Background**

In the busy, vibrant community of Bolton's Derby Road, sits Freeze'n'Spice, a thriving specialist grocery store selling everything from sweets to samosas, all brimming with tempting international flavours. Whilst most customers are from the surrounding Muslim community enticed by the wide variety of quality ready-made frozen Halal meals, the store also features influences and spices from all corners of the world. Recently, a fully stocked South Africa corner launched in store, offering everything from traditional BBQ fare to South African home baked cookies and treats. Ibrahim Lockhat took over the business in April 2012 with his vision firmly set on positive growth. Since then, sales and customers are both on a strong upward trend, due to forward thinking promotions and a strong social networking presence on sites like Facebook helping to create a band of loyal customers.

"We firmly had expansion in mind when we purchased Freeze'n'Spice. We knew how we wanted to take the store forward; but we were hindered initially by the old tools that were already in place. Top of the list of infrastructure modernization was decreasing the time at the till spent for the customer. I came previously from a retail background gained at a nationwide forecourt garage chain who successfully used PC based EPoS (Electronic Point of Sale) solution to assist their every business decision, so I knew there was an easier way." Reflects Ibrahim.

With over 600 products on the shelves serviced by a single standalone cash register with no scanning barcode facility, each item needed to be manually labeled with the correct price, entailing around 2 hours work a day. Restocking at the wholesalers was also an entirely manual process based on educated provisioning by Ibrahim.

"Restocking from the shop floor is a relatively easy process when you have large items on show, such as those held in a clothing retail outlet. However most of our stock is housed within deep freezers, so it used to be a chilling prospect doing an accurate stock level inventory each time. Whilst we were pretty close, we wanted to take the 'estimation' factor out." Ibrahim recalls with a shiver.

Sadly, the laborious processes didn't end there. Most provisions collected from suppliers did not arrive with retail pricing, so, back at base, Ibrahim had to apportion a correct and competitive RRP to each item before they were stickered.

When it came to processing each transaction, again, the process was entirely manual, with every customer having each item's price entered at the till. This was fine for the majority of small transactions with single items, but when it came to large orders, not only did the queue quickly amass but mistakes could, and did, happen, resulting in the entire order being re-processed. You can imagine the displeasure from those in the queue.

## **The Solution**

With his previous retail experience acting as a guide, Ibrahim knew that an EPoS solution would provide Freeze'n'Spice with the accurate transactional information he needed to drive the business forward. But he was aware that PC based EPoS solutions were the domain of larger retail chains as they incurred a significant capital outlay plus heavy installation and an ongoing management overhead. But, since then, times had progressed and a conversation with chip & PIN merchant provider, CardSave, prompted Ibrahim to look into the next generation of EPoS designed specifically for small retail business from Casio. This Android™ based all-in-one EPoS terminal, the slimline Casio V-R100, appeared to provide all the functionality, but none of the overhead of its cumbersome PC based cousin. And, Ibrahim noted, being connected to the internet and based on the Android platform, it accommodates all the latest APPs and packages to assist small business, with more arriving daily.

Pleased with the initial findings, Ibrahim invited CardSave and IT retail solutions provider, DGCS, to prepare a complete optimized small retail solution proposal based on a low monthly rental cost. Freeze'n'Spice considered the proposal in detail: There was no capital outlay, just an easy to use, all-in-one package that features the Casio V-R100 EPoS with customer display, operator touch screen, printer, barcode scanner, chip & PIN device and out-of-the-box installation software. The retail solution package is designed to pull each part of the transaction together faster and easier than ever before, making automatic processing cards and crediting of the merchant far quicker. In terms of the software, DGCS pre-installed their Casio Retail template to facilitate a real time view of the business and automate processes for wholesale ordering, transactions and receipt detailing. This software looked set to revolutionize the Freeze'n'Spice back office; allowing automatic adjustment of stock levels and when under threshold levels, prompt Purchase Orders to be issued to the suppliers.

Technology wise, the solution delivered, but financially, Ibrahim was concerned about the viability and outlay of such a feature packed system. Pleasingly, CardSave informed him of a pay-as-you-go scheme set up especially to help smaller businesses. Impressed with the pricing, Ibrahim placed the order and ten days later, the solution arrived, pre-populated with the 600 Freeze'n'Spice products all barcoded and ready for scanning. Training was simple and lasted 30 minutes. All in all, from out-of-the-box to confident transaction processing, all within 90 minutes.

## **The Results**

On the shop floor, the EPoS' small frame with large touch screen fits snugly on the counter top where it sits rugged and spillproof to survive the knocks of frozen produce. The staff like it as it mimics the touch screen functionality of their smart phones and tablets. Next screen prompts drive the Freeze'n'Spice team to assign categories for easy classification. The barcode scanner captures every detail, and where frozen packaging has distorted the packaging detail, manual barcode entry is facilitated. There is also a quiet, unassuming, ambient ease of use, with no PC fans whirring in the background, consuming unnecessary electricity. Ibrahim notes. "With the Casio EPoS solution in place, gone were the moments of nervous keying-in the correct number of zeros as a large order entry came to an end. Instead, we just point and click at the barcode whilst the customer views a large display, takes away a receipt containing detailed transaction information, and we have a till that is never a penny out."

The small retail solution has also opened the door for further marketing initiatives to increase interest in the shop. The Casio V-R100 EPoS directly accesses the internet so that when not serving customers, social networking sites like FaceBook can be populated with offers and information on the frequent promotions and tasting days held in the vicinity. Ibrahim notes, "This access is like an online window on the world and we are sending updates every day now to our increasing 'thumbs up like' Facebook customer base. In the future, we are going to relish the opportunity through the system to capture customer detail, understand their likes and dislikes and target promotions accordingly through eshots and SMS text messages."

With a significant portion of the day now free from the chores of manual pricing of items or manual ordering, Ibrahim can now concentrate his efforts on making the store more attractive through point of sale and creating targeted seasonal promotions. And when he does leave the shop, he knows that an automated email will be sent on total sales for the day; number of items needing restocking and volume and flow of customers to help with staffing rotas. Expansion is now on his mind, with a second shop due to open within 12 months.

We'll leave the last words to Ibrahim: "It's a total game changer. For us, the most important thing is making our customers happy, time and time again. By halving their wait time and making errors a thing of the past whilst ensuring their favourite item is always in stock, we do just that. And all from a solution that costs us just 2.50 a day" he smiles.

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