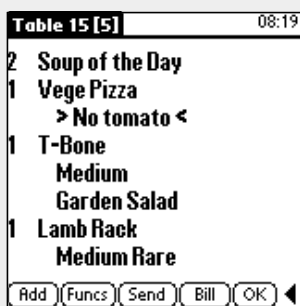## Palm™ handheld technology gives waiters a hand with WaiterPad

Restaurateurs can improve customer service, reduce costs, and increase sales with wireless turnkey solution

A new wireless handheld ordering system developed by Australian developer WaiterPad is revolutionising the hospitality industry, ensuring that restaurants are kept on the cutting edge of technology. The solution, which also is referred to as WaiterPad, incorporates the use of Palm™ m500 handhelds to assist wait staff in taking and relaying orders to the preparation areas.

WaiterPad was first rolled out in 2002, and it is now used at more than 95 sites in Australia, from casual to fine dining, with another 100 sites planned for during the next 12 months. Successful establishments across Australia that are using WaiterPad include fine dining at Machiavelli, street café Zoo Bar, cabaret restaurant Dracula's, franchise Tony Roma's and bar/restaurant Industrie.

WaiterPad is surely positioning itself as the handheld solution of choice in the industry. The efficiency of the WaiterPad system using Palm technology will herald a new and improved way of operation for not only restaurants, but airlines, fast-food outlets and aged care.

WaiterPad is currently rolling out a solution using Palm™ m500 and m515 handhelds that will allow restaurants to conduct large menu changes or access meal and wine databases. Waiter Pad is also planning to expand its solution globally, growing with an additional 150-200 site installations forecast by mid 2003.

THE CHALLENGE

In 1998, WaiterPad observed how the hospitality industry was in need of a unique system that provided a more efficient and user-friendly solution for taking orders. It therefore undertook the challenge to create, design and implement a wireless solution instead of the paper and pad solution currently in use.

"There are currently very few systems in the world that allow wait staff to quickly access a restaurant database, kitchen, bar and cash register using a wireless, one-touch ordering tool," explains Richard Steers, operations manager at WaiterPad.

"Those that do exist are often very expensive. WaiterPad has built a system that is cost-effective, provides an expected return on investment, and does not require any support from an external source, and very little maintenance from restaurant staff."

Agreeing to this, Alfie Schmid, manager of Gold Coast theatre restaurant Dracula's, the first restaurant to roll out the solution, said, "I was looking for a system that would ensure that superior customer service was not jeopardised by the need for wait staff to quickly leave customers' tables to ensure orders were processed quickly and efficiently."

THE SOLUTION

WaiterPad was designed specifically for the customer service market to provide an electronic ordering solution suitable for both small and large restaurants. With a low-powered, radio frequency cradle for the Palm™ Vx handheld, waiters are connected to the back-end activities (kitchen, bar and service areas), while being able to access and input data from the handheld-based fast selection system.

"With Palm™ as the handheld of choice for our system, we are assured of providing our customers with the smallest and most robust device in the industry with superior battery performance," said Richard Steers. "The Palm™ OS® also provides the fastest and most reliable OS."

Machiavelli Restaurant
Angelo Italiani, manager of Machiavelli said: "We tried 15 different methods of taking orders before being introduced to WaiterPad. We were looking for something simple and practical that would allow our staff to concentrate more on developing a relationship with the customers, as that is a restaurant's most important asset."

Tony Roma's
Family BBQ restaurant Tony Roma's needed a system that was cost-effective and found it with the combination of WaiterPOS and Palm™ handhelds. According to Frank Bochman, General Manager Tony Roma's Sydney restaurant, "It's the best configuration available that offers a flexible program and reporting system. It's also straightforward when it comes to training staff on its use."

THE OUTCOME

Using one touch to retrieve menus and to place orders, WaiterPad can be customised to meet a restaurant's requirements, which can ultimately lead to reduced staff costs and increased efficiency of order taking and service delivery, whilst decreasing billing errors.

WaiterPad is currently achieving great success throughout Australia, with the majority of restaurants achieving their objectives and increasing their bottom lines.

Industrie – Bar Restaurant

"WaiterPad economised the movement of waiters across the restaurant and bar. This means that we can provide great customer service with less staff on the floor at any one time. I expect to reduce wage costs by 20 percent and experience a return on investment [ROI] within 12 months," says Michael Gencher, manager of new Sydney bar restaurant, Industrie.

Dracula's Theatre Restaurant

Dracula's, the most popular theatre restaurant on Queensland's Gold Coast, has an average occupancy of 300-450 customers each night. Since WaiterPad and six Palm handhelds were implemented two and a half years ago, sales have increased 20-40 percent each night based on the efficiency and turnaround of orders, and the improved ability to recommend menu items using the handheld.

"I expected to reduce my staff numbers after deploying WaiterPad with the streamlining of our service flow. However, we not only found ourselves being able to serve more customers more efficiently, but we needed to retain our staff numbers to handle the increased orders; hence better profit levels," confirms the General Manager of Dracula's Theatre Restaurant, Mr. Alfred Schmid.

THE FACTS & FIGURES AT-A-GLANCE

Enterprise:
- WaiterPad

Industry:
- Systems Solution Development

Category:
- Palm™ Handheld Developer

Application:
- WaiterPad

Features:
- Easy to use
- Reliable
- Lightweight
- 12-hour battery life
- Large, easy-to-use interfacce
- Industry-specific open architecture
- Real-time, wireless communication among waiters, kitchen & bar staff
- Multiple printers for ease of communication with kitchen & bar areas
- Automatic updates on daily specials and dish availablility
- Product prompting and order review screen
- Minimal upkeep - only when changing the menu

Benefits:
- Improves customer service
- Increases bottom-line profits
- Minimizes billing errors
- Eliminates paperwork
- Reduces data-entry

Specifications:
- Front end developed using WaterPad & Waiter POS
- Back end developed using StockPro, Market Manager & Sales Analyst
- USB Sync cable
- Palm™ Vx, Palm™ OS 2.16