

**BILL BOOTHE**

Bill Boothe is president and owner of The Boothe Group, LLC, an independent consulting firm that helps clubs understand computer technology, make good decisions and receive the highest value from their technology investment. During his 28 years in the club industry Bill has assisted more than 400 private clubs. Bill can be reached at bboothe@boothegroup.com.

Tableside POS Is It Right for Your Club?

Before we jump into a tech discussion of tableside POS and its pros and cons, let's first make a quick visit to your club's dining room and check in on a busy lunch shift.

It's a little after noon and the dining room is bustling. The Millers are seated at their favorite table near the far end of the room, where it's a little quieter than up front. They've already placed and received their beverage order.

Mary, your lead server, arrives at their table to take their lunch order. She's using the traditional captain's pad method of recording orders, with her special abbreviation system developed over many years of service.

After a brief chat about the specials and soup of the day, the Millers place their orders. Mary thanks them and turns to head over to the service area where she can enter the order on one of two POS stations.

But before Mary can take more than a few steps she's intercepted by Mrs. Smith and her husband, back from a two-month stint out of town visiting with family and friends.

Mary and the Smiths go way back, and Mrs. Smith launches into a lengthy story about the grandkids and all the fun they had visiting. Mary does her best to move on but the conversation with the Smiths lasts for several minutes.

Finally extricating herself from the Smiths, Mary again heads toward the service area only to be waylaid by Mr. Jones and his three golfing buddies. They are ready for another round, but with a few modifications, so Mary spends several minutes picking up their order.

All the while, the Millers are watching – and starting to get a bit irritated – knowing that their order has yet to go anywhere. Not Mary's fault but nonetheless an unhappy experience for the Millers.

Fast forward to tableside POS. Mary would have taken the Millers' order right then and there on her tablet PC, and their order would have been sent immediately to the kitchen for preparation.

No sidetracking to chat about the grandkids, no delaying to pick up another order. Quick and easy right to the kitchen.

Sounds pretty good, right? But will this approach really work at your club?

First and foremost, consider the venue. Tableside POS is a natural for poolside, patio, deck, and other areas that are casual and a distance from any POS stations.

It's especially effective for less complex menus, which are quick and easy to enter into the POS tablet.

More formal settings are a different animal. With the complexities of a full dinner menu, with endless mods and special prep instructions, tableside POS might pose a bit of a challenge to your waitstaff. There's also the ambience factor: Do you really want technology at the table?

One way around the issues with formal settings is to use a modified tableside approach: that is, go ahead and take the order on the captain's pad but instead of heading all the way to the service area to access POS, the server simply steps off to the side and enters the order there. The ambience is not compromised, and the order still flies to the kitchen quickly without interruption.

Bottom line: Tableside POS has the potential to speed up the ordering process at your club. How you choose to use it is up to you. BR

