

Harris Farm Markets gives check-outs a fresh look with Toshiba TEC POS solutions



Established in 1971 and with a single shop in Villawood, Harris Farm Markets (HFM) was the first Australian fruit and vegetable company to establish a supermarket style operation. Now with 20 stores operating across New South Wales, HFM has over 800 employees and approximately 220 checkout lanes; and in increasing numbers, it's a combined Toshiba TEC ST-7000 Modular POS Terminal and Navikey LKBST-65 touch screen solution at each lane.

Time for change

When Ian Lapid joined HFM as Systems Integration Manager in 2003, one of his primary goals was to establish a solid POS system infrastructure throughout the company's stores – an infrastructure that would enhance operations and, more importantly, improve customer experience. It was a goal that Lapid soon realised was more urgent than he had initially thought.

"The POS terminals we were using at the time were causing major problems," Lapid explains. "It wasn't all that surprising if two days after installation of new equipment I'd receive a call from staff telling me that it had failed. I was spending around 85 to 90 per cent of my time simply trying to keep the POS terminals operational – they were breaking down *that* much."

So it was that in 2005, frustrated with the lack performance from the existing POS terminals and poor service on the part of the vendor, Lapid organised with Toshiba TEC solution provider Allweigh Solutions to trial a Toshiba TEC ST-7000 terminal and Navikey touch screen.

In contrast to the standard practice of testing new equipment by placing it in a fairly low-risk environment, Lapid made the decision to trial the ST-7000 and Navikey in the



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Systems Integration Manager
Harris Farm Markets





busiest lane of one of HFM's busiest stores – Parramatta. "Our initial plan was to see how it would stand up to a three-month test period," Lapid explains. "After five months, though, and the unit taking everything that could be thrown at it, we bought it and made the decision to go with that same solution in all new stores and store refurbishments."

Built for the tough environments

As opposed to supermarket check-outs, which rely almost solely on barcode scanning, cashiers in the grocery industry typically have to key in a four-digit product look-up (PLU) number for each item. According to Lapid, it was this that was causing a never-ending series of support and performance issues. "On a *slow* lane, a cashier might easily enter several thousand PLUs a day," Lapid says. "On a busy lane, this number can easily be anything up to 15,000, which equates to an enormous number of keystrokes and represents fairly harsh keyboard treatment. The Navikeys take this level of use in their stride."

Adding even greater emphasis to the toughness and reliability of the Toshiba TEC solutions is the extreme heat to which the units are subjected. With the ST-7000s secured in a closed shelf beneath every lane, the amount of heat that can be generated is more than enough to cause system failure in less sturdy equipment – and this was definitely the case prior to the Toshiba TEC introduction within HFM.

"The non-Toshiba TEC gear was very prone to slowing down and even totally failing because of heat issues," Lapid says. "But we have not had a single situation where this has occurred with the ST-7000s. This is equipment that's obviously been designed and built to withstand the real rigours of a harsh retail environment."

"In fact, the first ST-7000 and Navikey setup we brought in three years ago has required only two minor service calls throughout that entire time. *That's* the sort of reliability I was looking for and what the stores demand."

A responsive partner

Bearing ultimate responsibility for ensuring the POS terminals at each of HFM's 200 lanes are fully operational at all times, Lapid recognises that the company's partnerships with Allweigh and Toshiba TEC are absolutely critical. "With our previous supplier, it wasn't unusual to have to wait several weeks for replacement units to be shipped in from overseas," he explains. "With Toshiba TEC, there hasn't been one instance of having to wait more than a day."

"Actually, when we put through a service call, an engineer is generally on site within a couple of hours and *always* has spare parts – even spare ST-7000s and Navikeys – just in case a unit needs to be taken back for repair."

It's also during the rollout of a new POS solution in a refurbishment situation that Lapid says the partnership between HFM and Toshiba TEC brings about significant time savings. It used to be the case that for each terminal to be installed, several hours had to be devoted to installing the operating system and POS software. Now, though, it's a case of having all the required software pre-installed by Toshiba TEC and ready to go right out of the box.

"Whenever we have a change to our POS software, I provide the team at Toshiba TEC with a disk image, which they automatically transfer over to any new ST-7000 we order," Lapid explains. "Aside from saving me an enormous amount of time when we install new lanes, if I'm ever in the situation of needing a replacement terminal, Toshiba TEC can install the software before they bring it out and ensure there's minimum disruption to our lanes."

The customer experience

Ultimately, it's the cashiers using the POS terminals on a daily basis who are best positioned to pass judgement on the Toshiba TEC solutions; and according to Lapid, they are every bit as enthusiastic as he is. "The cashiers are the ones who have to take the brunt of a customer's anger if they're kept waiting too long in a line," he says. "With the Toshiba TEC gear operating without fault, they're getting their customers through more quickly than ever before. This is precisely what the business, store managers and customers want!"

For more information on TOSHIBA TEC Point Of Sale solutions, please call (02) 8845 6222 or visit www.toshibatec.com.au

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