

HP Point of Sale system goes to the head of the school lunch line



“School lunch programs need a POS solution that is both stable and affordable. With support from HP and Tech Data, we’re able to offer customers the unique advantage of having top-of-the-line products like the HP POS rp5000 at an affordable price. That’s real value.”

– Brad Boyink, Vice President,
Meal Magic Corporation





Parents want more nutritious school lunches for their children. Kids want more choices and better tasting food. School officials want to discreetly distinguish between full-pay and free or reduced-price customers, and even monitor student allergies. School boards want all this and more, but can't allocate more money for any of it.

Welcome to the world of school food service managers.

Since 1988, an increasing number of school food service managers have turned to Michigan-based Meal Magic Corporation for technology to help them address these issues and others.

To complement its proprietary software, Meal Magic looked at a variety of hardware options for both large and small schools. Schools with more than one serving line couldn't afford expensive proprietary POS systems but needed more stability than PC cash drawer (PCCD) solutions delivered. They also wanted a product with a long lifecycle to keep total cost of ownership low.

For lunchrooms with only one service line, Meal Magic needed a less expensive option, with fewer bells and whistles but with the same reliability and quality as its package for larger operations. "Traditionally, very small lunchrooms have been left out of the technology loop because the smallest POS systems cost \$4,000 plus maintenance and other costs," says Brad Boyink, Meal Magic vice president. "Small districts can't afford that."

Meal Magic also had to consider customer expectations. "In education, reputation is everything; educators want a name brand," says Boyink. "We were designing a very specific, innovative solution, completely from scratch, and

we had to find a well-known technology partner that could give us smart advice, smart technology and smart support."

Recipe for success

Meal Magic chose the HP Point of Sale system rp5000 for large lunchrooms and the HP iPAQ Pocket PC hx2100 for lunchrooms with only one service line because both products operate efficiently in difficult environments like the heat and humidity of school lunchrooms. In addition, the rp5000 offers a five-year lifecycle and combines the advantages of both PCCD and proprietary POS solutions.

Meal Magic .Net Suite, the company's most recent offering, gives school lunch programs the newest software technologies, Microsoft® SQL and a mix of proprietary innovations. The suite offers advanced service-line features and a complete set of back office functions, and even allows parents to submit applications for free and reduced-price lunches over the Internet. Parents can also make deposits for student debit cards online, speeding up service lines and reducing lunchroom costs.

"We chose the HP Point of Sale system rp5000 for lunchrooms with more than one service line because it is reliable, scalable and easy to manage," says Brad Boyink, Meal Magic vice president. "In addition, the pricing makes our product very competitive, and it has a great warranty."

For lunchrooms with a single serving line, Meal Magic developed Protégé, a handheld solution based on an HP iPAQ Pocket PC hx2100. A district can sign a four-year

contract, receive an iPAQ Pocket PC for each lunchroom and pay a modest monthly service fee for Meal Magic software and online services.

The iPAQ Pocket PCs are ideal for these users because of the small initial investment, convenient size and quality, says Boyink. "Like all HP products, they are reliable and are backed by an HP warranty. Those qualities provide added value for our product."

Meal Magic also uses HP Compaq nx9008 Notebook PCs in its training labs.

Better service, reduced costs

With a solid technical platform and HP support, Meal Magic has created POS solutions that go beyond the norm. Their partnership with HP reinforces school confidence in the company's POS solutions. "We can give customers the unique advantage of having top-of-the-line HP quality with the rp5000 at an affordable price," says Boyink. "That's real value."

Boyink also likes the five-year lifecycle of the HP POS system rp5000 as compared to the typical 12-month lifecycle of PC cash drawer equipment. "With a longer lifecycle, I know that every image will be the same for a long period

of time," he says. "That makes my technicians more productive and results in costs savings we can pass on to our customers."

At Warren Consolidated Schools in Warren, Michigan, Meal Magic software and HP POS system rp5000 registers have helped cut costs and boost income for the food service department. "We renovated the kitchen in one of our high schools, which increased meal counts and sales significantly," notes Carl Merkle, food service director. "Meal Magic and the rp5000 registers enabled us to handle the extra customers easily and efficiently."

"The Meal Magic system is extremely user friendly, and the rp5000 registers are extremely reliable," says Merkle.

Kimberly Dum, food service supervisor for Logan Elm Schools, says the Meal Magic Protégé is doing the job for her in two elementary school lunchrooms. "Our cashiers learned to use the iPAQ Pocket PCs in 15 minutes, and we don't worry anymore about discriminating against the students who get free or reduced-price lunches. It's all done quietly and anonymously. It took me just two days to process all the applications for my whole district. That's a huge improvement."

Challenge

- Develop affordable, top-quality POS systems for school food programs
- Reduce paperwork and administrative costs for school districts
- Enable school lunch programs to take full advantage of available federal reimbursements
- Enhance Meal Magic's image as a provider of innovative technology

Solution

- HP Point of Sale rp5000 with customized Aspen touch screen
- HP iPAQ Pocket PC hx2100
- Meal Magic .Net Suite software
- Web-based Meal Magic .Net Suite services
- HP Compaq nx9008 Notebook PC

Results

- Reduced administrative expenses for school food programs
- School able to easily handle increased lunch counts and average daily sales
- Enhanced student services for school food programs
- Enhanced image for Meal Magic with its clients
- POS system for districts that could not afford one previously
- Local expertise, pricing and quick availability from Tech Data Corporation

At a glance

- **Company:** Meal Magic Corporation
- **Founded:** 1988
- **Headquarters:** Grand Haven, Michigan
- **Employees:** 10
- **Telephone:** 877.383.3100
- **URL:** www.mealmagic.com
- **Primary business:** Provides POS and back-office systems for school food service programs

Partner at a glance

- **Company:** Tech Data Corporation
- **Headquarters:** Clearwater, Florida
- **Telephone:** 800.237.8931
- **URL:** www.techdata.com
- **Primary business:** Global provider of IT products, logistics management and other value-added services

A profitable partnership

Meal Magic buys HP hardware through Tech Data Corporation, a leading distributor of IT products. "Tech Data has been a wonderful resource for us," says Boyink. "They help us meet customer expectations by delivering hardware from their warehouse in Indiana within 24 hours."

Meal Magic leverages Tech Data's POS/Data Capture Specialized Business Unit (SBU), which tailors its product offering, sales and technical support to the specific needs of VARs developing POS solutions. "Tech Data is dedicated to offering customers like Meal Magic the latest POS technologies from leading manufacturers like HP," said Karl Werner, director of Tech Data's Advanced Technologies Group. "Meal Magic's creative use of HP POS technology is an excellent example of how Tech Data, resellers and vendors collaborate to develop unique and innovative solutions."

"HP and Tech Data Corporation give us good advice and excellent products, as well as great availability, pricing and marketing support," says Boyink. "HP's catch phrase is 'invent' and that's exactly what we're doing. We're inventing new technologies, and HP expertise, equipment and support are making it easier for us to do it."



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