



Plan kiosk integration to maximize ROI

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Many grocery chains are deploying self-service kiosks throughout their stores. But are the myriad applications on these kiosks really delivering value to customers and retailers?

For the past several years, a number of solution providers and grocery retailers have experimented with kiosk self-service. And the most important information obtained from these experiments is customer response. Customers like some applications and dislike others.

Two applications in-particular – deli self-ordering and recipe or meal solution recommendations - stand out for the value and convenience they provide the customer and the ROI they deliver to the retailer. They should, therefore, take precedence – not be buried beneath other, less-profitable applications.

With deli kiosks, a customer places an order, continues shopping, and later swings by to pick up the finished order – a very productive and efficient process. But it's also important that the application keep the customer returning to the store.

An ideal deli self-order application features all the content and bells and whistles that make it the most convenient and productive option for the customer.

Those features include:

- Speed and ease of use
- Up-to-date content, especially for pricing and inventory status
- Order history that shows frequently ordered items
- The up-sell and cross-sell of other products and services
- Ability to use a loyalty card or PIN to view buying history and/or receive special offers
- Ability to shop by dietary needs, such as low-sodium, gluten-free and low-carb
- Ability to order all deli items, not just meats and cheeses, for instance

Finally, the deli application should have robust admin/maintenance capabilities, and it should be tightly integrated with the deli's scale-management system.

Recipe recommendations help busy customers get quick suggestions for meals and are extremely well used. An ideal software solution, for example, would allow a customer to scan a package of ground beef and quickly receive several recipes for

beef. The customer then selects and prints one or more of the recipes, which includes an ingredients list.

Like the deli application, the recipe application must be robust enough to keep customers coming back.

Those two applications are the “killer apps” for self-service in the grocery store. And while the self-ordering model also could be deployed in other grocery departments, such as bakery, meat or seafood, self-service in the deli makes the most sense, because it provides returns and convenience for the retailer and customer.

No other self-service application deployed in grocery stores has equal potential for the high utilization rates and ROI that the deli and recipe applications have.

How does a retailer formulate strategies for deploying self-service kiosk applications? Start small, with two to four kiosks for deli self-ordering, recipes and, perhaps, bakery self-ordering.

A good approach is to front the applications with a common custom-branded portal, or user interface, that facilitates maintaining a consistent look-and-feel.

Another point: Try leveraging any existing Web or e-commerce presence. That can be as sophisticated as establishing multi-channel transactions that function across both the Web and kiosk or as simple as making the two platforms merely look similar.

Self-service is about convenience, speed of use and productivity. Retailers should be wary of overloading the kiosks with too many applications and essentially overwhelming customers with too many options. This will confuse and frustrate the customer and leave a bad impression of self-service. A customer who is frustrated is not likely to return to that kiosk, or worse, to that store. Essentially, retailers should start with proven self-service applications and build from there, letting customers dictate which self-service options should be added.