EPOS Update - January 2018

Introduction

The ICU EPOS system is provided by Orbis Tech and has been in place in the Union bars and shops for almost 12 months. The new system replaced two older systems and is supported in the first instance by the ICU Systems team, as well as Orbis customer support.

The general feedback from the retail and commercial team on the system is positive, particularly around the reporting capabilities of the system and some of the POS usability functions, though we have various ongoing usability issues that are logged with Orbis as well as stability issues that crop up occasionally. The frequency of stability issues seems to have slowed in recent months, however, as our knowledge of the system has increased and more fixes are put into place by Orbis.

We have had six major functionality issues fixed by Orbis in the last six months including fixes to tab functionality, moving the master till in Beit Bars, setting up coupon printing and redemption, duplicate orders being sent to the kitchen and other smaller issues. There are still outstanding issues to be looked at but the general move is towards an improved experience for staff and for customers.

Relationship with Orbis

Relations are generally good. We are still withholding final payment from installation on condition of delivery of functional reporting Dashboard and Bank Reconciliation modules. Orbis accept that these are two areas that were promised as part of the system and are looking to implement changes to accommodate. These functions are currently both in development; Bank Reconciliation needs some critical issues fixing before we are able to use it, and the Dashboard is being built from scratch by Orbis.

Once we provided our Dashboard specification to Orbis, it was decided that their existing Dashboard functionality would not meet our requirements so they are building a new platform to show live reports from the system. While this is an inconvenience in terms of delay to the project, it does show willingness from Orbis to develop their product; we will be the first to use the new dashboard and will have the opportunity to feedback on the development work and help to evolve the platform.

We have put pressure on Orbis to make the necessary changes to meet our requirements. Along with our weekly update calls we met formally with our Account Manager Darren Brown in November to reiterate our concerns.

Generally response from Orbis on support issues is prompt and fixes are provided where possible. As mentioned below, in future we will look to hold Orbis support to account more closely on the terms of the Support Agreement.

Timelines for main outstanding issues

- Bank Reconciliation – one issue has been fixed by Orbis, with one more outstanding before we are able to effectively use this module. The tentative estimate from Orbis for this is 22nd Jan.
- Dashboard – Version 1 of the Dashboard has an estimated delivery date of the end of January.

Other News and Developments

Graduation Successes
Working closely together to deliver an excellent service for customers, the Systems team and retail team ran pop-up shops for Graduation Day on 18th October. This resulted in an all-time record income for October Graduation of £25,487, with the popup shop in Sherfield alone taking over £8k using our two mobile tablet-based tills.

New Hardware in the Shops
We have installed new tills in Shop and Shop Extra. It was forecast that we would replace 3 tills now (Jan) and the 2 Shop Extra tills in August, but the tills have come in far under budget (probably a combination of shopping around for receipt printers and over-budgeting) so we have managed to install all 5 tills for the same money as was budgeted for 3. We are working closely with Orbis and the retail team to ensure these are functioning at their full capacity and iron out any post-installation issues that may arise.

Service Level Agreement
To encourage a good day-to-day relationship between ICU and Orbis, we are re-reviewing our support agreement. The terms of the agreement are acceptable but we would like to be able to hold Orbis to account on their performance so will be aiming to better track how they are responding to support requests. We are working to try and improve the customer support processes generally; various improvements in tracking and reporting have been made but we are still pushing for more transparency and better communication on where issues fit into development timelines.

Orbis Structural changes
Various changes with how Orbis Tech as a company operates may have an effect on our relationship going forward. Orbis will now be operating purely as a software company (as part of Invenco) and all support and hardware will be handled by a company called Tokheim Service Group (TSG). The Orbis support team has remained the same, but is now managed by Tokheim.

It is unclear at this stage what risks or opportunities this presents; potentially we should see a more efficient response on support issues but we will be dependent on the relationship between Orbis and Tokheim when issues are escalated to software support and require development input from Orbis. We will mitigate this by maintaining a close relationship with our account manager and the developers at Orbis where possible.

We will continue to request further information on the exact nature of the relationships between the companies but so far we have seen very little in the way of change other than a slight improvement in reporting on support issues from the support team.

Future Development Opportunities

Cloakroom and Front Door tickets
The Systems team have been investigating ways to use the EPOS system for cloakroom and door ticket sales at events in the Union venues. This is ongoing but progress has been made toward setting this up, with the aim to trial the function this term. This would provide a number of efficiency improvements and improve our service for customers at larger events.

Financial Integrations
Once we have access to the working Bank reconciliation module we will be able to start automating more of our reconciliation processes, increasing efficiencies for bar and retail staff as well as the finance team processing data. It will also reduce our reliance on paper forms and decrease opportunity for human error in reconciliation.

Kitchen Management System
This smaller project is intended to be used to manage orders in the kitchen and enable the catering teams more effectively monitor performance. The aim will be to have a system in place to track the time between orders, preferably measuring each step along the way. This has slipped back in the timeline as a result of the other outstanding issues that we are still waiting on from Orbis and we will review the timeline for this, pushing this later into the year.