How Can Networking Devices Improve Your Business?

Networking devices can extend the life of your POS system, increase the speed of payment processing, and enable remote management of POS hardware.

by Laurie Pasquerell

Upgrading a POS application and/or hardware can be very expensive, and the driving force to do so can vary from one retailer to the next. Accordingly, there might be alternatives to this expensive and time-consuming task. A network upgrade, or the installation of network connectivity devices, is one substitute for a large-scale equipment overhaul. For instance, the inclusion of network-connector devices can often improve the speed of your POS network. Moreover, if the upgrade you are looking for is remote access to your POS system, you may not have to overhaul your existing POS infrastructure.

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Extend Shelf-Life Of POS Hardware

When your budget for upgrades is low or nonexistent, you can extend the life and functionality of your POS hardware by using serial-to-Ethernet connection devices. These devices IP (Internet Protocol)-enable your older POS stations (those containing only serial ports), so you can reduce network cabling, gather data remotely, or simply monitor and control your serial devices regardless of their location. "We engineer and manufacture all of our serial port devices at our own facility," says Lewis Fedyna, senior engineer at LAVA Computer Manufacturing. "We want to ensure the highest degree of interoperability with other manufacturers' software and hardware. Therefore, we don't just provide a networked serial input/output port on a PC, but a port that is 100% transparent because it appears to any system as if it was attached during manufacturing."

Accessibility to network information is a hot topic in the retail world. Being able to retrieve near real-time information presents an opportunity for faster decisions, thus increased reaction time. Connecting POS terminals to an Ethernet network can expedite several processes in your organization. "By linking devices together and transferring information via Ethernet, information can be stored rapidly and transferred to other software programs, as well," says Charles Chen, national product sales manager at Moxa. "For example, credit card information can immediately be transferred to banks; loyalty information can be stored in a CRM [customer relationship management] system; and all POS transaction information can be transferred from the local store system to the store headquarters for more rapid use." Managers can access real-time data and make immediate updates to in-store marketing solutions like digital signage.

Another benefit from directly interfacing a POS machine to a high-speed network is LP (loss prevention) surveillance. With LP equipment (i.e. security cameras, digital video recorders) available on a network, managers can monitor real-time POS activities, including transaction data, from almost any location. Having this ability allows managers to approach employees performing questionable activities much sooner than they could if they surveyed taped materials.

Often, several peripheral devices exist at the POS. By connecting these peripherals to Ethernet and/or IP networks, you can receive many benefits. Multiport expansion devices are available that improve POS connections to multiple pieces of equipment. These devices can connect the POS hardware device (e.g. PC, terminal) to other peripherals, including receipt printers, keypads, scales, pole displays, credit card readers, and bar code readers at each checkout station.

Enable Remote POS, Peripheral Access

The space available at the POS is usually limited and can quickly become cluttered. Devices exist that can completely remove the PC/workstation from the POS area.