

Museums & More ask the POS Expert Question:

Are you aware of any P.O.S. system software for under \$5,000 suitable for a smaller museum that carries about \$10,000 in inventory?

The simple answer is “Yes”, but you better be willing to kiss a lot of frogs. A standard rule of thumb for purchasing an Inventory Control or P.O.S. (Point of Sale) Software Package is simple. You should budget 20 Percent of your “Sellable Inventory” for your purchase. Please note that I did not say “Spend” 20 percent, I said “Budget” 20 percent.

Before you start the search you will need to decide what is most important to you, the P.O.S. (Point of Sale) or the Inventory Control. There are literally hundreds of Point of Sale and Inventory Control Software packages on the market today. Less than a hundred of those software packages do both, Inventory Control and Point of Sale, well. Less than a handful of those packages will integrate directly with a back office accounting package. Most POS Software companies have taken the easy way out and just “Dump” the accounting information into QuickBooks or some other accounting package.

A good Point of Sale Package will enable you to track you customers and their buying habits. A good Inventory Control Package will help you control costs, and increase your profits by making “Good Buying Decisions”. Finding a software package that does both is what you will ultimately be looking for.

There is much more, that just the POS Software alone, to take into consideration, if you want a POS System. Here are a few questions you must answer before you start your search. What computer will I be using for our Check Out Station? How many “User Licenses” will I need? Will I be using a Barcode Scanner, Cash Drawer and Receipt Printer at the check out station? Will I keep on using our Credit Card Box or will I want to integrate Credit Card Processing with the POS Software?

The same can be said for an Inventory Control Software Package. Does the Inventory Software Package have any Point of Sale Features that I will need to run the museum, like Customer Tracking? Will it be easy for our counter people to use? Will your Inventory Control Software package use POS Hardware to speed up check-out and lessen operator error? Will you need to print barcode labels? Will I need to use a Portable Data Collection Terminal (PDT) to keep track of my inventory?

All of these are really good questions and they should be directed to an Inventory Control or Point of Sale Specialist that offers several packages, including a low end solution for smaller business, such as your museum.

If you are the Retail Manager then involve your Supervisor in this process as early as possible and keep them informed through the whole decision making process.

When I first started working, at a fast food restaurant, a thunderstorm swept through our town and the roof over the deep fryer started to leak. I told my supervisor that we had a “water leak”, he immediately called a plumber.

Your Supervisor, seeing only a computer says, “Call the Computer Guy, he will tell us what we need”. Chances are your regular “Computer Guy” is not qualified to answer Inventory Control and POS questions. Failure in keeping your Supervisor involved in the process will only result in your Supervisor “Calling a Plumber”, that’s when the roof caves in.

Your best bet, as you start to weed your way through this process, is to first, set your 20 Percent Budget, it will help you to get the most bang for your buck. Ask yourself the questions outlined above to see what else you will need in order to make your POS or Inventory System work for your. Most importantly, be sure to keep your Supervisor in the loop.

I hope this helped.

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