#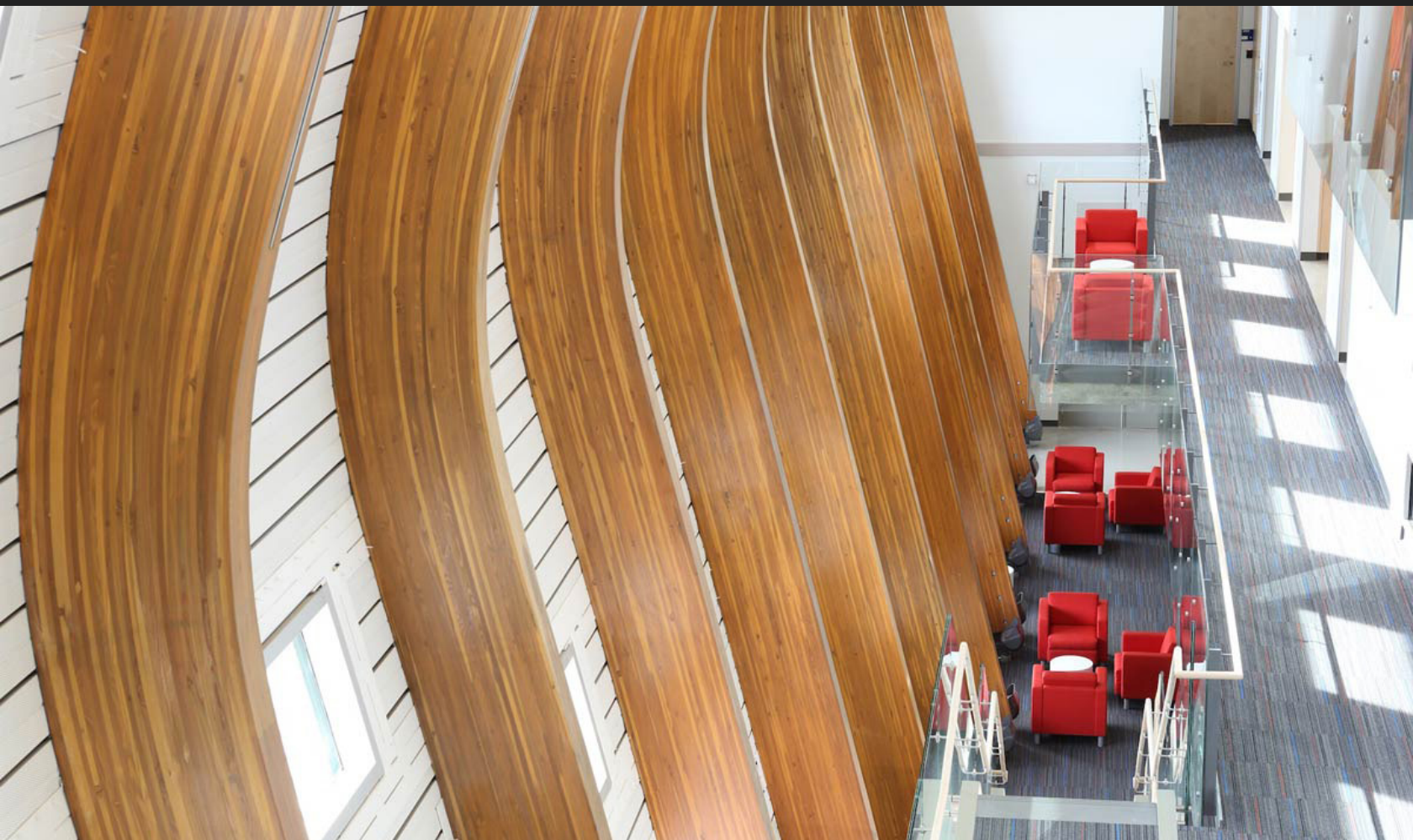 How the Alma Mater Society of UBC lowered costs, increased sales, and improved the student experience with a new POS and online ordering.

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Introduction

The Alma Mater Society of UBC is the student society of University of British Columbia, recently ranked as one of the world's top 50 universities. AMS serves more nearly 48,000 students at the Vancouver, BC campus and operates several student services, including food and hospitality within a sprawling 250,000 sq ft student union building. The building features eight outlets, including a full-service restaurant, pub, coffee house and variety of counter service outlets.

Challenge

In 2017, AMS kicked off an effort to replace an aging point-of-sale system installed in 2011. Their point-of-sale hardware had reached end-of-life, spare parts were difficult to come by, and the service costs continued to rise. The previous vendor experienced a restructuring as a result of a corporate acquisition and resulted in AMS losing access to local support and repair depot. Support calls went through an overseas call center, and there were lengthy delays in getting on-site support.

The old POS and software limited AMS ability to enhance the customer experience and add online ordering, and expand payment options, including gift and meal cards. Another challenge unique to campus operations is that most of the 250-300 employees are part-time students working short shifts with steady turnover— which means onboarding and training new staff can require a significant amount of time and resources from management.

Quick Summary

- Alma Mater Society (AMS) of UBC is the student society of the University of British Columbia, which is consistently ranked as one of the world's top 20 public universities.

- AMS represents more than 48,000 students at the Vancouver, British Columbia campus and operates many student services, including food and hospitality.

- AMS Food Services features eight outlets, including a full-service restaurant, pub, coffee house and a variety of counter service style outlets.

- 21 fixed POS terminal workstations

- Integrations include: Squirrel CRM Gift Card, Eigen payments and xDine Online Ordering, Volante Student Meal Card, Optimum Control (inventory management).

Quick Benefits

- 18% increase in sales since upgrading to Squirrel POS.

- 40% lower annual maintenance costs

- 15X faster to program a brand new menu.

Solution

Speed of support & service and reliability was a critical factor in looking at a replacement point-of-sale. Having a local support contact and service options was a must-have, considering the unnecessary downtime dealing with overseas technical support. By choosing Squirrel, AMS had 24/7 access to remote technical support within the same time zone. Spare parts, on-site support could be dispatched within 24-48 hours, if not the same day.

From an installation perspective, Squirrel's on-premise server and terminal architecture was the same as the older system, which meant they could retain the old wiring and save on rewiring costs. Local regulations required that student data reside on servers in Canada. This requirement disqualified many cloud-based POS systems since data was stored on US servers.

Squirrel POS was a perfect fit to handle the mix of required styles, including Table Service, Bar and Counter. Squirrel also integrated with Eigen for chip and contactless payment processing and is in the process of migrating to Squirrel's CRM Gift Card module to offer students more flexible payment options. Another critical requirement for the new POS was integration with the UBC student meal card that is mandatory for all on-campus residents and compatibility with online ordering to let students order and pay for their food orders directly from their phone and schedule pick-up.

Impact

One of the most immediate benefits with the new Point of sale was the ease of use and programming. Programming or making menu changes with the previous POS could take up to 1 ½ days for an entire menu build. With Squirrel, a new menu could be completed in 30 min. The Squirrel system was easy to learn with its tablet-style graphical user interface which meant new staff could quickly learn the system with minimal training.

As a result of the operational and functional improvements gained with the new POS, AMS has seen sales growth of up to 18% over the last couple of years. Profits from operations ultimately goes back into a student endowment fund that helps finance new services for students. Most recently, AMS has introduced online ordering with Eigen xDine, and while it won't take over dine-in anytime soon, it will be a convenient ordering channel for students and staff. Early experience shows that many students are taking advantage of online ordering from their favorite outlet to save time in lines. With the Squirrel-xDine integration, students can order their menu in advance and schedule a time for pick-up. Submitted orders don't get sent to the kitchen until 15min before scheduled pick-up time

Is your organization still struggling to operate with outdated hardware and software? Do you want to partner with a POS solutions provider that goes above and beyond for your team?

Contact the experts at Squirrel (info@squirrelsystems.com) now to learn more about what we can do for you.

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