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Han's Café

Opening the first Han's Café in Perth, Western Australia in 1995, Ian Han and his wife, Tram, quickly realised the potential of a healthy and affordable alternative to fast food for families, opening another 15 franchises by 2004. With up to 1,500 patrons passing through each café daily for their choice of Asian cuisine, including Thai, Vietnamese and Chinese, Han's Café runs on a business model that allows Ian to open several cafés, get the business up and running and them sell them to franchisees.

Challenge: Improving service at all levels

With a vision to expand operations along the Australian south and east coasts, Ian believes the potential of the Han's Café business is enormous. "We're currently in a very strong position and, like most business owners, I want to build on that to grow the business," he said. "The more we concentrate on establishing the right business model for running the cafés now, means we're going to improve the overall customer experience and build a great reputation in the market."

In his efforts to establish "the right business model", Ian recognised the importance of streamlining the ordering process - from taking a customer's order through to its serving and finally, having the bill reflect *everything* that was ordered. "I knew that with the right solution, patrons would be able to get better service simply by staff at each of the cafés having access to the best tools for their work," he said.

100 per cent increase in turnover

After researching various hospitality industry Point-of-Sale (POS) systems, Ian opted to implement a combination of technologies from Epson and PalmTEQ. Featuring advanced Epson MR-800 and SR-600 POS terminals, Epson TM-T88III kitchen and receipt printers, along with PalmTEQ hand-held WaiterPads, services and POS terminal software, the tightly integrated systems have already been implemented in seven of the 16 Han's Cafés.

"We previously had paper-based ordering systems in-place at these seven cafés and after replacing them with the Epson and PalmTEQ POS solution, our turnover of customers and sales has increased by almost 100 per cent," stated Ian. "This is simply because we have been able to reduce the amount of time in taking the order, getting it

through to the kitchen and then having the food delivered to the customers. The result is that we have up to 1,500 patrons passing through each café every day!"

Quick turnover

Strategically located in shopping complexes and next to cinemas, Han's Café franchises were developed to provide a top quality meal at an affordable price and delivered to the customer as quickly as possible. "We have a strong relationship with major shopping complexes and cinemas in Western Australia and it's important to the relationship that we're able to provide movie-goers and shoppers with good food and quick service," Ian said. "The majority of customers who come into the cafés only have a set amount of time to eat a meal before they go to a movie or have to be somewhere else, so a quick turnover is essential."

Using PalmTEQ's WaiterPads in the dining areas, which can often be spread over two storeys, Han's Café waiters are able to take orders and have them printed immediately to the Epson TM-T88III printers located in the kitchen and bar areas.

Added to this is the very real benefit of the order's details transmitted wirelessly through to the Epson MR-800 or SR-600 POS terminal,

where the PalmTEQ software maintains an accurate running total for each table – all this without waiters leaving their stations.

"Because we can have waiters on the floor at all times taking orders from one table while the kitchen processes the order taken just seconds before, the meals are prepared straight away and the entire dining experience can take place in a matter of just 25 minutes," Ian explained.

Reliable and efficient technology

Any kitchen environment can be demanding for electronic equipment, and in the high volume kitchens of the Han's Cafés it's even more so. "All of our kitchens are constantly dealing with excessive heat, spills and incredibly high demand," Ian said. "This is a typical commercial kitchen environment, but hardly one that printers would be able to stand up to – or so we thought!"

According to Ian, the reliability of the TM-T88III printers is such that kitchen staff members are able to concentrate on their work without having to "coddle" the equipment. "The printers work – they work constantly, reliably and perfectly, which is precisely what's needed in this environment!"

In discussing the overall efficiency of the Epson and PalmTEQ solution, Ian points to speed of communication as being crucial. "Since we've had the systems in place, communication between the kitchen, bar, waiters and front counter has been incredibly smooth," he said. "The orders being transmitted wirelessly between the WaiterPads, printers and POS terminals means that the level of efficiency within the cafés relates directly to a major improvement in service to our customers. And that relates directly to much greater profitability.

"When we started the business, the cafés were using the paper-based ordering system and the constant running between tables, kitchen and front counter caused all sorts of problems. Orders were often misplaced and bills were sometimes incorrect because a waiter either lost an order of simply forgot to hand it in when they were particularly busy.

"Of course this happens in all food outlets," Ian continued. "Since implementing the Epson and PalmTEQ POS solution, though, our accountability for orders is 100 per cent every time. This adds to the customers' already improved satisfaction with our service – in turn – increasing our sales. It's the best possible dining experience for everyone."