

Beyond the Register: Choosing a POS System

Questions Retail Business Owners Should Ask POS Vendors

A companion checklist because technology is rarely the biggest problem. Understanding the business is.

1. Start With the Business, Not the Software

Be sure the POS vendor asks you questions about your business first.

- Tell me about your business. *what you sell, who you sell to, how you sell it*
- What's working well today?
- What's frustrating you about your current setup?
- What takes up the most time in a typical day?
- If you could change one thing about how you run the business, what would it be?

2. Ask About Outcomes, Not Features

Retailers rarely ask for "barcode scanning" or "inventory management." They ask for the outcome underneath it. Vendors should be pressed to answer in outcomes, too.

- How will this system reduce pricing or ringing mistakes at checkout?
- Will I be able to see exactly what's on my shelves in real time?
- Can I tell which products are actually making me money?
- How does this speed up checkout and support multiple payment types?
- How does this system support selling in more than one location, or online?
- What decisions will I be able to make with this data that I can't make today?

3. Ask About Fit for Your Type of Business

Workflows, inventory complexity, and reporting needs vary widely by business type: a boutique, a hardware store, and a garden center are not the same problem.

- Which types of retailers do you specialize in, and do you have references similar to my business?
- How does the system handle my specific inventory needs? *size/color variants, perishables, serialized items, etc.*
- Can it support multiple locations, and if so, how is inventory tracked across them?
- What does the system do well out of the box, and what requires an add-on app?

- Who provides and supports this solution? *the software company, a reseller, or a payment processor, support and available features can differ by who sells it*

4. Ask How Data Flows Into QuickBooks

This is the single most important — and most overlooked — conversation. The answer to “What do you want to see when you open QuickBooks?” determines the right POS, the right integration, and how much reconciliation work lies ahead.

- Does this POS connect to QuickBooks natively, or through a third-party connector?
- Will sales post as daily summary totals, or as individual transactions?
- What level of detail will I actually see in QuickBooks? *sales, payments, fees, taxes, discounts, cost of goods, inventory*
- How is inventory reflected in QuickBooks, if at all?
- How much reconciliation work will this create for me or my bookkeeper each month?
- Will I have a complete audit trail, or only summary-level detail?
- If I later want more transaction-level detail, can the integration be upgraded, or would I need to switch systems?

5. Ask About the Vendor Relationship, Cost & Support

The hardware or software can be excellent, but the experience often depends on who's actually supporting it day to day.

- What's included in the price, and what costs extra? *hardware, software fees, per-transaction fees, add-on apps*
- What does the contract term look like, and what does it cost to cancel or switch?
- What kind of support is available, and what are the response times?
- Who do I call when something breaks at checkout on a Saturday?
- What happens if I outgrow this system, is there a clear upgrade path?

6. Ask About Growth

A POS should support where the business is going, not just where it is today.

- Can this system grow with me if I add a location or start selling online?
- Does it support omnichannel selling: in-store, online, and marketplaces from one inventory count?
- What reporting and analytics are available to help me make better decisions as I grow?

Tip: Ask the business owner “What do you want to see when you open QuickBooks?” before you ever discuss specific POS platforms. The answer often points to the right system.