

# Grocer Case Study: Hilltop Steak House

## Hilltop Taps StoreNext for Seamless PoS System

*The 70-foot neon cactus glowing in front of Massachusetts' favorite steakhouse stands as a regional landmark for the best combination restaurant and butcher shop on the East Coast. But of the thousands of people who come to dine or shop – or both – at Hilltop Steak House & Marketplace every year, most never notice the establishment's equally dazzling point-of-sale (PoS) system.*

*And that's just the way management wants it.*



### About Hilltop

- Headquarters: Saugus, Mass
- Type of Operation: Grocery/Butcher/Restaurant hybrid
- Number of Locations: One (great) store

Located in picturesque Saugus, Mass., a quiet New England town of about 40,000 people, Hilltop Steak House is the highest volume, privately owned restaurant in the country. Along with the restaurant, the establishment features a grocery store in the same building. This old-fashioned butcher shop and marketplace, particularly renowned for its high-quality custom cuts of meat at value prices, is one of the highest volume specialty markets in the Boston area.

With a huge restaurant on one side and a renowned marketplace on the other, Hilltop's management team not only needs to integrate two disparate profit centers – a landmark restaurant that seats 1,200 people and a nine-lane marketplace – but also must track and manage the sale of 6,000 – 7,000 items per day.

Hilltop's existing POS system wasn't, however, up to the task. In particular, back-office functions weren't fully integrated with the restaurant and grocery

operations, and the system's reporting format was antiquated and complex. Such problems made it cumbersome to conduct sales trend analyses and to monitor the effectiveness of Hilltop's sales and marketing promotions.

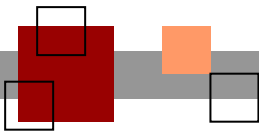
Most importantly, Hilltop's management needed a system with the flexibility to make ongoing changes in discounting, marketing applications, on-screen advertising and other last-minute but crucial developments.

"We were disappointed with our system's performance, but as an independent grocer and restaurant operation, we simply didn't have the breadth it would take to implement a fully customized solution," said Dennis January, chief financial officer of Hilltop Steak House. "We knew we wanted a new system, but for cost and manpower reasons, we required a solution that was virtually ready to go."

### Open design opens doors

POS reseller Reliable Cash Register, Inc., based in Worcester, Mass., proposed a solution that combined ISS45 software from StoreNext, a joint venture of Fujitsu Transaction Solutions and Retailix Ltd., and TeamPoS point-of-sale terminals from Fujitsu.

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The combination proved to be the perfect recipe for satisfying Hilltop's IT tastes. Combining industry standards with supermarket-specific applications, the StoreNext- Fujitsu solution eliminated the need for a fully customized system, and it satisfied management's demands for performance flexibility.

Using the Windows® NT operating system, Hilltop's ISS45 implementation allows management to create and customize its own screens and reports, in addition to special POS transactions, discounts and offers. The system's open design, coupled with supermarket-specific applications that are 100 percent based on accepted IT standards, also helps to ensure an easy migration path.

"This is the best 'in-the-can' supermarket software I've ever seen," said January. "It didn't require a lot of customization - which always costs a lot of money - and it gives us marketing capabilities we just didn't have before.

"Now we can do different types of discounting and kiosk-type advertising on the TeamPoS terminals, and although we don't do tons of frequent-shopper programs, we still have the ability to implement them easily and economically whenever we choose."

Another major advancement is the system's flexibility in tracking sales, January said.

"Normally, we track sales on a daily basis, but sometimes we need the system to provide us with exception reporting. Say, for example, we have a two-day promotion and we want to track Hilltop's sales on those specific days. Most systems, like the one we used to have

here, only allow you to monitor results within a predetermined schedule - daily, weekly or monthly, for instance - but with our new system, we can track sales anytime we want.

"As a result, we now have the ability to measure the impact of each and every promotion we undertake, not only in terms of sales volume, but by profitability as well. Being able to capture sales data at the individual item level whenever and however we want is the key to the system's power," he said.

Jennithan Cortes, who manages the Hilltop account for RCR, the reseller firm, said that to help ensure ongoing customer satisfaction, the system features a redundancy architecture that incorporates a number of automatic back-up mechanisms into the design.

"If one server goes down, the system still works with no lag in service or any other type of degradation," Cortes explained. "Everything is as seamless in the back end as it is in the front."

January agrees. "Our new system gives us a Windows-based solution with a level of marketing power that, in the past, has only been feasible for the larger chain stores. It's a superior system that will make us more competitive - and profitable - for years to come."

Like the thousands of people who visit Hilltop Steak House each week, January is a satisfied customer.

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