

PAR InFusion™ Software Tightens Food and Labor Cost Controls, Centralizes Database Changes for BURGER KING Franchisee

Many technological changes since the late 1990s have had a significant impact on the Quick Service Restaurant (QSR) industry. From new corporate-mandated applications, the Internet's growth and emerging payment types, QSRs have often had to scramble to keep up. But for BURGER KING franchisee GDK Development, early adoption of PAR hardware and software products has helped the company stay a few steps ahead of the curve. Along the way, PAR has given GDK pinpoint control of its two key cost centers—inventory and labor—while also saving time by centralizing menu and price change functions.

Now PAR is a BURGER KING corporate-approved vendor, paving the way for other franchisees to receive the benefits of its products, service and expertise.

When GDK first began using PAR in 1997, the company was simply looking for technology that ran Microsoft Windows-based programs, because GDK managers were familiar with popular applications such as Microsoft Office and Word. Today, GDK, based in Shamokin, PA, uses PAR's ViGo™ point-of-sale hardware in its 11 Burger King locations (its 12th store is a full-service restaurant/sports bar that also uses PAR technology), as well as the InForm, InTouch and InSynch modules of PAR's InFusion™ software suite.

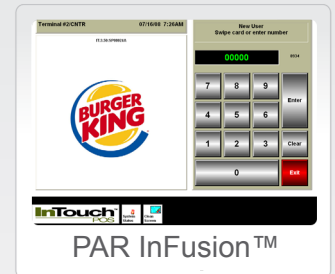
The early switch to PAR turned out to be a fortunate decision, according to Jim Backes, Director of Operations for GDK. "One of the unique things we've seen since 1997 is that as PAR has upgraded, we've been able to upgrade right along with them," says Backes. "We're never in a situation where we're 'starting over'; instead, we're taking our existing knowledge base and adding to it."

For example, when BURGER KING corporate began requiring franchisees to deploy its proprietary Kitchen Minder food preparation management application, PAR worked with the corporate group to write a program that would integrate PAR's system with the Kitchen Minder application. GDK has used the resulting integrated solution for nearly two years. "I'm confident that as we move forward, any new technology that's needed in the industry will be available with PAR," says Backes.

Tight Control of Inventory and Labor Costs

Backes likes the item-by-item control that's possible with the InForm module's inventory solution. "It offers us very tight inventory control. The solution has the recipes for all of our products, and it gives us a product variance based on our actual menu mix versus theoretical usage. We get an over and a short on every product, on every day that we do an inventory on that product," says Backes. While GDK has been using PAR's inventory control system for so long that it's difficult to make cost comparisons, Backes believes that a QSR adding such a system would see food cost savings.

InForm's scheduling solution provides GDK with better visibility into the other key QSR cost center—hourly labor. The system costs out weekly schedules versus anticipated sales based on a four-week average forecast, taking into account the different pay rates of different employees. "We see this in action every week; InForm allows us to make smarter decisions on costs versus forecasts," says Backes. "The two major costs we want to control are our food costs and our labor costs, and those are the two things that this system keeps track of the best."



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Centralized Control Streamlines Store-Level Changes

GDK also saves both time and man-hours with the centralized functionality of the PAR In-Synch module. “Any type of price or menu change, or coupon offer—anything to do with our main database—can be done one time at the home office level,” rather than having to be physically performed at each restaurant, says Backes. In addition to performing one man-hour centrally versus a total of 11 man-hours at all its restaurants, GDK also saves on travel time, since the company’s furthest locations are three to four hours apart in central Pennsylvania. Without the centralized menu function, “An above-restaurant person would spend the majority of their time programming versus operating the restaurants,” notes Backes.

Once a change is implemented, “we can then schedule a download for a specific time when the change will become active. When the store manager walks in that morning, all the changes that are needed will have already been done,” notes Backes.

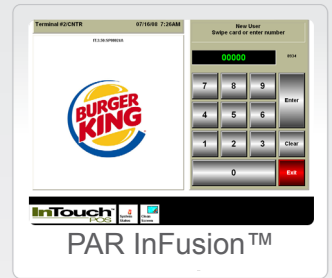
In addition, the PAR application allows Backes to set up three distinct store groups, corresponding to the three established BURGER KING marketing areas GDK operates in. For the stores in each area, Backes can easily customize menus and pricing, as well as comply with local tax regulations, while still operating from a single centralized database.

Backes also likes that PAR’s software is user-friendly and easy to learn. “It’s very easy to train new employees,” he notes. “The InTouch touch screen technology allows for the proper ordering sequence for both individual sandwiches and value meals. The cashiers can easily add or subtract items such as cheese or bacon with a sandwich, and whether it’s served with fries or onion rings—the system brings them up in the proper sequence.”

In addition to being customizable to the BURGER KING menu, the InTouch solution has also adapted to the rise of alternate payment options. “Gift cards and credit cards are totally integrated into the payment system, so everything is tied together, which gives us great cash control procedures,” reports Backes. In the newest GDK restaurants, customers can swipe their own credit cards (rather than handing them to the cashier), saving even more transaction time. “This is a major advantage compared to our competitors, and even to other BURGER KING operators who don’t have an integrated payment system,” he says.

Backes adds that the adaptability of PAR’s products has been aided by PAR’s Professional Services Team, which has proven very helpful with programming or technology questions as well as upgrades. “Wes Frye at PAR has been the most professional, friendly, knowledgeable and easy to work with person that I’ve dealt with during my 25-plus year career,” says Backes.

This level of service and these relationships have allowed GDK to “continually upgrade on a store by store basis, as necessary, without starting over,” he adds. “Some other BURGER KING franchisees are switching over now and it’s a whole new thing for them. But for us, as PAR has changed or added features, we’ve been able to add on to what we have.”



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