

Profit Ability

By Andrew Leibs
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Few industries have more established practices than food service. It's a mature market, but one that has been slow to automate, which creates opportunities for technology companies. One such innovator is LionWise, which has released a new point-of-sale system to help fast-prep and table service restaurants move many day-to-day operations from the back office to POS stations out front. The LionWise system enables managers and waitstaff to stay close to customers while automating a broad range of business functions, including inventory monitoring, changing menu prices and availability, and adjusting checks. "Restaurants historically have a high mortality rate," said LionWise president Scott Filiault. "Most restaurants will benefit from any product that will help them avoid pitfalls and proactively manage their business." LionWise was founded in 2004 following the sale of Lilly Software Associates, which made scheduling software to automate manufacturing. Founder Richard Lilly, vice president of product development David Layne and Filiault, who served as information technology director, make up the LionWise executive team. LionWise is intended to help restaurants ramp up operational efficiency across the board.

Filiault said LionWise is targeting independent restaurants "to help them compete with regional and national chains," though the product has applications at almost any venue serving food, from school cafeterias to sports stadiums to casinos. Some of the main benefits include improved cash and inventory management, enhanced customer service through improved visibility into server performance, and reporting tools that lead to more informed buying and promotional decisions. The LionWise system will have many different users, including bussers, waitstaff and floor managers, Filiault said.

"The intuitive system, built on Microsoft's .NET technology, is sophisticated enough for businesses to take things up a notch with (up-selling) and cross-selling of special items," Filiault said. Though much of the company's two-year history has centered on research and product development, LionWise has had positive feedback from a number of test sites, including Popovers on the Square in Portsmouth. "It's working phenomenally well," said Popovers manager Lisa Spector. "I love its functionality; you don't have to page forward or back -- everything I need is on one screen." Popovers can manage its entire baked goods inventory from one menu that can be broken down by product for automatic ordering and restocking. "One of the things I especially like is that LionWise was willing to accommodate the changes we needed to run our business," said Spector. Popovers owner John Tinios, who also owns The Galley Hatch in Hampton, is also enthusiastic about LionWise. "By using the LionWise system, we are able to gain up-to-the-minute visibility and tracking of costs, sales, inventory and server performance, which helps us maintain the best possible customer service while increasing our profitability," said Tinios. Filiault said he expects LionWise to grow quickly in 2007.

"We have a very aggressive outlook," says Filiault. "We will be expanding throughout New England in 2007 and looking to make gains in New York and Pennsylvania."