

The business case for cloud POS in QSRs: Building always-on, anywhere operations

Why enterprise quick-service brands are moving to cloud-based point-of-sale systems to drive speed, accuracy and resiliency

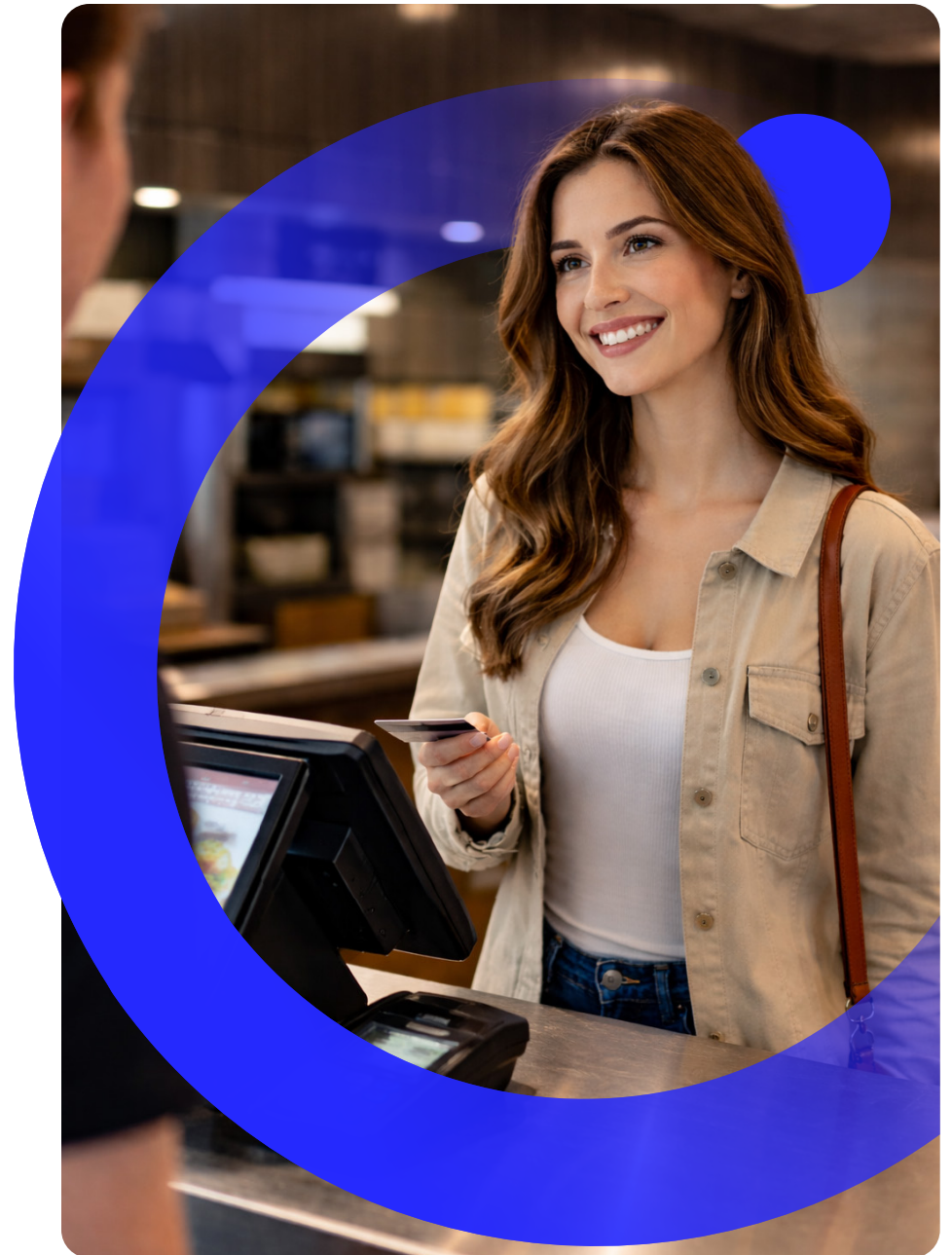
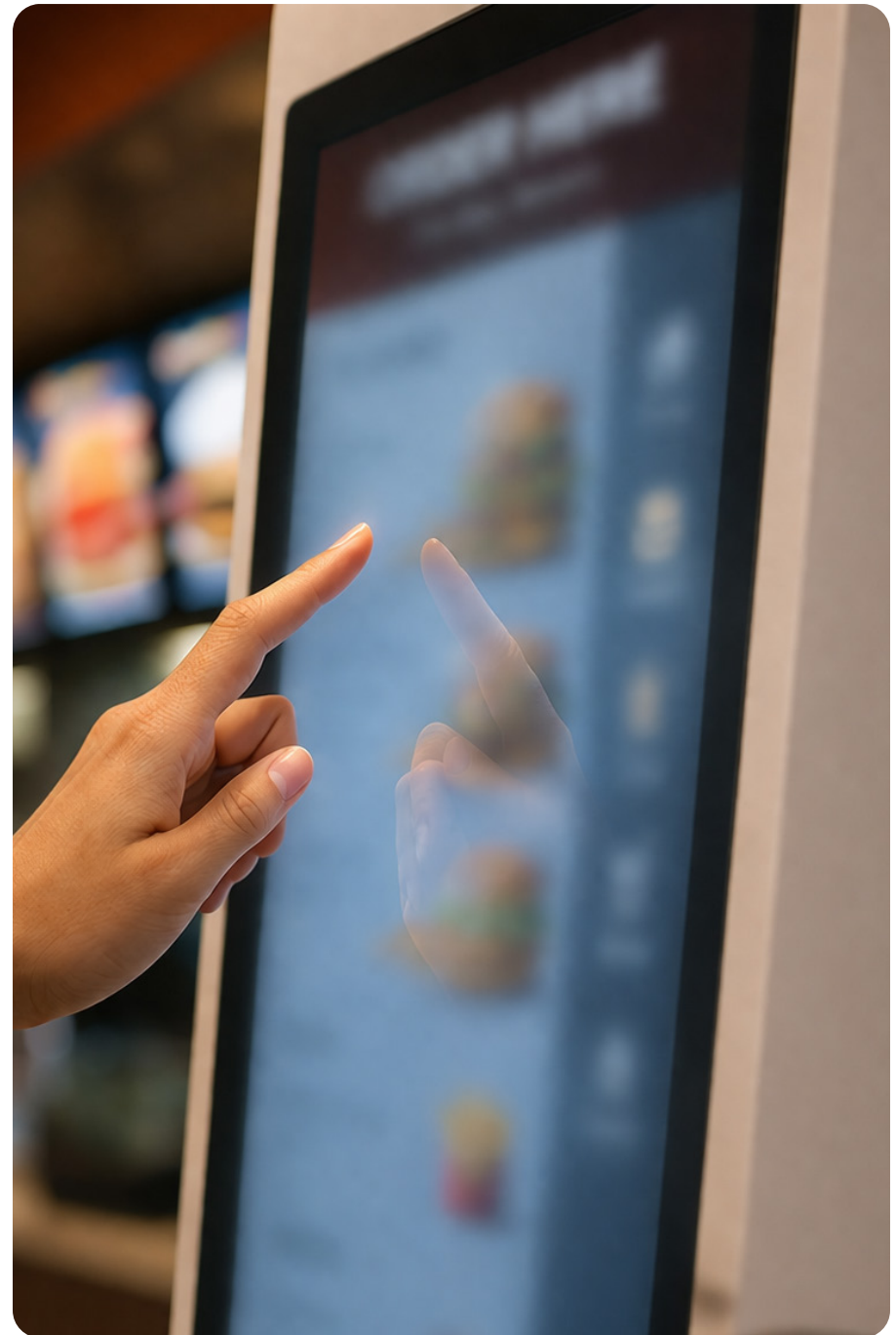


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Introduction

Enterprise quick service restaurants (QSRs) are operating in a fundamentally different environment than just a few years ago. According to recent research from Global Payments, operators face rising risks, with 45% citing staffing shortages, 34% pointing to network outages and 32% highlighting POS downtime as top concerns¹. At the same time, only 18% describe their organization as “highly resilient” technologically, highlighting a significant gap between expectations and reality.

Layered on top of these operational pressures are powerful consumer and market trends. Over two-thirds of restaurant sales are now ordered and consumed off-premise, representing 67% of total volume.² Mobile ordering is now mainstream. More than 7 in 10 consumers have placed at least one mobile QSR order.³

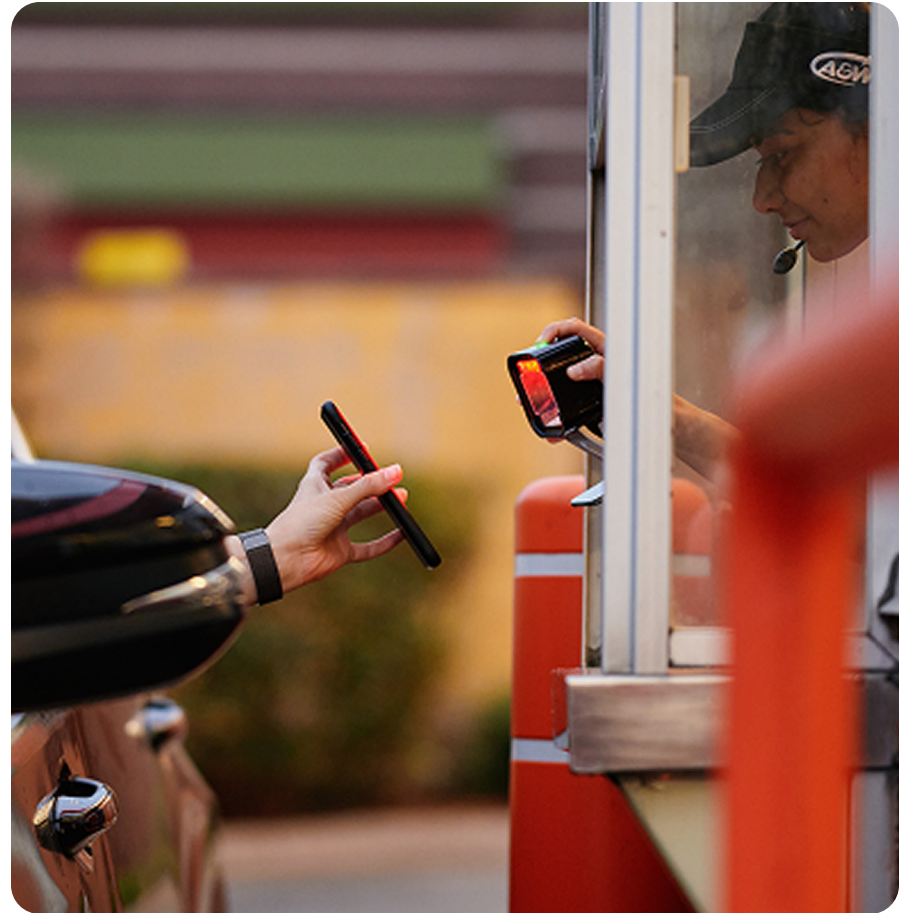
This report examines how these shifts are reshaping QSR technology decisions. In doing so, it makes the business case that cloud point-of-sale (POS) has become the foundation QSRs need to deliver speed, accuracy, flexibility and resiliency across increasingly complex omnichannel operations.



The omnichannel reality and its demands

QSR guests no longer follow a single predictable path to purchase. Today, a typical brand might serve the same guest across drive thru, mobile, web, kiosk and third-party delivery in a single week. The rise in off-premise interactions shows that the center of gravity has shifted away from on-premise dining:

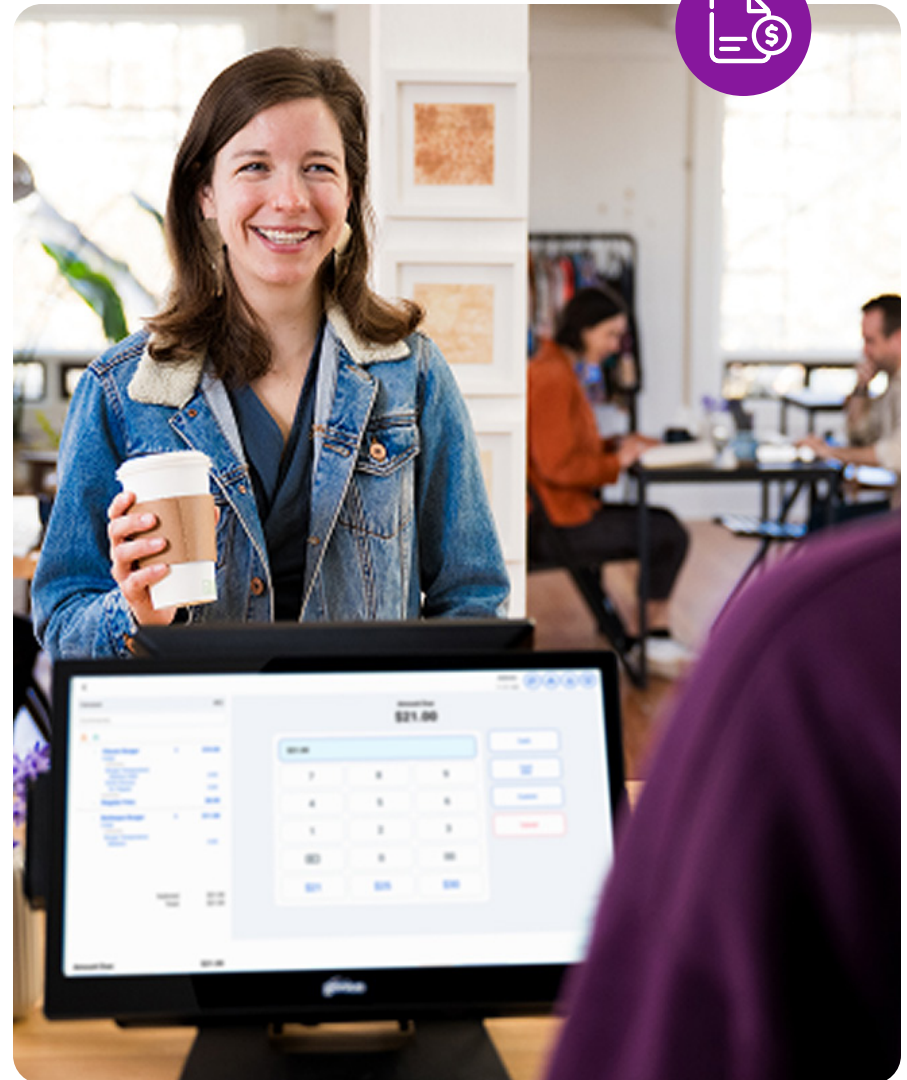
- ✓ **Drive thru** remains a critical pillar of this ecosystem. Nearly half of fast food orders (43%) are placed at the drive thru, where brands continue to invest in speed and convenience.⁴
- ✓ Digital self-service has become equally important inside the four walls. An estimated 80% of QSRs have deployed **self-service kiosks**⁵ and 65% of consumers say they would use kiosks to place orders.⁶
- ✓ Mobile ordering is now standard. 71% of consumers have ordered from a QSR via **mobile app** and they expect experiences that are fast, intuitive and consistent with in-store service.⁷



Unifying payments to meet omnichannel demand

This omnichannel complexity is transforming QSR technology infrastructure. Brands that synchronize orders, payments and fulfillment across every touchpoint are better positioned to deliver on these omnichannel consumer expectations. In fact, 87% of QSR brands say unifying payments across channels is essential for cost savings and for building a single, coherent view of their customers.⁸

QSRs are now acting on their need for solutions that better match today's operational and customer experience demands. 49% of QSR executives say they would consider switching POS providers.⁹ In Global Payments research, only a small minority of QSRs still operate primarily on-premise technology ecosystems; 51% of respondents describe their technology environment as hybrid — combining cloud and on-premises systems— while 31% say they are primarily cloud-based.



Why legacy POS holds QSRs back

These changes also reveal the limits of legacy systems built for simpler, single-channel operations. Legacy and on-premises POS systems remain at the core of many QSR operations, but they are increasingly misaligned with how brands do business today. Most of these platforms were designed for dine-in-dominant operations with predictable traffic patterns and limited order channels, not for highly variable demand across drive thru, mobile, kiosk, web and delivery. As a result, they tend to create friction at the very moments when speed, flexibility and consistency matter most.

Operational friction at enterprise scale

From an operational standpoint, older systems typically struggle to unify customer and payment data across channels. Instead, data is often trapped in separate systems, such as:

- In-store transactions
- Online orders
- Delivery marketplaces

These environments force teams into manual reconciliation and make it difficult to understand guest behavior end to end. Scaling across locations can be equally challenging. Rolling out the same configuration, menu and pricing across dozens or hundreds of units becomes a time-consuming, error-prone exercise.



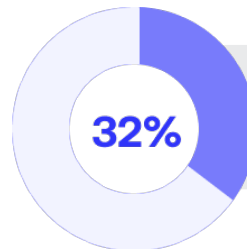
Slow change and stalled innovation

Change management is another pain point. Legacy systems often cannot push menu changes, price updates or limited-time offers instantly, especially when each store runs its own server or local database. That slows time to market for new initiatives and increases the risk of inconsistencies that frustrate guests and staff. These limitations become especially visible when brands add new channels. Integrating a mobile app or delivery partner can require custom development, extensive testing and ongoing maintenance that strain already stretched IT teams.

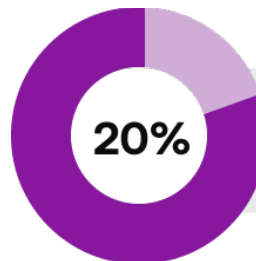
Legacy systems as a resiliency risk

Resiliency is often the most critical concern. Systems built for a more static operating model are now being asked to support a dynamic, omnichannel environment.

In Global Payments survey, 32% of respondents cite legacy POS infrastructure as a core concern for maintaining operations during outages. Only 20% are very confident that their POS can continue to operate if the primary network fails. This leaves a large majority of brands exposed to revenue loss, longer lines and negative guest experiences when disruptions occur.



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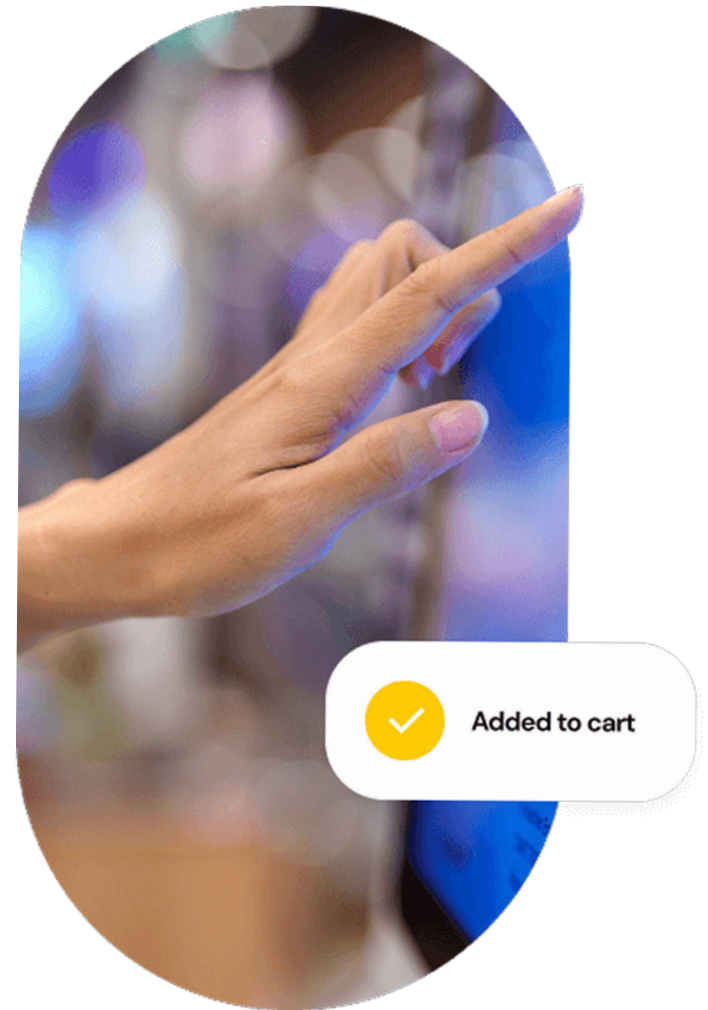
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How QSRs can close the resiliency gap

The resiliency gap is not theoretical. Operators feel it day to day. In Global Payments research, only 18% of respondents describe their organization's technology as "highly resilient," while a sizable portion rate their resiliency as moderate or even somewhat vulnerable. When asked specifically about their ability to maintain POS and payment operations during network outages, only 20% express strong confidence that they can keep running as usual. This lack of assurance has direct implications for guest experience and revenue protection.

When operators dig into what drives their concerns, three themes emerge

- **Modern vs. legacy POS infrastructure:** Resilient brands run on platforms designed to handle disruption and omnichannel demand.
- **Strategic investment vs. deferred spend:** Resilient operators treat resiliency as a planned, funded priority, investing in upgrades and architecture changes.
- **Redundancy vs. single points of failure:** Resilient stacks are built with backup paths and failover options so no single system can take down the operation





Using cloud and edge to close the gaps

Cloud and edge architecture offers a way to address these concerns. In this model, centralized cloud management handles configuration, reporting, analytics and enterprise-wide updates, while localized edge processing supports fast, reliable transactions—even when network connectivity is degraded.

This combination improves speed, supports continued operations during outages and reduces dependence on on-site servers that can be costly and complex to maintain. It also shifts economics away from periodic, large capital upgrades toward more predictable subscription-based models, which can be easier to align with budgets.

Beyond the technical details, operators see resiliency as a core component of both brand reputation and everyday execution. In open-ended survey responses, many describe resiliency as uninterrupted guest experiences and consistent business operations, even when systems fail or external conditions change.

4 value drivers of cloud POS

There is growing interest in how cloud POS can support today's challenges and tomorrow's opportunities. 28% of QSR operators plan to invest in payment and transaction systems over the next 12–24 months, according to Global Payments research.



1. Faster service

Speed remains a defining metric in QSR and a clear point of differentiation. Cloud POS supports faster service by centralizing workflows and enabling consistent, optimized processes across locations. Because configuration lives in the cloud, updates can be pushed to every device at once, reducing variability that slows teams down.

Cloud architecture makes it easier to add devices during peak periods. Tablets, mobile terminals and additional kiosks can be brought online without the complexity of provisioning local servers, allowing operators to line-bust or open additional ordering points as needed. When combined with edge processing, this setup supports high transaction volumes with low latency, helping brands keep up with AI-enabled drive-thru benchmarks and other emerging speed expectations.

2. Better order accuracy

Accuracy is closely tied to both guest satisfaction and profitability. Cloud POS improves accuracy by enforcing a single source of truth for menus, modifiers and pricing, so every channel — from kiosk to mobile app to front counter draws from the same configuration. That reduces the risk of mismatches that can confuse guests and staff.

Integration with kitchen display systems and other back-of-house tools further strengthens accuracy. Orders flow directly from POS to kitchen in a structured, predictable format, reducing miscommunication and manual transcription. Self-ordering kiosks and digital confirmation screens let guests review their order before submitting, which in many operations reduces remakes and waste.

3. Greater speed to market

Brands need to bring new ideas to market quickly, such as limited-time menu items, loyalty offers, new pricing strategies or third-party delivery partnerships. Cloud POS accelerates this process by allowing central teams to configure changes once and deploy them everywhere, rather than managing store-by-store updates.

An API-first architecture also makes it easier to integrate with new partners and tools, from mobile apps to AI-driven personalization engines. Instead of lengthy custom projects, many enhancements can be delivered through standardized interfaces, reducing time and risk. For operators planning near-term investments in automation, payments and data-driven capabilities, this flexibility can be a key differentiator.

4. Flexibility in ordering channels

Cloud POS also provides the flexibility needed to support guests wherever they choose to interact. A device-agnostic approach means the same core platform can power kiosks, mobile ordering, drive thru lanes, curbside workflows and even pop-up locations. Operators can add or relocate terminals to match demand — shifting capacity to drive thru during peak commuting hours, for example, or expanding kiosk presence in high-traffic dining rooms.

Because all of these channels connect to the same underlying system, orders can be routed and fulfilled more efficiently and guest profiles can be maintained across touchpoints. That unified view is increasingly important as brands experiment with tailored offers, loyalty integrations and personalized experiences.



Making the move: key evaluation criteria

For QSR leaders considering a move to cloud POS, a structured evaluation framework helps keep technology decisions aligned with business goals.

Start with an honest baseline

Start with an honest assessment of your current state. How often do outages or POS issues impact the ability to serve guests? How quickly can menu changes, price adjustments or new promotions be deployed across all locations? What proportion of the IT budget is devoted to maintaining legacy infrastructure versus funding innovation?

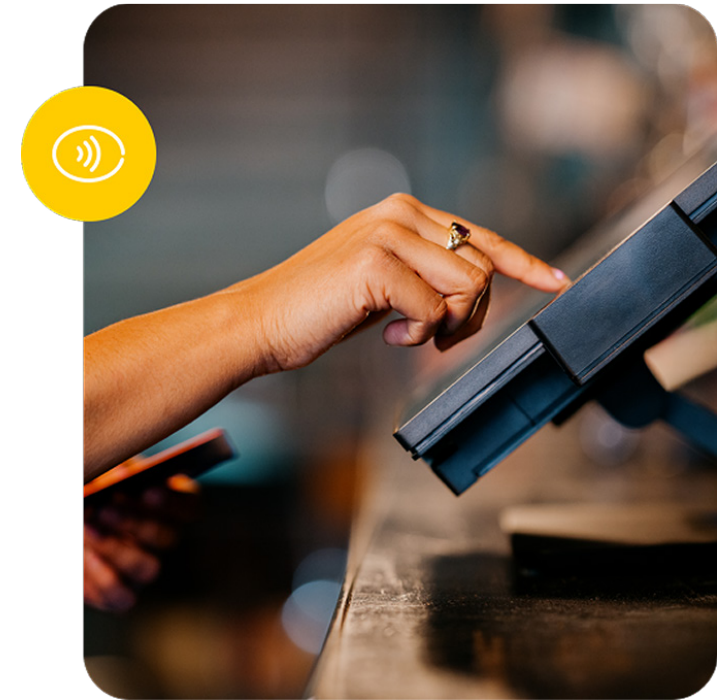
Define what success looks like

Define clear success metrics up front. Common measures include uptime, transactions per hour during peak periods, order accuracy rates, time to market for new features and IT efficiency (for example, hours spent on routine maintenance versus strategic projects). These benchmarks can guide vendor conversations and provide a baseline for measuring the impact of modernization efforts over time.

Choose partners who can scale with you

When evaluating cloud POS providers, determine which capabilities matter most. Experience with multi-unit operations, an integrated ecosystem that spans POS, kiosks, drive thru, kitchen management, loyalty and payments and a cloud-and-edge architecture that balances central control with local performance are all critical.

A strong API platform, robust implementation support and a clear, credible product roadmap round out the checklist. Together, these criteria help ensure that the chosen platform can support today's requirements and the next wave of QSR innovation.





Conclusion

As the QSR landscape continues to evolve, cloud POS is emerging as a key enabler of speed, accuracy and resiliency. With 82% of operators already running cloud or hybrid infrastructure, brands still relying on legacy systems face increasing pressure to adapt. In doing so, QSRs can build a technology foundation to support the next decade of omnichannel growth and guest expectations.

Global Payments provides modern, cloud-based point-of-sale and commerce solutions designed for high-volume QSR, fast casual and enterprise foodservice operators with Genius™. By connecting ordering channels, kitchen operations and integrated payments in a single ecosystem, Genius helps brands accelerate service, improve reliability and deliver consistent guest experiences across every touchpoint. If you'd like to connect, [reach out to our team.](#)

¹Global Payments survey of 114 senior leaders at QSR companies ran from Nov. 26 – Dec 22, 2025.

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