

NACS hosts growing group of self-service suppliers

By Joseph Grove

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LAS VEGAS—The annual tradeshow of the National Association of Convenience Stores opened yesterday at the Las Vegas Convention Center. The number of exhibitors focused on kiosks and ATMs remained small among about 1,400 vendors of soft drinks, energy drinks, candy bars, adult magazines, cup racks and car wash systems. But the c-store world continues to adopt not only the technology but the philosophy of self-service.

"You're seeing more companies be very aggressive with self-service," said Jeff Lenard, a spokesman for NACS. "I don't know that we're at a tipping point yet, but it's hardly unique anymore."



Pan-Oston produces many self-checkout units, including this tabletop unit that includes biometrics for use in loyalty programs or other applications.

While pay-at-the-pump and the ATM are the mainstays of c-store self-service technology, other applications are gaining ground.

Radiant Systems has deployed self-ordering terminals in WaWa, Sheetz and Rutter's c-stores. Spokesman James Hervey led booth visitors on a whirlwind tour of the various applications his company has developed for their fast-food products, calling the deployments a great fit for the c-store space.

"The ROI is almost automatic," he said. "First of all, your food waste goes to zero almost instantly."

In addition, Hervey said, the self-service applications are three times more successful at up-selling items like cheese and chips. "The machine never forgets to ask, and there is no embarrassment factor for the customer saying yes."

The self-ordering terminals link to the POS terminals, eliminating the need for a second cashier at the food station.



James Hervey demonstrates the self-ordering application Radiant Systems developed for the fast-food products of BP c-stores.

Self-checkout is moving from the grocer to the c-store. Self-service new-comer Pan-Oston showed its Utopia line, applications that can be custom-configured for the small spaces typical of the c-store environment as well as for those of the larger food retailers. Units can be positioned on the floor, with or without a security scale, or on table tops, with biometric capability.

"The biometrics can be used to reduce the number of keys and cards c-store operators have to give employees," said Russell Strickland, self-scan project manager for Pan-Oston. "They can be used for loyalty programs as well, when they're customer-facing."

For more stories about [c-store](#) applications of self-service and [ATMs](#), follow the links.

NACS is an international trade association representing more than 2,200 retail and 1,800 supplier members. The U.S. convenience store industry, with more than 140,600 stores across the country, posted \$495.3 billion in total sales in 2005, \$344.2 billion coming from motor fuel sales.

Lenard expected about 25,000 people to attend the show, which was first produced in 1961.