Mobile sales and reconciliation lightning fast with Black Label Solutions

Challenge

- Event Cinemas wanted a more efficient way to manage payments and reconciliations for gift cards and vouchers sold outside the cinema
- It needed a PCI compliant solution that would work over a 3G network and function without dedicated power

Solution

- Event Cinemas partnered with Black Label to implement a mobile POS solution that interfaced with its back-end Vista ticketing and inventory system
- It has extended the use of the solution to enable payment of food and beverages at pop-up stands and events

Benefits

- Reconciliation of payments made outside the cinema are now automatic, reducing errors and fraud
- Productivity is up and labour costs reduced
- Service has also been improved with customers able to quickly tap and pay and receive their receipts via email
- The anytime, anywhere transactional solution has opened the door for further service innovations

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A gift card or voucher for the cinema may seem like an easy gift but with movie theatres often tucked away in the far corners of a shopping centre, they are not always top of mind or very convenient to buy. This was the dilemma Event Cinemas faced before deciding to step outside the cinemas and target new markets to increase sales. The challenge was finding the right solution to manage transactions made at the pop-up stores it created.

Initially, Event Cinemas employed a very manual process to sell the gift cards outside the cinemas. It would "pre-sell" a number of cards within its ticketing and inventory system and then sell them offsite with payments made via cash or card.

The EFTPOS system used for these transactions was entirely separate from the Vista solution, making reconciliation and attribution back to each cinema's cost centre painful. The entire process was inefficient and subject to fraud and error.

Justin Fenwick, General Manager of Information Technology for Entertainment at Amalgamated Holdings Limited, said, "We want to provide our customers with the best possible service and have embraced innovation as a way of achieving that. So when it came time to re-engineer the gift card process, we sought out the latest technology and a partner who could understand our unique requirements."

Event Cinemas came across the right hardware first; Leo, a 3G enabled device from CommBank. Black Label came recommended by CommBank because of their experience with Leo and the payments ecosystem.

"We have taken the approach that it's better to fail fast and learn a lot from it and Black Label was a good fit in this regard. They were willing to work with us in a fairly agile state and there was minimal upfront investment,"

JUSTIN FENWICK, General Manager of Information Technology for Entertainment, Amalgamated Holdings Limited

Ground breaking integration

Event Cinemas wanted more than just a mobile app or cloud-based web store. The solution needed to interface with Vista in order for transactions to be reconciled back to each individual cinema. The solution also needed to work with Event Cinema's other existing peripherals, including ticket and receipt printers. Flexibility to support multiple models was important.

Black Label was set the challenge of building our a solution that was PCI compliant and interfaced with Vista using the vendor's APIs.

The level of integration was ground breaking and ultimately enabled automatic reconciliation between dozens of payment terminals and cinemas across the country. First though, the solution was piloted for three months at limited sites.

Justin said, "We learned a lot from the pilot period but Black Label met all of our success criteria around the availability of the service and the ease of use and efficiency of the application. Black Label was also very good at taking on feedback and adjusting the solution as the pilot progressed."

Four months later the solution was rolled out to more than 30 locations Australia-wide. It was a smooth rollout without any major issues.

Justin commended Black Label's flexibility to work with Event Cinema's timeframes. "We had some starting and stopping while we put in place the internal resources we needed to be successful. Black Label was very patient throughout and were quick to deploy their team when we were ready to proceed. As a result, the larger deployment took only four or five months."

Enhanced service and increased volumes

Now, Event Cinemas is able to efficiently sell gift cards and vouchers at pop-up stores and events such as charity golf days. In key periods like the run up to Christmas or Father's Day, it will set up stores in high-traffic areas with just two to three staff equipped with the mPOS devices. The solution gets hit hard during these times but has proved to be successful.

Service and efficiency has improved even while the volume of transactions has increased. The elimination of manual processing has also reduced fraud and errors.

Justin said, "The process was so inefficient before that we risked missing out on business. Customers would see the queue and walk on by. Now, we can serve customers faster and have instant reconciliation with our back-office systems. Our staff are more productive, driving down labour costs."

"Black Label has been really good at listening and understanding our priorities which is important when you're dealing with heavy deliverables and critical deadlines. Their transparency and agility throughout the project management process has also been key."
JUSTIN FENWICK, General Manager of Information Technology for Entertainment, Amalgamated Holdings Limited

Unlocking new opportunities

Once the technology was in place, Event Cinemas sought to extend its value and apply it to other areas of their operations. The mPOS solution is now used to enable payment at pop-up food and beverage stands within the cinemas and also at their annual outdoor Moonlight Cinema events where convenience is key.

"We are able set up and sell food and beverages closer to the customer so they don't always need to join the queue at the bar. They can just quickly tap to pay and enter their email

address if they'd like a receipt," said Justin. "It's an anytime, anyplace transactional solution and it will continue to evolve. It comes down to technology innovation and operational imagination."

Commenting on the relationship with Black Label, Justin said it had been refreshing to work with a partner who was able to translate their requirements into real business solutions – even when the goal posts kept shifting.