



The “**Top 10**” questions to ask before deciding on florist software for your flower shop.

1. Do I have to pay wire service fees every month?

Many (expensive) point-of-sale systems are sold by large wire services. If you purchase or use one of these systems for your flower shop, you will be forced to pay a monthly “membership” fee for as long as you own your system. With the average membership fee running approximately \$300 a month, over 60 months, you will end up paying over \$18,000 extra if you purchase your system from a wire service. You will be stuck in what most florists refer to as “POS jail” and will be unable to get out once you sign on the dotted line.

2. Are there any upfront license fees?

Most new software used today does not require users to purchase an “upfront” license. This new type of software is referred to as “software as a service” or “SaaS”. Many POS vendors would like you to pay a \$5,000 – \$10,000 license fee and finance it over 48-60 months. Don’t fall into that trap.

3. Do I need to buy a server?

Most older, non-SaaS systems require you to buy a local server that is usually in the range of \$5,000 or more. Most servers are expensive and complex to maintain. Not only that, you are constantly forced to keep buying indefinite “updates” from the same vendor. Make 100% sure that any point-of-sale software you purchase includes ALL updates forever – otherwise, it will be mandatory to “upgrade” your system in a few years and pay another “license” fee. Just ask any florist that is being forced to “upgrade” their outdated POS system that they purchased only a few years ago.

4. Can I use my own computers?

Many older systems use what’s referred to as “dumb” terminals - commonly running on UNIX (a very, very complicated programming language). Make sure you don’t have to purchase any overpriced terminals directly from the vendor. These terminals are often marked up 100% more than what they are commonly available for online. You can get a very solid, brand new PC/monitor these days for \$400 – which includes a two-year warranty. You can also use new Macintosh computers with our software.

5. Is the order entry form all on one page?

If you have ever taken multiple flower orders by phone, you know how frustrating it can be to have to switch to different screens to enter a single order. This dramatically slows you down. Make sure your order form is contained on “one” screen. If you have to keep clicking on “F” keys all the time, this slows you down considerably and makes training new users much harder.

6. Are all the software updates included?

Many of today's florists are being forced to pay \$10,000 or more to "upgrade" a wire service system they just purchased a few years ago. Make sure that all updates will be included for the life of your system. Be certain to get this in writing.

7. Is it Windows-based?

Many systems are "character-based" and usually run on some form of UNIX. These are normally very complicated and convoluted to use. Make sure your system is Windows-based (meaning that you can use a mouse). Also, make sure it is "browser" based so you can run it from any computer with an internet connection.

8. Do I have to "rekey" website orders?

Many POS shop management systems do not have a direct interface or module for their website. This means that every website order they receive has to be "re-keyed" by another employee. This process takes time and is error prone.

9. Can I import all of my existing customer records from my old system?

Make sure you can import all of your customers into the new system and don't have to "re-key" them one by one.

10. Can I keep my existing account ID's in the new system?

Many systems force you to "rename" all of your existing accounts within your old system. Make sure you can use the exact same ID's or else your customers and staff will be very confused.

11. Are there any website transaction fees?

Many vendors (especially large wire services) charge upwards of \$3-\$4 per website order when you use their website with their POS system. Make sure there are no transaction fees associated with your website that's linked to your POS system.

12. Are there any mandatory training fees?

Some POS vendors try and work a mandatory "training fee" into their contracts, usually in the range of \$2,000-\$3,000. If the system is so difficult to use that you need someone on-site to train you, it is usually an indication that the system is not very user-friendly.

13. Are there any mandatory on-site installation fees?

Again, don't get stuck with an on-site "installation" fee totaling over several thousand dollars. In most major cities, you should be able to find a local person to set up your network in a few hours. Most shops actually do it themselves in order to save on fees. It is basically the same procedure as setting up a new, home PC.

14. Can I use my own credit card processor?

Many vendors force you to use their credit card processing services. This is so they can "lock" you in. If you don't pay your bill for any reason (dispute) they can take those funds without your permission. Don't get caught in this trap. Make sure you can use any vendor you wish with your new POS system. Most of today's vendors are VeriSign/PayPal PayFlow Pro compatible.

Okay - that was technically fourteen points - but hopefully we've given you a good starting point as to where to begin and what questions to ask when you are trying to decide on a new POS system.



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