Mobile Purchase-to-Pay and Inventory

Streamlining processes and removing paper

Introduction

Across the hospitality industry, the process of ordering, buying, receiving and stocking products is important and time-consuming.

Food and beverage is the biggest cost to the business after staffing, so you have to manage it accurately. Not having the right products on hand means missing items on the menu, disappointed customers and staff under pressure.

Paperless solutions

Even with systems in place to manage the purchase-to-pay process, it can involve a lot of admin and be prone to error – especially if systems are not integrated or rely on paper for key elements. It's easy for a delivery note or invoice to go missing, or information on a handwritten note to be mis-keyed into the system. Correcting mistakes takes time for both you and your suppliers. Left uncorrected, they're likely to cost you money.

Purchase-to-pay and inventory systems such as the Fourth Solution have revolutionised this process, with features such as paper-free invoicing, electronic ordering and simplified inventory management. Now Fourth has taken another important step by adding mobile technology to the mix. This gives the opportunity to remove all paper from the process and liberates managers from the desktop computer in the back office.

In this white paper we look at some specific examples of how this works and what it means.

Ordering

Ordering is an important part of the process where it doesn't make sense to force staff to the back office to do their work. It's all too easy for a manager to see that stock of a particular item is low, make a mental note or jot down a reminder – then forget to enter it into the system when they finally get back to their computer.

Mobile technology means you can walk around the storeroom, see actual stock levels vs theoretical, check what's already on order, then create a new order there and then.

Searches, drafts, templates and repeat orders all help speed up the ordering process. Plus you ensure purchasing compliance by applying order limits and only allowing products that are needed at a particular site to be bought.

You stay on top of orders with electronic responses from suppliers and order statuses. And it's easy to make sure stock levels are correct when you can see stock-on-hand, stock-on-order and par-levels for each item, plus in-app notifications when it's nearly time to place an order.
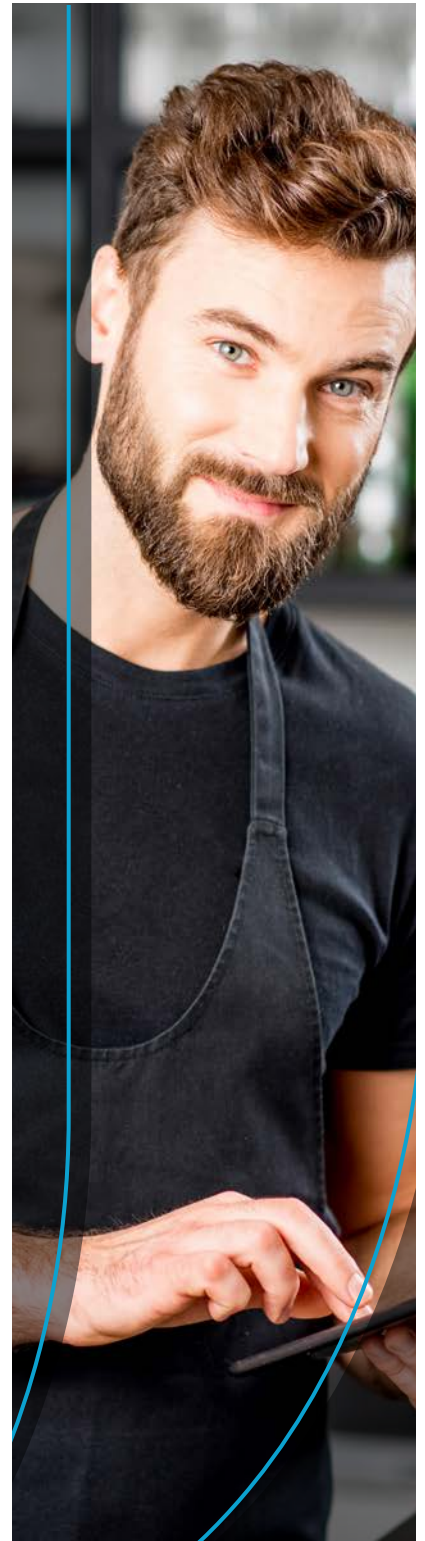
Inventory Challenges	Benefits of mobile apps
Staff need to be in back office to place orders.	Staff can place orders anywhere, anytime.
Paperwork in different places makes it difficult to stay on top of orders.	Order status is always at your fingertips.
It's hard to assess stock levels at any given time.	Stock level information is available instantly
Purchasing policies aren't always followed.	Purchasing is always compliant.
Processes are inefficient and wasteful.	Admin time is saved.
High risk of products being out of stock.	Risk of out-of-stock products is reduced.

Goods receiving

Receiving deliveries is a vivid example of theory meeting practice head-on. Once upon a time, your ordering software would be sitting on a PC in the office, while the delivery itself took place on the pavement in front of the restaurant or in the loading bay behind the hotel.

By using mobile technology, staff can now log orders on a smartphone or tablet wherever and whenever goods are delivered. No more paperwork at risk of being lost, rained on or blown down the street. No more illegible handwriting because staff can capture information digitally as they receive the delivery.

It's easy to check pending deliveries and swipe to accept or reject items or amend quantities or weights. Checks are completed against the original order rather than the Goods Received Note (GRN), which means that any errors can spotted straight away.

And because entered data goes directly into the system, it's immediately available for review by central purchasing departments or other departments.

Receiving Challenges	Benefits of mobile apps
Goods checked against the GRN, not the original order.	Goods are always checked against the original order.
Staff have to be in the back office to fully check items.	Staff can check items when the delivery is actually happening, wherever they are.
Paperwork is easily lost.	No paperwork.
Re-keying of information leads to errors.	No re-keying.
You mistakenly pay too much for items.	You only pay for what you actually receive.
Inaccuracies can damage supplier relationships.	Accuracy and transparency strengthens relationships.

Inventory counting

Pens and count sheets are traditional, but we all know how easily they can lead to errors. Re-keying data is a common source of problems and delays are inevitable if what's on the sheet doesn't match what's on the shelf.

Counting on a smartphone tablet both speeds up the process and removes the need for re-keying. Staff don't have to refer to the sheet – they simply count what's in front of them. It's easy to create and manage stock areas on the fly and to add 'write-in' items.

You don't even need an online connection. If you're working in a basement or other area with no cell or Wi-Fi coverage, you can download all the information you need to your device. Once you've completed the count, the data is uploaded to the system when you are reconnected to the network.
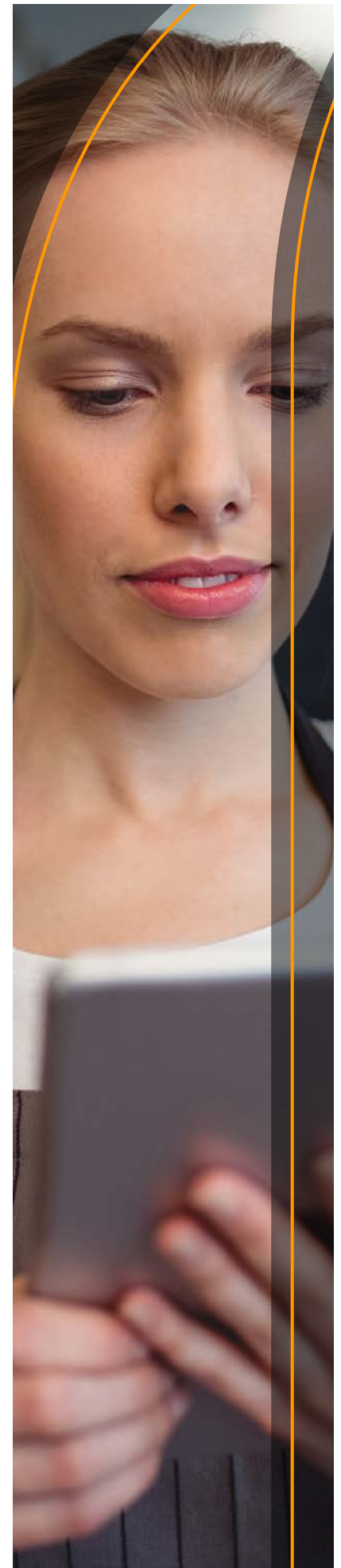
Conclusion

The purchase-to-pay and inventory process is a fundamental part of hospitality operations, where speed and accuracy are vital. Using mobile technology recognises the way sites actually work, by enabling managers and staff to carry out key processes on the go.

It helps eliminate paper from the process, reducing costs and errors. It also liberates managers from the back office, giving them more time front-of-house where they can keep customers satisfied.

What's more, it improves the employee experience by giving them the right tools for the job, allowing them to complete tasks quickly and easily. And with a fully integrated system, it reduces administration and eliminates errors as data flows accurately through the system.

All in all, by identifying real-world problems and providing practical solutions, mobile technology makes ordering, receiving and counting goods easier, faster and more effective than ever.

Fourth's mobile solutions for Purchase-to-Pay and Inventory Management

As part of Fourth's ongoing mission to eliminate paper and desktop computers, reduce administration and improve employee engagement, we've developed new mobile apps that allow you to complete key tasks on the go.

For purchase-to-pay and inventory management, this includes:
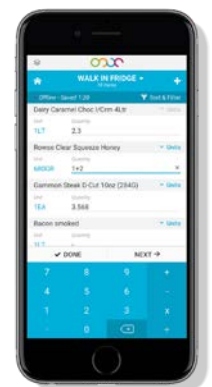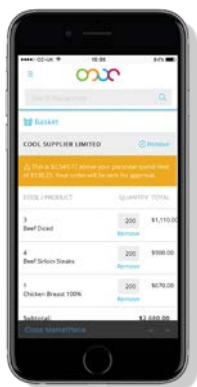
Ordering

Reduces administration time and ensures compliance by allowing you to quickly and easily create and place orders on the go.

Receiving

Ensures accuracy and speeds up goods receiving by allowing you to check deliveries at the point of delivery, and input information directly into the system

Counting

Speeding up shelf-to-sheet counting by allowing you to enter stock counts directly into the system. Also allows offline counting when you don't have an internet connection.

About Fourth

Fourth provides end-to-end, best-in-class technology and services for the restaurant and hospitality industries. Their procurement, inventory and workforce management solutions, coupled with the industry's most complete data and analytics suite, give operators the actionable insights they need to control costs, scale profitability, improve employee engagement, and maintain compliance. Since its merger with US-based HotSchedules, Fourth serves more than 7,000 customers across 120,000 locations globally.

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