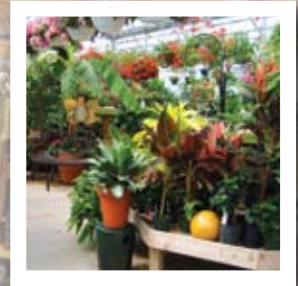


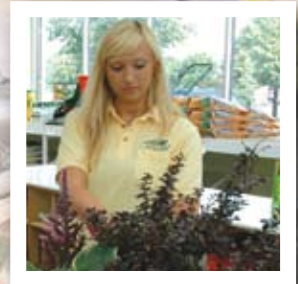
Point Of Sale Technology for the Garden Center



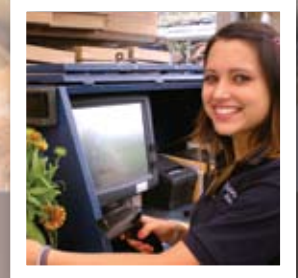
Inventory Control



Ease Of Use



Speed At Checkout



Customer Loyalty



RCG The Retail Computer Group, LLC



Case Study #1

Inventory Control
at Wallitsch Nursery &
Garden Center



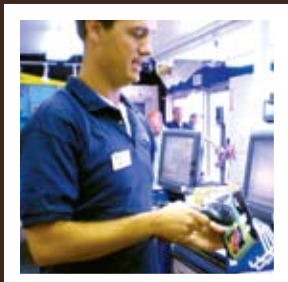
Case Study #2

Ease Of Use
at Platt Hill Nursery



Case Study #3

Speed At Checkout
at Valley View Farms



Case Study #4

Customer Loyalty
at Corso's Flower &
Garden Center



Bringing Innovative Point of Sale to the Garden Center

DECADES OF EXPERIENCE. A one-stop shop offering of products. Unparalleled technical support and service. Is it any wonder why The Retail Computer Group (TRCG) is the leading provider of point-of-sale (POS) systems and software for the garden center industry?

TRCG, which includes Dana Miller, president of sales and marketing; Mark Simmons, president of operations; Herb Quandt, president of finances; and J. Lombardi as vice president of sales, was formed by three mergers of Radiant retail partners, so its customers benefit from the principals' extensive knowledge and expertise pertaining to the challenges of garden center retailing.



In addition, TRCG is a Radiant Systems Elite Business Partner, which means it offers the leading POS system, CounterPoint SQL. But in an effort to make the product even more valuable to garden centers, TRCG has customized the platform specifically for the garden center industry with a dozen unique modifications, including a horticultural database and weather table. These modifications are only available through TRCG and represent the commitment to innovation that has pushed the company to the forefront among POS solution providers.



And while TRCG customers appreciate the technology that powers CounterPoint and the value it offers their businesses, they truly value TRCG's commitment to customer service, system support, and training. Those are the keys to TRCG's success. The company, which has nine offices located across the United States, offers technical support for all of its offerings and handles everything from large national chains to one-register garden centers. That service is just another sign of how TRCG prides itself on helping these businesses improve through integrating POS technology.

For example, David Williams, co-owner of Williams Nursery in Westfield, N.J., has been selling Christopher Radko Christmas ornaments online since 1996. Last November, Williams jump started his online sales thanks to the CPOne e-commerce feature of CounterPoint SQL.

"I already had my website up and running," Williams notes. "With CounterPoint and CPOne I can take any product I have in inventory and put it live on the website. And I can use CounterPoint for processing the order."

Karen Thacker, vice president of operations at Altum's in Zionsville, Ind., appreciated the simple learning curve that came with the CounterPoint SQL system. "We switched last year and went live in November. We looked at a couple of different POS systems and kept coming back to CounterPoint," she explains. "It was very user-friendly and had the

Point Of Sale Technology Center

capabilities we needed.”

Along with its versatile offerings that can be adapted to meet each retailer’s needs, TRCG also provides its own technical support, whereas other POS dealers rely on parent company support. It’s that personal touch that David Ploussard of Hoerr Nursery in Peoria, Ill., likes best. His company went through two POS systems before switching to CounterPoint through TRCG, and he says the change proved to be the right choice.

His nursery was looking for solid data to aid in purchasing decisions, inventory control, customer counts and margins, as well as a system to aid in making the leap to e-commerce. They found all of those qualities in the CounterPoint software. “We’re learning more each day. We’re passing from the honeymoon stage into the meat and potatoes of the system,” Ploussard says. “I’m satisfied and most of that is due to the support they provide. All systems have their own advantages and selling points. But support is support. **You either have it or you don’t. TRCG comes through.**”

The need for purchasing, inventory control and tracking customers are not limited to large green retailers. To cater to the smaller businesses, TRCG has created a new way to purchase CounterPoint SQL. CounterPoint In A Box™ is a revolutionary way to provide a complete, turnkey system at a fraction of the normal cost. When CounterPoint In A Box arrives at the retailer’s location, they simply unpack it, plug it in and start ringing sales. CounterPoint In A Box can be purchased as a single register, a single register with a back office computer or two registers and a back office computer. This product gives retailers who do approximately \$1 million or less in sales a full-featured system at an entry level price. CounterPoint In A Box is available today with systems shipping in September.

“Some of the Radiant partners will only work with larger customers; they really don’t do anything to focus on the retailers doing less than \$1 million a year,” Lombardi says. “CounterPoint In A Box is the first true effort to focus on these smaller retailers.”

For more on CounterPoint In A Box and other TRCG offerings, visit the Web site at www.trcgllc.com or call 1-800-944-0917, ext. 118. ■



J. Lombardi and Dana Miller

E-Support Via A Trusted Advisor

Purchasing new technology is intimidating, so garden center owners know they need a POS provider that offers thorough support. TRCG understands this as well. In fact, TRCG is so sensitive to its customers’ need for ongoing support and service that J. Lombardi, TRCG’s vice president of sales, authors a weekly technical tips email for customers.



“When garden centers purchase CounterPoint, their primary focus is getting the system up and running,” she says. “We help them do that as quickly as possible, but we also want to make sure they understand and benefit from the product’s full capabilities. As with any technology, the users get more value as they get more familiar with CounterPoint. The Trusted Advisor e-newsletter helps our customers move through this learning curve much more quickly and easily.”

Each edition of the e-newsletter contains detailed information on a different feature of CounterPoint and how to use it, including tips for speeding up checkout times and customizing reports.

To receive TRCG’s Trusted Advisor email sales@trcgllc.com.

Wallitsch Nursery & Garden Center Keeps Control Of Inventory

CounterPoint software allows this Louisville, Ky., operation to increase profitability through inventory control.

SINCE ITS BEGINNINGS as a cut flower shop more than 60 years ago, Wallitsch Nursery & Garden Center has constantly evolved to keep up with the changing retail market.

Today Wallitsch is a full-blown lifestyle center, offering Louisville gardeners everything they need to perfect their outdoor rooms and landscapes. The additional inventory required to be a lifestyle center, however, caused major headaches when it came to keeping track of what was in stock and what was selling.

"Basically, we were in the process of trying to do inventory control manually and it wasn't working out," says Mary Wallitsch, who co-owns the business with her husband, Jim. "We were trying to increase our gross margins, and we felt we had to get a better control on inventory by

"It's funny how we went all these years - 60 years - without a POS system, and now I can't imagine not having it. I can't imagine how we coped without it."

controlling what we were buying."

They talked for three years about replacing the basic cash registers with a state-of-the-art point-of-sale (POS) system, but the idea of

installing one was daunting to the couple. They settled on CounterPoint with three touch-screen registers and scanners from J. Lombardi and The Retail Computer Group because they felt a solid rapport with her and felt the company provided the best options for their needs.

The garden center already used Microsoft Office Access to create a database of the items in inventory, including item numbers, descriptions, pricing, barcoding, vendor numbers and other vendor information. Having that database saved quite a bit of work, as the staff at The Retail Computer Group was able to upload that database to CounterPoint.

Mary Wallitsch says before CounterPoint was installed, she would have to go out to the floor to see how many items had sold to know inventory on a particular product. Now she

can look it up in the computer system quickly and easily.

"Being able to look at the system and know with certainty what's in stock and being able to put a value on that inventory is tremendously helpful," she says. "It gives us a continuous inventory."

CounterPoint also quickly shows details about inventory an owner or manager would not otherwise have the time to find out, such as how long an item sat on the shelf before being purchased, or what the margin was on a certain item. "If I pay \$15 for an item, I know what I need to sell that item for to get my particular margin," she adds. "I know through CounterPoint what margin I actually got and if I had to put it on sale."

CounterPoint also offers flexibility by allowing a retailer to price products individually based on margin, rather than grouping products into one price point. The system has the ability to compare vendors for pricing, which aids in purchasing products and can generate reports on an item's last cost, standard cost and average cost to help the owner or manager price the item for sale. Sales can be programmed into the system to ring up automatically, rather than manually changing prices on individual products.

Overall, installing the system three years ago has now made Wallitsch Nursery & Garden Center a far more profitable operation, despite a lagging economy. "We were around 2 percent (profit) four years ago, and now we're up to more than 10 percent," Mary Wallitsch says. "That's a lot of hard work on a lot of people's part, but CounterPoint is definitely a big factor in that."

In fact, Wallitsch says she doesn't know what she would do without CounterPoint now. ■



Mary & Jim Wallitsch

Platt Hill Nursery

Gives The Retail Computer Group High Marks

Support is a No. 1 priority for this popular, two-location retail garden center.

PLATT HILL NURSERY in Bloomingdale, Ill., was a pioneer when it comes to point-of-sale systems in the horticulture industry, opting to barcode products and use a POS in the 1980s before many even knew it was an option.

So after owner Platt Hill opened his second store in nearby Carpentersville in 2007, he had a very detailed list of criteria the winning POS supplier had to meet. World-class technical support topped the list and for Hill, was a deal-breaker if not provided.

"We are open seven days a week, and over 40 percent of our business for the whole year comes in 31 days in May," he explains. "If the system crashes on Mother's Day weekend, I wanted it guaranteed in writing that I get a live competent body on the phone or on site. If they want to support retail, they have to be available on retail hours."

Hill adds that criteria eliminated half the competition and pushed The Retail Computer Group (TRCG) to the top of the list. Reliability of the system was the second priority on Hill's list. He wanted to know from others around the industry that the system worked well and reliably.

After talking to several friends who also owned garden centers, he found CounterPoint and The Retail Computer Group earned high marks in the industry.

He talked with J.



Lombardi, vice president of sales at TRCG extensively to make sure CounterPoint SQL was right for him.

He had CounterPoint installed in February, and went through the three-day training by TRCG himself, along with two other employees. By mid-March, the two other employees were no longer with the company, leaving only Hill trained

on the brand new system and spring fast approaching.

Despite the spring crunch and a brand new system, Hill and his staff were able to overcome the challenge of losing two of the three trained staff and operate CounterPoint with little difficulty. "I will also say the whole staff was just terrific as far as willingness to roll up shirt sleeves and learn the system."

He gave credit to TRCG, too, who he said was there for support during that crunch time. "They were very forthcoming and patient with

us in getting us up and running and keeping us going." The actual hardware from TRCG

made training easier during that period of time. The touch screens allowed the cashiers to learn CounterPoint easily and get customers through the line efficiently. "Some of our cashiers were very nervous," Hill says. "I asked them at the end of the spring, and they said, 'Oh man, it's really great.'" They were very happy and confident."

Another aspect of the system Hill likes is how easily available reports are, such as the stock sold reports run during a range of dates. For example, with the click of a mouse he can tell how many 1-gallon barberry bushes he sold during the months of May and June so he can use those numbers for buying next year.

Hill advises that a retailer's POS system is only as good as the information in it, and training cashiers is the key to keeping that information solid. He says hiring people who are accurate and detail-oriented will save a lot of time when it comes to having the right inventory numbers.

With the combination of TRCG's technical support and CounterPoint SQL's efficiency, and ease of use, everyone at Platt Hill Nursery became comfortable with the entire system, including Hill.

"I'm not a computer person and I actually ran the system all by myself on Easter Sunday with success." ■

"I'm not a computer person and I actually ran the system all by myself on Easter Sunday with success."

Valley View Farms Speeds Up Transactions

Customers breeze through the checkout line thanks to the CPGateway service.

DURING THE PEAK DAYS OF SPRING, as well as during the winter holidays, Valley View Farms actually hires a police officer to direct traffic in and out of the parking lot. As one of the largest single-site independent garden centers in the country, life can get rather busy at this Baltimore-area garden center.

Yet just six years ago this popular retailer was still running basic cash registers. In 2002, the decision was made

to purchase a point-of-sale (POS) system, CounterPoint, from The Retail Computer Group (TRCG). Now the garden center runs 18 touch-screen registers located on the retail floor, in the nursery and in the separate

“When 75 percent of your business is credit cards, it reduces the time at the register by an incredible amount. The very first spring we had it up and running – Mother’s Day weekend – the system paid for itself.”

aquatics building, as well as seven back office systems to do the administrative work. Valley View management found CounterPoint so beneficial they have already purchased the upgrade to CounterPoint SQL.

“Prior to this system, we had those old registers that had a key for garden goods, etc. – it was just an antiquated system,” says Controller Sue Schwarzweller. “The business was prospering quite a bit and the lines were getting longer and longer and longer. There was a definite need to spring into the world of technology.”

That leap into technology meant finding a POS system that could drive

traffic through the store quickly and efficiently to get them on their way. One of the key benefits of the CounterPoint system, CPGateway, processes credit

card transactions in a blazing two seconds.

For Valley View, the system was the solution to reducing customer wait time, thus allowing the parking lot to turn an extra time each busy Saturday. “When 75 percent of your business is credit cards, it reduces the time at the register by an incredible amount,” adds Schwarzweller. “The very first spring we had it up and running - that Mother’s Day weekend - the owner said the system paid for itself.”

In conjunction with using the touch screen CounterPoint system, Valley View implemented barcode scanning to speed up checkout and create a more accurate inventory. Virtually everything coming off the trucks now is bar-coded, which means the information is there ready to be scanned. That allows employees to get all the information needed before the product comes into the stores, which eliminates having to price material off the trucks.

CounterPoint can also easily facilitate deliveries, as

well as print a loading slip to allow customers to pick up larger or oversized items that can’t be scanned through the checkout.

Having CounterPoint and the support of TRCG behind it has improved operations at Valley View Farms. “Our customer service improved because people want things faster,” Schwarzweller notes. “We’re more than pleased with the system.” ■



Corso's Flower & Garden Center

Rewarding Customers Via CounterPoint

The Sandusky, Ohio, garden retailer built its loyalty program around the features available in CounterPoint software.

WHEN CORSO'S FLOWER & GARDEN CENTER in Sandusky, Ohio, purchased and installed its CounterPoint system in the winter of 2001, the buzz word customer loyalty was barely a blip on the radar.

John Corso, vice president of retail sales, says the main goals with CounterPoint were to get a better handle on margins and inventory. Essentially, they wanted to get a better handle on "what was paying the bills," he says. They opted for five registers for the sales floor and 20 other units between the retail, wholesale, landscape and office operations.

Through the CounterPoint Subscription Service (CSS) upgrade, Corso could implement a customer loyalty program.

"We came to the decision we wanted to do it, and discovered CounterPoint (via CSS) had a whole loyalty function in it, that made it easier to do," Corso says. CSS allows the CounterPoint customers to stay

current with all the new features and benefits constantly being upgraded and enhanced by Radiant Systems.

Once the customers are set up in the system, CounterPoint can track individual purchases. Cashiers either scan the loyalty card or look the customer up in the system, and the software does the rest. Corso's has decided there are only certain times designated for redemption, and the register knows that, too. At checkout, the system will prompt the cashier to ask the customer if

they want to use their rewards dollars. That will only happen during Corso's defined redemption dates.

The customer loyalty program in CounterPoint has its benefits over a non-POS based rewards program like bonus bucks because the POS system tracks buying habits and makes it easier for the retailer to target customers with direct mail pieces. "We can see an earnings history, redemption history and what they bought by category (and even by item)," John Corso says. "I can quickly pull my top customers up and see who spent what this year. With the loyalty program, you're paying them to track their buying habits."

Corso uses the CounterPoint system to send a variety of mail to certain customers. For example, he can pull everyone who bought a perennial last year and send them a mailer about an upcoming perennial special. Or he can do a broader mailing, like an invite to the annual wine and cheese event to everyone who made a purchase in the last year. Corso also uses CounterPoint to send a birthday treat to those who gave their birthdays on the sign-up form: they receive \$10 off a \$20 purchase.

Corso's loyalty program has helped retain consumers even with foot traffic decreasing due to growing competition with other retailers and a lagging economy. His CounterPoint system from The Retail Computer Group helps him stay in contact with all his customers to keep them coming back. "I wouldn't want to do without it - where would we be then, not knowing who our top customers are?" Corso says. ■

"I wouldn't want to do without it - where would we be then, not knowing who our top customers are?"



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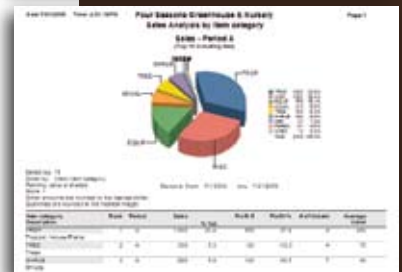
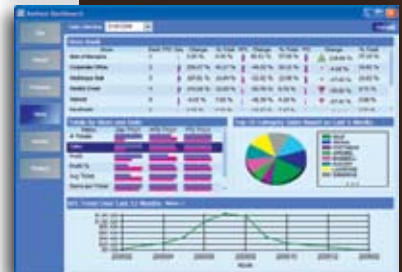
- The only "green" version of Counterpoint on the market today comes from TRCG at no extra charge
- Turnkey system - unpack it, plug it in and ring sales
- Customer loyalty included
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