

**BILL BOOTHE**

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Club Software – A 20-Year Retrospective

Since this is the BoardRoom's 'State of the Industry' edition, it's interesting to look back to see how the club software industry has progressed and changed during the past 20 years.

In 1999 when I was with RSM, we published information on 29 club management membership and accounting systems (some included their own F&B POS) and 10 standalone F&B POS systems. Here's a little walk through memory lane – from 1999.

29 CLUB MEMBERSHIP AND ACCOUNTING SYSTEMS

Abacus 21, Aces Software, American Ziegler (AZI), C.H.I.T.S. (Sampson & Associates), Clubware, Club Data, Club Software, Club Systems Group, ClubTec, Computer Golf Software, Country Club Systems, Crescent Systems, Diamond Management Systems, Fairway Systems, Flex Screen, Gary Jonas Computing, Golf Management Systems, Handicomp, Integrated Business Systems (IBS), Majestic Software, MTE, OBI Club Software, Par Business Systems, Priority Club Systems, Pro-Shopkeeper, Smyth Systems, TA Consulting, Vanguard Systems, Watson, Steach.

10 STANDALONE F&B POS SYSTEMS

Aloha, Dine-Amics, HIS, Micros, NCR, POSitouch, Remanco, Restaurant Manager, Sabal, Squirrel.

In 1999, evaluating and selecting systems for private clubs involved choosing among almost 40 contenders. Today, we're down to about a half dozen. But that hasn't made the selection process any easier! Here's why. The remaining systems now incorporate virtually every function needed by a club – membership, accounting, POS (F&B and retail), inventory, lodging, website, mobile app, blast email - you name it, they have it.

In the "old days", if you liked one accounting system but another POS system, you simply bought your favorites and interfaced them. Of course, interfacing presented a host of challenges, but clubs felt that they were able to take a "best of breed" approach to maximize their systems capabilities.

Today, you're likely to get almost everything from a single provider. That presents its own challenges – mainly balancing the various pros and cons from one system to the next. Good membership and accounting, weak POS. Good website and mobile app, weak accounting. Good this, weak that.

Plus, today's selections lock a club in to an enterprise commitment. No more replacing a module or two with something third-party. It's all or nothing with today's software suites.

What's the point of this 20-year retrospective? Just this: If you're thinking of replacing your club's enterprise software suite, make sure that you clearly understand where your incumbent system's weaknesses are – and that the new suite you're favoring doesn't bring with it some serious shortcomings in other important areas.

Jumping from the frying pan into the fire isn't a great selection strategy. So, here are a few pointers to consider when evaluating new systems:

1. Don't get wrapped up in "bells and whistles" features. Make sure the bread and butter features that make up 90 percent of the system are solid. Then circle back to consider the cool stuff.

2. Don't assume that all systems run reliably and have good customer support. Check around to make sure.

3. Get everyone involved in the selection process. Don't be the lone wolf out scouting for a new system. If things go sideways, you'll still be the lone wolf.

4. Don't assume that your old system has to go just because it's old. Consider reengineering before you "throw the baby out with the bath water," – That's a saying that goes way back to the 1500s and is still applicable today. **BR**

