

Ask The Experts



Safer Payment Options in a Pandemic

Q: In light of COVID-19, do you have any recommendations regarding handling payments?

A: Safety, of course, is of utmost importance, so it might be best for you, your staff and your customers to avoid the transferring of paper, money or checks. If you had previously been a cash-only business, that should change. But at the same time, becoming “no cash” may not be a completely sound practice, either.

Small businesses have often been hesitant to accept credit-card payments because of the fees involved, but you should factor this into your cost of doing business. Search out credit card processors that make sense for your company. Nowadays, there are many online services, such as Square, that do not charge monthly fees or require a contract. They also do not require expensive terminals. A simple card reader may be free or reasonably priced, and you only pay a fee for each transaction.

Along with swiping credit cards or reading chips, many card readers offer

a touchless option, allowing the client to use their card by simply holding their phone or watch near the reader. Also consider smartphone apps such as PayPal and Venmo that allow clients to send funds electronically. Being able to accept credit cards not only provides a safer option, it is usually more convenient for your clients.

If you do accept cash or checks, just be careful. Most studies indicate that the virus transmitted via cash or checks is low, but use gloves to accept the payment, disinfect the cash, or put it somewhere safe where you won't handle it, and continue to wash your hands.

Tracking Transactions for My Business

Q: My business is growing, and I am looking for a software program that will make it easier for me to track stringing records and help keep track of my demo racquets. What are my options?

A: Over the years there have been a few products dedicated to tracking customer records specific to racquet service. Many, however, are no longer available. The

Accepting credit cards and using apps that allow clients to transfer money electronically may be safer ways to conduct business for you and your customers.

USRSA launched one many years ago, but with computer upgrades and the increasing use of smartphones, tablets and other web devices, it wasn't cost-effective to maintain and constantly keep updated. I'm sure other programs have dealt with similar issues.

One option is a web-based program called Stringjob (stringjob.com). It was developed by a tech-savvy racquet technician, has been around for years, is easy to use and captures a lot of information. Since it is web-based, the information you enter is on the website, not on your computer.

There are several point of sale (POS) options to track sales and inventory, but none that I am aware of focused solely on the racquet service industry. So, while these options can address many of your needs, it may not cover them all.

When I operated a retail tennis store, we used a POS system that tracked sales, inventory and customers. While it captured customers' string purchases, there wasn't a way to record tension or other specifics, so we used a separate spreadsheet to track string tension, gauge, the machine used and the technician, as well as the resulting string-bed deflection reading. For our high-volume shop, it got the job done, and I would still recommend it. As far as tracking demo racquets, I'm not aware of anything specifically on the market at this time, but some POS systems may have components that can be adapted for rentals.

If anyone has come across any systems useful for tracking stringing and demos, please drop us a note. ■

We welcome your questions. Email them to bob@racquettech.com.