# CASHLESS CARD SYSTEM
# BUYER'S GUIDE

# INTRODUCTION

Much has changed in our industry since we introduced the 2021 Cashless Card System Buyer's Guide. The inflation rate in the US is at the highest level since 1981. A looming recession is on the minds of many consumers and business owners in every industry. In this environment, making the right purchasing decisions is more crucial than ever.

With so much at stake, selecting a card system that meets your needs and budget is essential. That's why we've compiled this buyer's guide to help answer these questions and more, making buying a cashless card system easier. Our guide provides an overview of the features and benefits of the leading cashless card systems on the market. We hope it helps you make an informed decision about which system is right for your business. Let's get started!

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# WHY YOU NEED A CARD SYSTEM

In today's competitive environment, businesses must offer the best customer experience. Not only by providing the right mix of games and activities and creating a frictionless buying experience. One of the most effective ways to do this is by incorporating a game card system into your arcade.

Here are some of the top reasons why you need a card system for your entertainment center or routes:

**Reduced Cash Handling**
People don't carry cash around anymore. Instead, they prefer to use credit cards or mobile payments. Plus, accepting credit cards at your center will minimize handling all that cash.

**Convenience**
Consumers are increasingly looking for ways to save time and effort, and they expect entertainment venues to provide innovative solutions that can help them do so. With self-service kiosks and a simple point-of-sale system, you provide the convenience your customers are accustomed to these days.

**Better Player Experience**
For anyone who's ever played an arcade game, the thrill of winning tickets is dampened quickly by a ticket jam. Not only do card systems prevent ticket jams, but it also minimizes the frustration of games eating tokens and quarters.

**Increase in Arcade Revenue**
Between minimizing downtime and accepting more payment options, many arcades see drastic increases in revenue—even without adding new games.

# WHY YOU NEED A CARD SYSTEM

**Reduce Operating Expenses**
When your operating expenses start to outweigh your income, it's a recipe for disaster. A card system with self-service kiosks can not only reduce service calls for ticket and coin jams, but you can also run lean with staffing.

**Gain Business Intelligence**
Business intelligence transforms data into actionable insights that inform strategic and tactical business decisions. With a card system, you can generate reports that provide insights into customer behavior, assess the performance of individual games, and identify opportunities to make changes based on customer behaviors.

**Minimize Equipment Downtime**
No owner or route operator wants to hear that their arcade games are down. Not only does it mean lost revenue opportunities, but it can also lead to unhappy customers. However, relying on your staff or customers to tell you when a game is down is not always reliable. With a game card system, you can get real-time notifications when an arcade game is down. This way, you can quickly get the game up and running again without missing a beat.

# HOW CARD SYSTEMS WORK

The player purchases a game card at a Point-of-sale station or self-service kiosk.

The player activates video, redemption, attractions, and table games with a simple tap of an RFID card or wristband. Players apply stored credit amounts to play games.

Tickets are stored on game cards that players take to redemption counters with redemption software or self-service prize machines to exchange them for prizes.

The player reloads game cards by adding more credits onto them via POS stations or self-service kiosks located throughout the venue floor.

Arcade operator views activities and reports through a game management software system that allows you to monitor operations.

# CARD SYSTEM HARDWARE AND SOFTWARE

Now that you know how card systems work let's dive into the hardware and software. There are a few different options for card system hardware, and the best choice for your arcade will depend on a few factors.

First, consider the size of your arcade and the number of locations you have. If you have a large arcade with many games, you'll need a robust system that can handle a high volume of transactions.

On the other hand, if you have a smaller footprint operation, you can get by with a more straightforward system.

Ideally, you'll want to get all your card systems under one umbrella so you can swap games easily, carry spare parts, gain business intelligence, and have one number to call for customer support.

Once you've considered all these factors, you'll be in a much better position to compare vendors and make the best decision for your arcade.

# CARD SYSTEM HARDWARE AND SOFTWARE

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### Game Cards

Arcade game cards are quickly becoming the new norm, replacing tickets, tokens, and quarters. All the credits and tickets won on redemption games are stored on a card, which offers several advantages. For one, cards are less expensive than other options and can be reused once they are empty.

Additionally, cards offer a more convenient way to play. With RFID cards, you can tap and play, reducing wear and tear on arcade cabinets. Ultimately, game cards provide a more efficient and economical option for both arcade operators and customers.

When choosing a vendor, it's essential to consider their lead time. Every vendor faces supply chain issues, but the time it takes to secure replacement cards indicates supply chain resilience. This indicator will give you a more accurate picture of the vendor's ability to meet your needs.

### Card Readers

As you may have already discovered, game card readers come in all shapes and sizes. The most apparent distinction is swipe or tap to play with game cards. As a general rule of thumb, you want to choose a card reader that minimizes confusion to accelerate adoption from players. For example, the display screen should be big enough for players to read and tap the came card anywhere on the screen to play a game. We've studied player behavior at our arcades and discovered that fewer options to play are less confusing.

Another overlooked feature is the mounting option of the readers. Some video and redemption games require readers to be mounted vertically, so pay attention to whether the display is adaptive or not. When you make site visits for vendor locations, you might find some readers awkward when mounted vertically. Ultimately, the best game card readers provide a superior player experience.

# CARD SYSTEM HARDWARE AND SOFTWARE

## POS

A Point-of-Sale system is a must for any business, but especially an arcade. Many different vendors provide POS systems, so it is essential to do your research and find the one that is the best fit for your business.

A POS system will allow you to accept multiple payment methods, keep track of employee card log-ins, and print kitchen tickets for food orders.

Most POS systems can be integrated with other industry software, providing many benefits. However, a dedicated arcade POS system will work just as well to sell game cards and access to attractions. Be sure to get a demo of the different features before deciding.

## Redemption software

If you're looking to run a profitable redemption center, you'll need to choose a suitable model for your business. Attended, unattended, or hybrid models all have different advantages and disadvantages.

You can run an unattended or hybrid model with self-service prize machines on slow days or during seasons without sacrificing the guest experience. For attended redemption counters, look for software that is easy to use and provides flexibility for all scenarios.

With the right software in place, you'll be able to run a thriving redemption center that meets the needs of your guests.

# CARD SYSTEM HARDWARE AND SOFTWARE

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**Arcade Management Software**

If you're looking for a comprehensive arcade management solution, you'll want to find cloud-based software to make updates and new features available in real-time. Look for a system that allows you to disable games, change pricing, receive notifications, and view reports anytime or anywhere.

Such a system will give you the business intelligence you need to track, report, and analyze every activity at your or multiple locations. With this information at your fingertips, you'll be able to make informed decisions about your arcade's operations.

As you evaluate options, pay attention to the user experience (UX) to see how modern each display looks. If it seems dated, it's a sign of technical debt, which can affect the time it takes for new releases. Choose a system that is reliable and easy-to-use, so that you can focus on running your business, not managing the software.

# INSTALLING A CARD SYSTEM

Installing the card system can seem daunting, but it doesn't have to be. With intuitive card readers with plug-and-play capabilities, the installation can be a breeze. Look for tools (like diagnostic tools), resources, depth of knowledge, and game manuals from each vendor.

When evaluating vendors, you want to ask about the ease of installing card readers. You will want a single reader with two connection points, so you don't have to buy multiple readers. Having installed many systems ourselves for our locations, we found that a 4-pin Molex design and 9-pin UCL harness is the most straightforward and intuitive design.

Installations typically take 1 to 3 days depending on the number of active readers. Many vendors (like Amusement Connect) support unlimited card readers for larger locations with 200+ readers.

Since many card systems operate through Wi-Fi connections, you'll want access points throughout your facility so the card readers can pass the information along to the arcade management software.

# REMOTE VS. ONSITE INSTALLATION



There are two options when installing a cashless system: remote or onsite. Remote installation is when you and/or staff members install and activate the card system. Onsite installation is when you have someone from the vendor install and set up the system at their location.

Onsite installations are ideal if you don't have the time or resources to install the equipment. This option may also make sense if installing a system at multiple locations and you need to get up and running quickly.

Remote installations are preferred if you'd like to save money from travel and labor costs from vendors. An installation team member will walk you through each step of the setup process.

# CARD SYSTEM EVALUATION CHECKLIST

**Installation**
- Is the system easy to install?
- Do you give the option for a self-install?

**Game Card Readers**
- Is the card reader tap or swipe?
- How does it look mounted vertically and horizontally?
- What level of customization is available for displays?
- What is the sound quality of the speakers?
- How durable are the card readers?
- Are your products made in the USA?

**Self-Service Kiosks**
- What size and budget options are available?
- What add-ons are available?
- How easy is it to customize the screen?
- Is the debit/credit card readers up-to-date?
- How quickly can guests purchase and reload game cards?

**Redemption Capabilities**
- How does the redemption prize machine or kiosk work?
- How does the redemption management feature track inventory?
- Does the system allow you to run an unattended redemption program?
- What are the redemption reporting capabilities?
- Is the timing of the ticket payouts customizable?

**Software**
- What are the multi-location reporting capabilities?
- Does the software have a modern user interface?
- How quick are the load times?
- What level of technical support is available?
- Does the software update automatically?

# CARD SYSTEM EVALUATION CHECKLIST

**Network/Server**
- Do we have to purchase an onsite server?
- How easy is the system to install and get up and running?
- How do you send updates to the software?
- How often is your system updated?

**Pricing**
- What are the pricing models for hardware?
- What is the pricing for game cards?
- What is the monthly service fee?

**Customer Support**
- Do you charge for customer support?
- What is your average response time?
- What do customers say about a vendor's customer support?
- Is your support based in the US?

# BLUEPRINT FOR SUCCESS

Here are tips that will help you successfully implement your cashless card system:

1. Get owner/management buy-in.
2. Make a business case with goals and objectives, recommendations, and a budget for the card system.
3. Build the evaluation/implementation team. Assemble a team responsible for assessing, communicating, installing, and training.
4. Coordinate staff training and onboarding. Combine self-guided learning with group training and on-the-job training with the card system.
5. Create a project plan.
6. Map out the steps, key milestones, tasks, and deadlines so the installation stays on track.
7. Build capabilities to identify ways to increase profit, analyze guest behavior, and spot market trends.

# CASHLESS CARD SYSTEM SUCCESS METRICS

You want benchmarks to know the business outcomes of upgrading your technology. Here are a few Key performance indicators to track and measure before and after installation:

- Credit card sales
- Labor costs
- Repeat visits
- Customer Lifetime Value
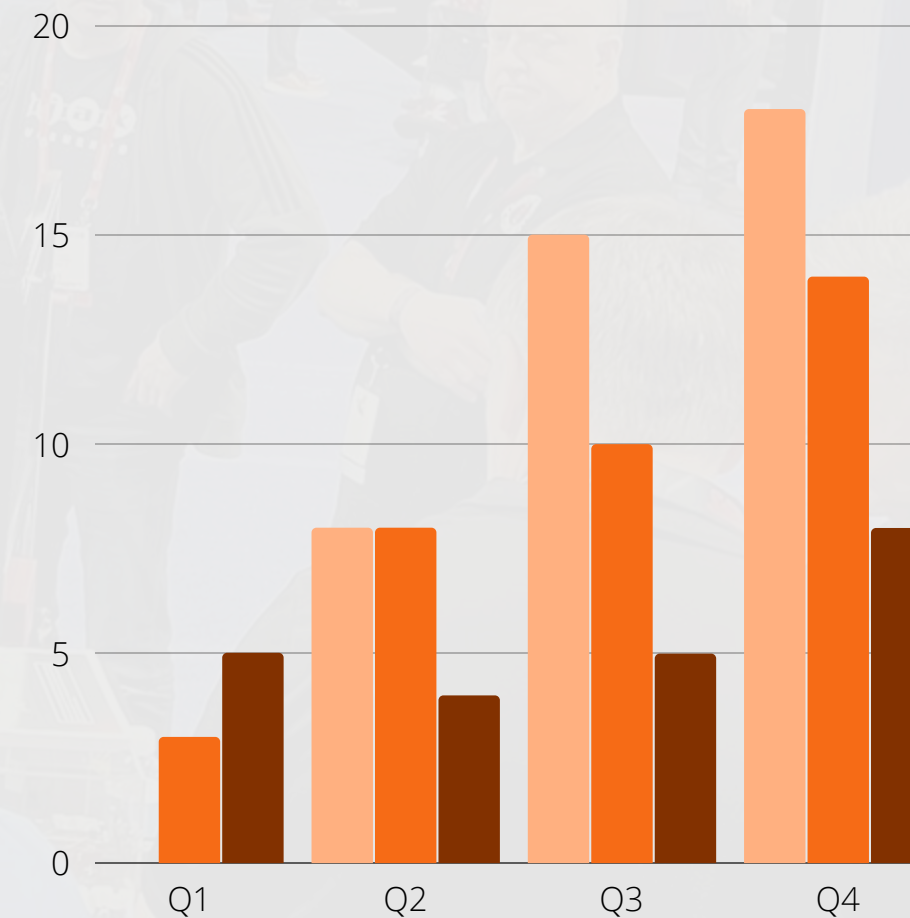
# CONCLUSION

Your evaluation should go beyond price and features. Be sure to talk to other operators using the system. Find out what they like and don't like about their system or experience with each vendor.

At Amusement Connect, we pride ourselves on delivering the best possible customer experience before and after the purchase. As you'll hear from our customer success stories, we're the card system that gives you more time, support, and ROI.

We're always happy to provide you with a demo of our product suite or budget options for the right equipment for your arcade. Want to be our next success story? Request a quote today.