

# focus @ TECH

## Amazon retail partnership, new HP POS system, Twittering

By Art Snyder

The maxim that you're only as strong as your weakest link is all too true, and that's why you want to stay on top of the digital world to generate profits in your vital snack bar and foodservice areas. And when those profit centers are in top form, your other sessions — all year long — quickly follow. Those lessons become ever obvious when you explore the retail opportunities that Amazon.com now offers, and learn how Hewlett Packard has honed a terrific new point-of-sale system well-suited to rink usage. And, the digital communication enabled by Twitter.com is helping you grasp anew the promotional ideas and incentives of the past, again invigorating your business. Plus, new cameras from Sony and Samsung should be able to do their part in helping you boost profits from your front door to floor activities like roller derbies. Details are below.

### Amazon.com retail partnership

Internet retailer Amazon.com has launched a new "WebStore" that offers intriguing promise to small businesses like skating rinks. This partnership between Amazon and any individual rinks (or small chains) across the country that want to join trendsetting Amazon in this e-commerce



venture is open to all. Essentially, Amazon WebStore is a full-featured online business enterprise that enables small- to medium-sized retailers to quickly design, build and manage their Internet businesses using Amazon's platform and technology.

"With the new Amazon WebStore, we are making it simple for retailers ... to build and operate a world-class e-commerce business" that's tailored to their product line and their customers, said Scott Pulsipher, director, Amazon WebStore. "By leveraging Amazon's technology and infrastructure, Amazon WebStore levels the playing field for small- and medium-sized businesses, helping them quickly and easily build their businesses and improve" the online customer experience of selecting and ordering new inlines, for example, and other skates and skating-related items.

Amazon.com offers design advice, merchandising ideas, inventory guidelines, and templates for quick and easy construc-

tion of individualized Web sites that benefit from Amazon's long record of success and customer satisfaction. Plenty of graphics is the norm with these partnership e-commerce sites — graphics are a key to effective online sales, after all — and you'll still be able to make full use of your rink logo and any design elements you favor.

Spokesman Pulsipher adds that the Amazon WebStore concept already counts scores and scores of participants, and many of them are household names. Among them: Timex, Martha Stewart, Samsonite and MTV.

For more information and all the details to get your rink under way with an Amazon WebStore, visit [webstore.amazon.com](http://webstore.amazon.com).

### HP ap5000 All-in-One POS System

The cost these days for labor can be prohibitive, and that's why technology can loom so large with saving you money and getting the job done right. Thus, your foodservice, skate shop and redemption profit centers are perfect settings for integrating the latest point-of-sale (POS) tech solutions for serving your valued rink customers. Hewlett Packard offers several full-featured, contemporary-looking POS systems tailored to the size and retail volume of your business, and their latest system — the HP ap5000 All-in-One POS System — is scheduled to be available this summer from Maine to California and from Florida to Washington. Several advances mark the HP ap5000 All-in-One POS System: The HP ap5000 system is compact, saving you valuable counter space wherever you place the unit in your rink. The HP ap5000 has been "ruggedized," or designed for heavy-duty use in the most demanding commercial settings, such as a rink; this built-in reliability helps keep downtime to a minimum. Despite being designed for hard, daily usage, the HP ap5000 is stylish, enhancing your rink's customer-friendly atmosphere and the eye-appeal of your rink's interior elements.

The integrated hardware components of the HP ap5000 are keys to the utility and value of the system. Particulars include the ruggedly built CPU, running the latest, reliable Windows 7 operating system, and a companion user keyboard; a 15-inch (diagonal) resistive touch-screen monitor, which is a space-saving flat screen that can be tilt-adjusted, for user comfort (it's also moisture-resistant, as you never know when a staff member or customer might accidentally splash a beverage somewhere

on the HP ap5000); a magnetic-stripe reader, for quick, accurate recording of items being purchased, mounted snugly alongside an edge of the monitor; and a two-line customer-facing display, which allows the customer to view transactions as they occur. A rear advertisement panel (which is non-electrical) on the back side of the monitor is standard, and it allows you an opportunity to make an attractive sales pitch or inform the customer of rink activities and featured sale items, for example. A clear cover protects the signage, and you can change it in seconds, as needed, for new announcements and sales presentations. A 10.4-inch rear LCD display for the customer also is available, as an option.

Extensive warranties are featured with the HP ap5000, and HP representatives can help you with system deployment, questions, features, peripherals (such as a compact thermal printer) and other aspects of the HP ap5000 All-in-One POS System for your rink. For more, visit <http://tinyurl.com/3y4wckg>.

### Twittering for profits

Social marketing is the newest strategy to do what marketing — good marketing — has always attempted to do: stay in touch with customers, and remind them that you have something for them. For rink operators, that "something" can be



anything from a 2-for-1 fountain special on the customer's next visit, to an announcement that your rink will have special prizes to award during an upcoming back-to-school week or a Halloween ghou-fest session in October. Reaching customers through social marketing has taken on a new approach this year, however, and it's one bursting with opportunity for rink operators: Twittering. In brief, Twittering allows you to send short messages — up to 140 characters in length — to anyone who has signed up to "follow" you in the real

world of Twitter.com. That's the Internet home of Twitter enthusiasts, where quick communication with others is the norm. To get started, you need to visit [Twitter.com](http://Twitter.com) and set up a free Twitter account for your rink. Then you publicize the fact that you're on Twitter, and you promote this throughout your sessions, every day of the week. And you let people know that they should sign up to follow you on Twitter, to learn of the latest news and happenings at your rink, along with exclusive bonuses for your Twittered followers. Major companies like Starbucks and Ford have found Twitter to be a very effective tool in reaching a targeted audience, and you now can learn how they and other businesses make Twittering a marketing winner. Details for business use of Twitter — Twitter 101 for Business — may be found online at [business.twitter.com/twitter101](http://business.twitter.com/twitter101). The advice is extensive and very helpful (it's much too detailed for review use here). And for more advice, and some how-to videos, go to <http://tinyurl.com/yfmd6vw>. YouTube also has a broad array of videos on Twittering. Simply go to [YouTube.com](http://YouTube.com) and do a search on Twittering.

### CyberPower CP1000AVRLCD UPS power system

The nuts and bolts of digital life are easy to overlook, but that fact doesn't lessen your need for some digital protection. The CyberPower Intelligent LCD CP1000AVRLCD unit is an uninterruptible power supply (UPS) for mid-range computer systems, and it features dynamic line conditioning, to guard against surges/spikes, and it offers battery backup in the event of brownouts or blackouts (summer weather is here, remember!). Its GreenPower UPS™ circuitry reduces UPS energy costs by up to 75 percent compared to competitive models. With loads of features, as with protected outlets for computers, printers, telephones and more, the CyberPower Intelligent LCD CP1000AVRLCD offers confident, abundant receptacle and line safety that'll keep your delicate digital equipment in good stead year after year. I've tested one model for the past nine months, and all has been trouble-free. For more on features, availability and pricing, visit the manufacturer at [cyberpowersystems.com](http://cyberpowersystems.com).

Art Snyder is a longtime RINKSIDER contributor. He lives in Centerville, Ohio, and has used computers and technology since 1986.