

## The Importance of Using Commercial-Grade Touch Computers

Trying to save money by using consumer-grade products can end up costing more in the long run.

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In many industries, what was once done with a pen and paper is now being accomplished with a handheld touch computer.

Instead of an order pad, restaurant servers take orders on a handheld device that instantly sends the customer's order to a printer in the kitchen. Instead of a logbook, truck drivers keep track of deliveries with an electronic tablet that captures customer signatures via a touchscreen and stores a digital record of the transaction.

But all touch computers aren't the same. There is a vast difference between consumer- and commercial-grade touch computers.

Consumer-grade all-in-one touch computers, typically seen for sale in retail and electronics stores, are designed mainly for personal use. These computers typically support 4 to 6 USB ports, a media card reader, a VGA input/output and multiple DVD drives. Some systems feature separate graphics cards to deliver high performance for entertainment applications.

But household use is far less demanding on an all-in-one touch computer than what it would receive in a retail environment or

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other public space. Devices are prone to jarring and spills. Retailers are open all hours and their computers are almost never turned off.

For a customer, there are few things more frustrating than attempting to use a self-service device, only to discover that the device is out of order. For a business operator, spending a bit more for commercial-grade equipment can pay off through increased equipment uptime, lower maintenance costs and higher levels of customer satisfaction.

### **Heavy-duty hardware means a longer lifespan**

Commercial-grade touch computers are built with heavy-duty parts and components designed to handle the wear and tear that comes with almost continuous use. Along with an increased resistance to deterioration, these high-quality parts also



Commercial-grade touch computers, like the Ubiquitous Touch Computer from Advantech, feature high-quality parts that can withstand the longer working hours required by commercial locations.

extend the lifespan of commercial touch computers far beyond that of consumer models, something that is critically important when one considers the difference in operating hours between the two.

While consumer computers may be turned on anywhere from one to eight hours a day, professional developers demand twelve to fifteen hours a day or more out of their computers, and commercial locations may never turn their systems off.

Cooling systems have become key selling points for many industrial grade products. Heat is the main factor that affects LCD and motherboard reliability, and once the damage occurs, units are rendered useless. Consumer products that use inexpensive

plastic bezels and encasements don't allow for proper cooling of internal electronics.

Many industrial platform manufacturers have developed fanless systems. This feature delivers an important message to system integrators — no heat, which extends the lifespan of the electronics.

Advantech Ubiquitous Touch Computers, for example, are designed specifically for extended-use applications. Some models include features such as mechanical protection, environmental resistance, fanless cooling and related peripheral connections.

The Advantech Ubiquitous Touch Computer series is an all-in-one computing system equipped with a wide-format,



*All-in-one touch computers can allow customers to serve themselves, freeing staff to focus on other revenue-generating opportunities.*

touch-based LCD panel and integrated key peripherals, allowing end users easy access to information and self-service transactions. The UTC series was introduced to meet the increased demand for self-service and interactive signage applications.

### **The advantages of customization**

Development of a vertical market is more than just installing a terminal at a location and leaving it. Operators are constantly looking for ways to differentiate their products and increase their competitive standing as well as their profit margins, and the ability to customize touch computers can aid in those goals

Many solution owners like to create their own images and applications, differentiating

themselves from competitors. Enclosure color, keypad style and the addition of company logos are common items for customization.

Consumer PCs are usually sold as complete systems and lack the ability to be customized. On the other hand, commercial systems, such as Advantech UTCs, can be customized for factors ranging from enclosure color to bezel materials, as well as for tailored peripherals.

Most commercial-grade all-in-one touch computers have built-in scanners or readers to allow users self-service capabilities, much the same as kiosks or POS systems. Allowing users to serve themselves without relying on in-store personnel empowers them to take action based on their own

needs — something that is critical for success of many vertical applications.

And although many consumer-grade solutions are typically designed solely for the desktop, Advantech Ubiquitous Touch Computers can be used in a variety of integrated solutions, such as wall mount, shelf mount or tabletop applications.

### Standing behind the product

Longevity is the single most critical requirement for commercial-grade systems. Business operators would rather use commercial-grade products with minimal service requirements than use consumer-grade products that come with high service needs, especially in critical applications or harsh environments.

But a problem arises, operators expect the manufacturer to take care of it.

Consumer products typically have a standard one-year warranty and usually specify within the documentation that use beyond what would be considered normal will void the warranty.

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Advantech commercial-grade touch computers, on the other hand, come with a minimum two-year warranty, extendable to three years, which cover installations in harsh environments.

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