



How Earlyon CafeCentra Can Help In the Management of Your Internet Café and Increase Profitability...

1. Introduction

Ever since the advent of public internet access, Internet Cafés continue to be the most dominant means of accessing the Internet in developing and under-developed countries around the world for the general populace. In these developing countries of which Nigeria is one, the Internet Café business has become a lucrative one, especially in highly populated cities where a large number of people have embraced the email, internet telephony and online chat communication culture. This money-making nature of the Internet Café, popularly referred to as the Cyber Café business, has given rise to large patronage from private investors in search of a consistent goose to lay golden eggs.

However the Internet Café business with its attendant problems and competition is not an easy one to manage, especially for the uninformed, thus ensuring that only Internet Cafés with well planned and consistently excellent offerings survive.

And one of the major problems that continue to plague the Internet Café business especially in a country like Nigeria has been the problem of **accountability**. These and other key issues that determine to a large extent the continued existence and viability of an Internet Café business are briefly discussed in the next paragraphs. While these issues may seem mundane to the average Internet Café owner just starting up, such owner may well be assured that many before him or her, despite the acclaimed profitability of Internet Cafés, have watched their investment go down the drain from not paying much attention to these important issues. It is thus a sound advice, to beware that the Internet Café business scene, like the old treasure islands, while rich in valuable returns, is also littered with the bones of the gullible and ignorant investor.

The aim of this whitepaper therefore, is to

highlight the key factors responsible for the successful management and continued profitability of an Internet Café, how the choice of Internet Café Billing software affects these factors and what makes the Earlyon CafeCentra Internet Café Billing and **Management** software a desirable ally in the management and continued profitability of an Internet Café business.

2. Earlyon CafeCentra, Your Internet Café and Profitability

2.1 The Accountability Issue

The purpose of starting any business can be summarized in three words: **to make profit**. And one of the most crucial factors in managing a business for profitability is **Accountability**. You can only know exactly how much profit you are making if you know exactly how much money your business is bringing in. And in the Cyber Café business, one of the most difficult things to know is the exact amount of money the business is making, especially in a country like Nigeria. The dishonesty of employees has always been a consistent headache in the Nigerian business scene. This is more poignant in the Internet Café business where the owner cannot be around every single minute of operating hours and manually keeping track of tickets created and sold is a very difficult task, even with a timer software. Virtually every timer software was developed for time allocation to Café users through tickets and other means, not to police dishonest employees. Though some timer software provide a minimal but easily understood accounts reports services, others provide complex reports that discourage or frustrate even the most Shylock of Internet Café owners.

It is even more discouraging when one realizes that the problem of accountability goes beyond mere honesty of employees. Some honest employees are under pressure from friends, relatives or associates to give them un-metered browsing time or extend the time paid for. Knowing that such allocated time do not need to be accounted for is a great temptation under such circumstances.

Then there is also the issue of crooked Internet Café employees who shutdown a client timer to allocate un-metered and unlimited time, or delete some accounts on the timer server software so that those accounts do not get listed in the reports and thus do not need to be accounted for. The unreliability of some timer software also encourage these crooked employees via problems such as occasional or frequent invalid tickets for no discernable reasons whatsoever.

In addition, most available timers are so easily disabled or bypassed by users who end up browsing for more time that they paid for, resulting in losses for the Internet Café operator.

Finally, there is the issue of printing. An appreciable number of Internet Café users often want to print emails or other information.

On one hand, most Internet Cafés do not have a means of knowing whoever sent a job to a printer, and sometimes users do not claim such printed jobs either by omission or commission. Some timer software prevent users from printing by blocking the screen or some other means, thus requiring the attention of an administrator. The combination of user irritation and pressure on the administrator sometimes is too much for Internet Cafés that they prefer to disable the use of that feature in the timer software.

On the other hand, almost every available timer software provide no means to account 100% for printed jobs in a Cyber Café. Some timer software claim to automatically deduct printing cost from user time/accounts, but what happens when a crooked Cyber Café employee shuts such timer clients down and prints for a user or prints the job from where the timer software server is running? For the crooked employee working in a Café with a lot of printing sometimes going on, pocketing a reasonable percentage of the returns regularly is more than enough to cover his/her monthly salary!

2.2. Earlyon CafeCentra and Internet Café Accountability

Earlyon CafeCentra is unarguably the number one software for Internet Café accountability in the Nigerian market. CafeCentra has a variety of features to ensure complete accountability in any Internet Café from Printed Jobs to Time Allocated and User Tickets sold and much more.

a.) *Income Reports:* CafeCentra has nine report types to cover almost every aspect of the Internet Café daily operation. These reports include *General Income Report, Income Report Summary, Account Creation Summary, Account Creation Report, Printed Jobs Report, Printed Jobs Summary, Standalone Time Report, Admin Time Allocation Report* and *Admin Time Allocation Summary*. The user can select the period he/she wants the report to cover. The General Income Report provides comprehensive information on each user account ticket sold and used within the specified period while the Account Creation Report provides comprehensive information on each user account ticket created within the specified period and the administrator responsible. Each information segment is grouped according to user account values and summarized under the Income Report and Account Creation Summaries respectively. CafeCentra reports are so accurate that even if a user account is deleted, in as much as the account has been used, it is reported as income, thus checkmating crooked Café employees. Information for reports are kept by CafeCentra for as much as three months for continued reliability.

The Printed Jobs Report provides information about each job printed by users while in the Café such as the number of pages, the Café Administrator who printed the job, the printer to which the jobs were sent, the time of printing and the computer from which the jobs were printed. The Printed Jobs Summary summarizes all these information by grouping according to Administrator name.

And to make everything easy for the Café owner, CafeCentra can be configured to automatically email all Report Summaries to your email inbox regularly!

b.) *Events Log:* CafeCentra provides the most comprehensive events log of any similar software on the local or international market. It logs down virtually everything that happens on an Internet Café network while the server was running. CafeCentra logs down the time each client software was started, the time it was shut down, the time a user logs on with any ticket, the time any account was deleted and who was

responsible, the time an administrator allocates standalone time and when the user was logged out and much more.

CafeCentra even logs down the time the server was shutdown and who shut down the server software! Thus a Café owner can have a clear picture of what is happening in his/her Café by checking the event log on the CafeCentra server which keeps events up to one month old in store. Furthermore, CafeCentra allows for the creation of multiple administrator accounts with varying rights. A particular admin account may have rights to create user accounts but not be able to view income reports or create administrator accounts while another may not be able to create users or print tickets but be able to authorize remote actions such as user logout, pausing of timers, rebooting or shutting down workstations. All actions carried out under an administrator profile are logged down for complete accountability.

b.) Other Features: CafeCentra has other accountability features such as complete Print Job monitoring. This means that CafeCentra can monitor all jobs printed in your Cyber Café whether from a computer running CafeCentra client or not, and even from the computer running CafeCentra server! CafeCentra also can lock the system date and time on the computer running CafeCentra server, so that nobody can change the time and your reports are always accurate. This feature also enables CafeCentra to prevent fraud on Time Bound accounts which could be used for overnight browsing and ensures that expired accounts cannot be rolled-back as is often possible with other Cyber Café timer software.

2.3. The Security Issue

Dishonest employees can turn your Cyber Café investment to a big loss over time, but dishonest users with the aid of insecure Internet Café timer software can bring that loss upon you faster than perhaps any other factor!

Most users believe in having everything free if they could help it and hardly feel any obligation towards morality when it comes to hacking your Cyber Café timer software and browsing the internet for free. And the worrisome news is that Cyber Café users are increasingly getting sophisticated in hacking timer software and browsing for free, resulting in losses for the Cyber Café owner or operator.

Now, instead of the average Cyber Café timer reducing the number of employees you have to employ, it is the other way round. Most owners now employ people to walk from one computer to the other, trying to see if users have bypassed the resident Cyber Café timer. The bottom-line in this is that the Cyber Café operator spends money that should go into profits as salaries for these *Cyber-walker* employees! Nonetheless, users still continue to cause problems because of the impossibility of monitoring them 100% of the time.

2.4. Earlyon CafeCentra Security

Earlyon CafeCentra is undoubtedly the most secure Internet Café Billing and Management software in the market today. The CafeCentra client implements such security features that makes it very difficult, if not impossible to hack or by-pass. In the event that a user is able to kill the client program, CafeCentra restarts it automatically. A second attempt at killing the client program would make CafeCentra to invalidate the user's ticket account and log the report on CafeCentra server as a security breach. Further attacks would make CafeCentra client to terminate all user applications running on the client computer and shut down the computer for the attention of a Cyber Café administrator, thus frustrating even the most persistent hacker. From experience, the vast majority of dishonest users give up after losing a ticket to CafeCentra security breach.

2.5. The Operating Cost Issue

The basic job of Internet Café timer software is to grossly simplify the job of billing users for time spent on a computer system. However, it is increasingly becoming clear that Cyber Cafés need more than just timer software. One of the highest areas of investment in an Internet Café business is the computer systems. Most users that come to Internet Cafés only know how to browse the web, type and send their emails. They mostly do not have computers at home, so issues like understanding critical system files and learned computer usage are either beyond them or not within their circle of concern.

It is thus desirable if the Internet Café owner can have software to help in the management of these assets while under customer usage. Such software would not only handle the general Internet Café user billing, but would provide options for the

Café administrator or owner to restrict users from tampering with critical system files, system registry, etc. It would also be of advantage if such feature as task management is available. This would help solve the problem of having to re-start computer systems when a running windows application stops responding, a situation which necessitates running scandisk at every system re-boot. Over time, most Café operators have noticed that under such situation, users are often impatient, prompting even the administrator to skip the disk scanning process, which in no long time results in a hard-disk littered with enough bad sectors to be unusable. The developers of the Microsoft Windows Operating System recognized these and other associated hazards and thus included shutdown procedures and application task management via *Ctrl-Alt-Del* key combinations. However in the bid to secure their software against hacks, most timer developers block this key combination and forget or do not bother to provide any other alternative. The attendant cost of system maintenance is thus shifted to the unsuspecting Internet Café owner. Another re-curent cost which is inevitable is labour cost. Employees are a necessity. However every business endeavours to limit their number to the minimum and one of the first places for getting back valuable Return-On-Investment (ROI) for the cost of purchasing timer software is reduction in the previously required number of employees.

2.6. Earlyon CafeCentra and Internet Café Operating Costs

Designed with the realization that the computers in an Internet Café are one of the most valuable assets of the business concern, CafeCentra provides the following features to help in the management of the Café computers:

a) **Remote Task Management:** Instead of re-booting a system with one of the applications not responding, the Café operator can simply go to the CafeCentra server, right click on the computer in question and remotely view the tasks running on the system. He or she can then remotely end an application that is not responding and the user can continue working on the computer as if nothing has happened.

a). **Client Security Policies:** CafeCentra allows Café operators to set client security policies to be effected on every client by just selecting appropriate options on the server with a

button click. Such security policies include preventing users from changing browser settings, changing folder options to un-hide critical system files, deleting or adding printers and much more. These settings are all effected as unobtrusively as possible.

b). **Remote Client Action:** All or selected CafeCentra clients could be remotely shutdown, rebooted, have their timers paused or the current user logged out right from the CafeCentra server. In addition Café administrators can send messages from the server to selected or every client machine. This greatly simplifies management in a Café with more than a couple of computers.

In addition, CafeCentra offers a unique Print Monitoring feature. While most timers simply block the screen once they detect that a user wants to print via the Print dialog or rather close the Print dialog forcefully thus requiring the attention of an administrator, CafeCentra actually queues all jobs sent to a printer. The user is then notified by CafeCentra with the options of canceling the job if it was mistakenly sent, keeping the job for later printing or having an administrator authorize it immediately if a Café employee is available at such moment; all at the simple click of a button!

Jobs kept for later printing can be printed by an administrator from the computer in question or remotely from the CafeCentra server after viewing all pending jobs on the computer. The number of pages of a job is known in advance by both the user and the administrator as provided by CafeCentra, thus avoiding any dispute on such information.

On the client program, CafeCentra offers such user friendly utilities such as Closing All Opened Windows, Launching Yahoo Mail or Hotmail Login page at the click of a button! There are also options for user timer pausing, account combination, etc as enabled by the Café operator. Earlyon CafeCentra also provides configurable Internet Access monitoring such that it can automatically warn users when Internet Connection is slow, giving them the option to pause their timers if they so desire and it automatically un-pauses such timers when the connection is better.

All these ensure that the barest minimum of employees is needed and Cyber Café operating costs are kept as low as possible, giving huge Return-On-Investment for the purchase of Earlyon CafeCentra.

3. An Internet Café Timer Is Not Enough

From the foregoing discussions, it is evident that for an Internet Café that would maintain continuous profitability and patronage, an ordinary Internet Café timer is simply not enough. The requirement is thus for a software that would not only handle the billing of Internet Café users, but would include other features to assist in the management of the Internet Café. Generally, and not unexpectedly, such software may be priced higher than the ordinary counterpart. However, the Return-On-Investment (ROI) in the long run to the smart investor is much more important than the few savings in immediate cost given by the alternative.

4. Conclusion

From the preceding paragraphs which have enumerated some of the key problems faced by Internet Café operators in managing their Cafés for sustainable profitability and how features provided by the Earlyon CafeCentra software helps in solving these problems to overcome, it is evident that even while the potential user may not be in a hurry to conclude that this is the software his/her Internet Café really needs, it is sure worth a trial.

The Earlyon CafeCentra software boasts of a rapidly growing user base and it should be of note that till date, no single Café operator has installed and tried it for the evaluation period without eventually purchasing the product. In fact, cases abound of Internet Café operators who have installed and paid for some other timer software often more expensive than CafeCentra, switching over to CafeCentra and never going back again due to the improvements in earnings and ease of administration offered by the software.

5. Sample User Case Studies and Testimonials

IMPORTANT

The sample user cases and testimonials provided are true-life testimonies of CafeCentra users and customers. The information have been provided on the basis that the true identity of these users shall be protected except otherwise instructed and the information shall only be used for marketing purposes. If you finally choose to become a CafeCentra user and experience an improvement in your business, you may also wish to share it with the software's developers by sending a mail to

testimonials@cafecentra.com. Your testimony would only be used for marketing purposes and your anonymity is guaranteed.

Case Study: Accountability Problems

When my friend told me about it, in all fairness I had replied that another timer would not make much of a difference, if any at all. Six months back, I'd polled my cooperative funds and all my other savings together to go into the lucrative Internet Café business rather than buy a new car as my colleagues in the civil service were doing, courtesy of the Obasanjo salary increase.

True to expectations, we started making money almost right away. But what I seemed to have underestimated was the problem of accountability, moreover when I have another job and couldn't be at the café all day long. I was always having the mind that not all the money generated was going into the business purse either by omission or commission. Manually cross-checking ticket sales was painstaking and worse of all, not fool-proof. Changing timers has not proved to be effective at all. And resigning from my job, even if I could afford it, was not going to help except I could consult an Oracle daily on actual ticket sales.

This explains why when I installed CafeCentra after much persuasion, I never expected any improvement. The first one week was rough and tough as the software's exceptional income reports kept indicting my attendants and fishing out even the remotest unreported ticket sale. And it had a powerful event log to back all its claims!

We are now in the second month of using CafeCentra and in fact, I have gained weight from the resulting peace of mind. Earnings have jumped up at least 25% and all I now need to do is come in once a week, switch to my admin account on the server and check the income reports. All of us in the café, including my attendants have come to respect grudgingly or otherwise, the accuracy of that software called CafeCentra. I call it the Oracle of my café!

Case Study: Management Problems

If you have ever started a business and watched your investment slowly going down to drain from un-articulated pressures and problems, then you could imagine the scenario I was in months back. I had planned two or even three Cyber Cafés in

the long run, but decided to start with one, if at least to get a feel of the whole business. The first couple of months was brisk business as I was one of the early starters in my area. However, six months later, I was not only yet to start another Café but really facing a nightmare in the management of the one still on ground; I was having hard disk problems regularly, users were not too pleased with the disturbing adverts from the cheap Cyber Timer I was using, users were printing jobs and forgetting or refusing to claim them, etc. The result was that I was losing customers to my competitors. I was at my wits end and the last solution on my mind was a new timer. Installing CafeCentra came more out of my shortage of options rather than any detailed study on my part. It was more like a stroke of luck. I had seen it at another Café owned by a friend in another state and noticing that he wasn't experiencing the same problems plaguing me, decided to give it a try, with ample encouragement from him. The result of that singular decision taught me the difference between ordinary timer software and Cyber Cafe management software and what that difference could mean to the success or eventual failure of a Cyber Café business.

I noticed that users liked the visual appeal of the software client, its user friendliness such as slow connection warning and print monitoring and the absence of disturbance from ubiquitous adverts. That was the immediate rewards along with the accurate reporting features that prompted me to pay for the software. The long term reward included longevity for my hard disk as a result of little or no more reboots due to non-responding tasks. I actually noticed that later on after much reflection. Now I introduce CafeCentra to friends anywhere I can. My Cyber Café is enough testimony to convince most of them though a few skeptics still exist, but that is not a problem; You can never rid the world of skeptics.

Case Study: Maximizing Profitability

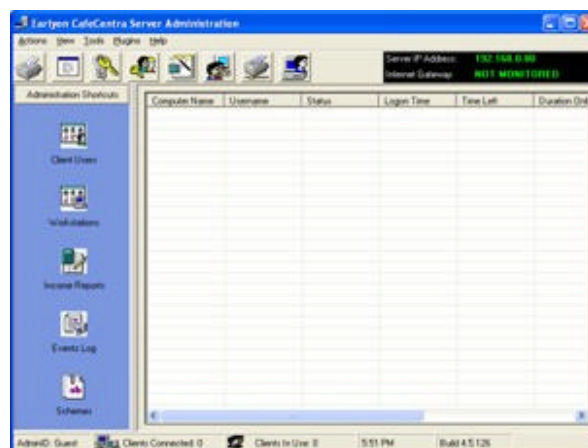
I'll just like to commend the developers of CafeCentra. They seem to have carefully studied the problem faced by numerous Cyber Café operators like myself. Arguably the biggest problem faced by most of us is the issue of honesty and accountability. It is so difficult these days to find an honest administrator. This CafeCentra software has proven that using just an ordinary timer in your Café can at best ensure that

users would pay for the time they use, not that you would eventually get every kobo made in the Cyber Café. The Cyber Café scene is becoming increasingly competitive and the costly to run that it is imperative that one makes as much as possible from his Café to be able to stay in business.

In fact I can hardly say how impressed and happy I am with this CafeCentra software.



CafeCentra Client Screenshot



CafeCentra Server Screenshot

For further information on Earlyon CafeCentra, or to arrange a trial installation of Earlyon CafeCentra at your Internet Café by one of our technical personnel or accredited reseller, please contact us via email at info@cafecentra.com or call us on **0803-4521607** or **0803-3724060**.

If however you wish to download and install Earlyon CafeCentra yourself, you can download the software at
