Bad Designs Can Cause Big Delays

What is it?
This is a computer terminal used by waiters and bartenders on a dinner cruise boat to keep track of dinner checks and bar checks. It is approximately five years old. The keypad is completely flat.

Keypad: the main problem

No Buttons
The computer uses a keypad with a flat surface to interface with the user. There are no buttons like on a traditional keyboard. The user is able press anywhere on the “button” to make a selection. This does not constrain the user to press two buttons at the same time. Because the terminal only accepts one selection at a time the user can easily choose the wrong liquor, beer, entree, etc. During the hustle and bustle of a busy restaurant this can and does happen many times. Most of the time the user is not aware that the wrong selection has been made.

Upgrading Breakdown
The only way to add or delete an item on the computer is to change the actual button. This causes the user to be forced to search for some buttons that should be grouped with others. This can cause a severe time delay. The only way to upgrade it would be to reorganize the entire keypad. This would cost a lot of time and money. It has lead to some odd mappings. Here are examples of some misplaced buttons:

• Lemonade is separated from all the juices (purple).
• Palmetto is separated from all the beers (yellow).
• Goldschlager is separated from all the liquors (white).

Original Layout
The original layout of the keypad is not very user friendly. Many of the buttons form rows while others form columns. The liquors are in alphabetical order, but everything else is in random order. There are many buttons that are not used such as: FIRE!, OPEN FOOD, and the smiley face (between o’douls and FROZEN).

Stickers
Because upgrading is so restrictive, stickers have been used to place over buttons. This does not look good and the stickers can easily fall off.

A Solution
Today, many restaurants use a touch screen display. This is ideal because it allows the user to use the computer much faster. They are far less likely to make mistakes. It is also easier to upgrade.

I certify that this submission is entirely my own work.
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