adequate ventilation, that their cable connections are protected and that other items cannot be stacked on top of them. Cables must also be run tidily and protected appropriately from what can often be a hazardous environment for electronics. Always place work stations away from heat sources.

Every vendor has horror stories of PC workstation CPUs being stuffed sideways into cabinets under bar sinks, of damp dish cloths being stored in a heap on top of an uninterruptible power supply, of cables being draped across (or through) the ice tray under a bar, and so on, all with the expected devastating impact on reliability. Systems are absolutely critical to the operation of any F&B outlet. While vendors are constantly working to make them more rugged and reliable, it's essential to do everything possible to protect them and maximize their reliability. Downtime costs money.

WIRELESS NETWORKS

Wireless networks are becoming much more common in F&B outlets, both for the staff using handheld terminals for order-taking in spread-out operations and, in appropriate environments, for guests' Internet access. Although they seem to offer much more freedom of installation, in reality the transmitter/receiver base stations/access points must be carefully positioned to ensure complete signal coverage, especially in larger outlets. A signal strength survey must be done prior to installation to identify the best locations for the access points, and cabling must be run from those positions back to the system server or network hub.

INTERNET

We have already discussed a number of ways in which Web-based applications can be used to help in the profitable operation of restaurants. A few more points bear mentioning. Installing Internet access for an F&B outlet is a necessity these days. The internet is the primary way in which the public searches for dining and entertainment options. All restaurants and bars will benefit from at least a point-of-presence Web site with contact details, and managers and chefs will need Internet access for e-mail and for research. It's also both important and valuable to make full use of search engine optimization to drive business via your Web site. Restaurants have to fight for visibility along with every other guest destination.

Installing broadband service at an outlet with appropriate firewall security can also provide public high-speed Internet access (HSIA) for all kinds of guest services as well as for other use such as credit card settlements. For example, wireless terminals at the Kentucky Derby allow patrons to place F&B orders, but also to bet, check handicapping data and watch videos from other tracks.