- Manage menus, and
- Provide data to other networked systems, freeing up time once devoted to report preparation and analysis.

Computer software suppliers are constantly updating their systems, and foodservice operators are eagerly embracing and purchasing system enhancements. Touch screen and wireless systems are quickly becoming the standard, allowing food servers to enter customer orders without having to make unnecessary trips to the kitchen. The kitchen staff notifies the server via a vibrating pager with a digital readout when orders are ready. Newer advances allow servers to place orders using handheld devices and server voice recognition systems. These new systems will make it possible for servers to remain in the dining area to provide customers with more personalized attention.

In addition to improving the flow of information from the wait staff to the kitchen production staff, the real-time data also improve purchasing and inventory controls. Wider wireless local area networks are giving properties with multiple food service outlets the ability to integrate information and consolidate operations. Consolidated data accumulated by a chain or a POS provider are available via an Internet site. Profitability as well as enhanced food quality is achieved by keeping inventories lower through rapid turnover. The leading POS systems offer an instant multilocation interface, so that sales, labor, inventory, and purchasing information can be shared on demand. This easy access of information creates a cost-saving environment through centralized data storage. These databases create powerful tools for making improved marketing, management, and financial decisions as reports can be generated by the day, hour, and minute.

Property Management Systems

For hotels and resorts, bringing each of these functions and other applications together into a unified program creates a **property management system (PMS)**. PMSs combine computer hardware and software into an integrated information system. These systems provide a central point for accumulated data and integrate a variety of activities at the property level such as:

- Reservations (Internet, central reservation, and GDS reservations),
- Pricing and revenue management,
- Guest profile,
- Guest check in and check out,
- Electronic keys,
- Telephone, messaging, and television activation,
- Maintaining guest **folios** (revenue recognition),
- Updating room status and housekeeping data,
- Combining **night audit** information and reports,
- Maintaining employee payroll records,
- Updating inventory records,
- Creating financial statements,
- Tracking travel agency bookings and commissions, and
- Tracking the effectiveness of marketing programs.

These systems have been further enhanced by another important development in the use of management information technology—**enterprise systems**—that combine information for multiple properties. Enterprise systems present a new model of corporate computing. They allow companies to replace their existing information systems, which are