



**Today, IT is being used widely in the internal operations of hotels to maximise efficiency and lower costs. Atanu Ghose throws light on the adoption of IT in hotels**

**T**oday's hotel guests are savvy consumers who expect outstanding service. The staff work hard to stay ahead of the competition, and so should the enterprise applications that are, or should be, used. Hotel Information Systems empowers hotels to create a business system that successfully manages the property, turns information into knowledge and realises greater profits. A typical Property Management System (PMS) is divided into various modules that interact to provide a remarkably comprehensive and easy-to-use system. Its intuitive and well-structured user-interface allows you and your staff to acquire the essential skills of property operations quickly and easily.

PMS should provide proven, implemented functionality in an Internet native centrally deployable environment. With a properly designed user-interface, one should be able to access all important account information from one screen instead of several, thus reducing the check-in process and improving the efficiency of the front desk. Each module should allow you to

search and retrieve information for guest, group and company accounts using virtually any criteria. All of this should be done without accessing complicated menu screens, thus increasing productivity.

Another global feature that is extremely important is detailed guest, group and company records. Used with a variety of customised reports, these detailed records allow you to precisely target your marketing efforts to improve your occupancy rates, increase your yield and enhance your strategic planning. Each module should have a customisable report selection menu. The reports should have provision for sorting and filtering of data to enable viewing of the exact information you need at a moment's notice. A good PMS enables your hospitality enterprise to increase revenue and occupancy, improve guest loyalty and reduce costs by centralising and streamlining your operations.

Some of the key features that should be available in PMS are listed below:

- ▶ Provides up-to-date customer information

and preferences, so that the services can be personalised. This contributes to a great customer experience and repeat business.

- ▶ Cater to your international guests with several language and currency options. Take advantage of multiple currency capabilities to display and quote rates in an alternate currency. Use flexible invoicing capabilities to meet local market requirements. Exchange foreign currency and foreign traveller's checks with a record of the transaction details including service charges and receipt tracking.
- ▶ Establish guest loyalty programmes by tracking room nights and revenue. Retain up-to-the-minute information about the number of reservations, stays, cancellations, no shows and the amount of revenue generated by each guest or company.
- ▶ Automate the delivery and processing of special guest services. Configure no-charge codes based on the frequency of use to provide customised recurring services.
- ▶ Extend your marketing programmes with the sale and management of gift certificates that you can issue, redeem, refund and track. Create cash-based certificates redeemable at cash value or usage-based certificates redeemable at non-cash or exchange value.
- ▶ Display occupancy figures, housekeeping and incoming reservations at any given moment with the flash status.
- ▶ Reduce manual transaction processing by creating virtual rooms to process accounts that do not impact availability or inventory.
- ▶ Optimise processing by storing past data in a separate archive database.
- ▶ Reduce processing time with the card reader interface. You can rapidly find reservations with just a swipe of the credit card regardless of the card that was given at the time of reservation. Approvals can be completed in batch mode at any time or online while the guest is checking in.
- ▶ Use credit card authorisation to record all credit card authorisation activity and keep an up-to-the-minute credit status on each guest account. Each approval code is stored in the application for the life of the system, facilitating effective research of disputes and charge-backs.
- ▶ Access the guest account directly from the room blocking display (is an easy-to-read graphical representation of the status of each room) to change information, add postings or messages and more. The Blocking Worksheet.
- ▶ Save guest service agent's time by

establishing charge routing instructions, which automatically transfer guest charges by individual code, group of codes or all codes from one account to another or to separate charges on a specific guest account.

- ▶ Save time, reduce errors and allow your staff to perform more guest service functions by defining the business rules and requirements of taxation regulations directly in the system. You can create and maintain an unlimited number of tax schedules, including when and how to rebate taxes for long-term stays or changes in associated revenue. The system automatically adjusts taxes on previous postings when the guest's tax status changes. Tax Exempt Reason Codes can be used for more detailed reporting about tax-exempt guests.
- ▶ Reduce excessive credit extensions by easily identifying receivable accounts that are over limit with system prompts and alerts. View receivable accounts that have exceeded their credit limit via reports. Place receivable accounts on credit hold and use them on current or future guest accounts, house accounts, sales masters and group bookings, only with user override permission.
- ▶ Maximise yields with rate and inventory rules including setting minimum lengths of stay, closing out room types and setting minimum rates. Establish oversell and undersell controls by rate plans and room types or for the entire house. Define daily allocations for the sale of specific rate classifications.
- ▶ Maximise revenue opportunities by designating 'shoulder rates' for individual group members arriving before or staying after the group dates. Sell unique rates, packages, room types and room numbers for each night of the guest stay.
- ▶ Optimise the configuration of your inventory to sell an unlimited combination of rooms as single suites or as individual rooms with the appropriate impact on availability.
- ▶ Reduce expenses by using the specialised features in the credit card interface – such as multiple processors, multiple merchant numbers, multiple properties and centralised deployment.

The impact on profitability, efficiency and repeat business ensures that the ROI on the IT investments is more than justified. ➡

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