

Summary

OPPORTUNITY	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Deploy technology to provide a seamless check-in/-out process for guests and:<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Differentiate the hotel from its competitors▪ Improve guest experience by reducing check-in time and lobby-crowding
ACTION	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Leveraged the use of the ubiquitous mobile phone to streamline guest check-in▪ Designed an integrated solution to enable guest communication via mobile interface▪ Conceptualisation to implementation took 1 year
RESULTS	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ 83% ↓ in average wait time to 1 min (form 6 min previously)▪ 40% of all hotel guests use the mobile check-in system▪ 15% of guests who used the system have rated the mobile check-in and check-out process as “excellent”

OPPORTUNITY

DESIGNING A SEAMLESS CHECK-IN EXPERIENCE FOR A GREAT FIRST IMPRESSION

When Bay Hotel Singapore was preparing to open its doors with 333 rooms in 2012, the senior management sought to avoid one of the industry’s most common challenges: many guests checking in at once.

Traditionally, checking-in can be a laborious process that involves recording guest details, searching for and allocating rooms, noting special requests, and preparing room keys. According to the hotel, conventional check-in can average 10 minutes per guest, encumbering staff and lowering the quality of guest experience.

As a new entrant to Singapore’s hotel scene in 2012, the hotel sought to create a seamless check-in process, while anticipating high volume of business with long queues (high possibility of bottlenecks). To improve on the standard process and differentiate from existing major players, Bay Hotel Singapore sought to leverage technology to reduce time wasted on manual processes and instead focus resources on guest engagement.

“The first impression is always very important. After a long flight in, if a guest enters the hotel lobby only to find a queue for check-in and another long wait, naturally he or she is going to be upset. We wanted a solution that would provide a seamless check-in and check-out process.”

-- Nigel Vsandh
Front Desk Manager
Bay Hotel Singapore

Supported by SPRING's Customer Centric Initiative (CCI), Bay Hotel redesigned the conventional check-in process, allowing guests to perform check-in and -out via their own mobile devices before they even arrive. When guests reach the hotel, necessary check-in tasks have been performed (e.g. room allocation, keys preparation). The guest only needs to verify personal information, sign off, and pick up the keys. This is done on QIKINN's "QikPad" (Photo 1), with each employee at the Front Desk equipped with an iPad.

Key Steps

- **Researching options and integrating solutions early-on:** The senior management decided to adopt a mobile technology early, when the hotel was still under construction. This left sufficient time for hotel to conceptualise and implement the system, and make changes to its operating procedures to best work with the system.
- **Partnering hotel's property management system (PMS) provider:** Working with their existing PMS vendor to identify solutions that would integrate well with the PMS, the hotel invested in QIKINN, a fully integrated mobile solution developed for hotels by Ubicomp System.
- **Designing a user-friendly process for guests:** The solution is designed to be as intuitive as possible. Guests receive a SMS notification as soon as they make a reservation, and are given the decision to check-in using SMS or in person at the front desk (Photo 2). Now guests just need a phone – not even a smartphone – to check into the hotel.
- **Configuring hotel system to allow timely notification and redesign pre-arrival procedures:** If the guest decides to use SMS, QIKINN receives the check-in request and a notification alert appears in the hotel front desk machine. The front desk staff can enter the Central Administration system to see the check-in request from the guest and prepare materials prior to the guest's arrival. The system also allows staff to enter in any guest notes, usually done at check-out.
- **Training employees:** Each employee was trained thoroughly on navigating the mobile solution as a part of their on-boarding. Due to the hotel's "all-in-one" concept (which folds all the functions of concierge, check-in, and bell-desk into a single job scope), employees can leverage the system for additional functions in their concierge and front-desk roles.

Photo 1: Verification interface on QikPad

Dear Harbans, Singh,
Welcome to Bay Hotel.
You may now use the mobile check-in while on the move. If you would like to start using the mobile check-in, send : CI 100397 to us after 10:00 on the day of your arrival.

Photo 2: SMS message for guest, giving option for mobile check-in

Key Success Factors

- **Leveraging existing government grants:** To defray the implementation costs of the mobile check-in technology, the hotel tapped on SPRING Singapore's Customer-Centric Initiative (CCI), which offers an assistance package to help companies in upgrading service standards.
- **Implementing this productivity measure from the start:** Bay Hotel's senior management decided from a very early stage of planning to adopt the mobile phone check-in process, thus allowing it to fully integrate with the hotel's property management system. This prevented interfacing issues typically faced by hotels when integrating legacy with new systems, and also avoided related costs.

Project period: Bay Hotel Singapore rolled out its mobile check-in service when it opened in February 2012. Conceptualisation to implementation took **1 year**, and included development and testing of the QIKINN infrastructure as well as training of staff.

Estimated cost: The cost of implementation was supported by the CCI package.

RESULTS

IMPROVED GUEST EXPERIENCE AND REDUCED BOTTLENECKS

- **Front Desk better prepared prior to guest arrival:** The longer lead-time prior to guest arrival gave added ease-of-mind for staff on the job as they are better prepared to receive guests when they arrive. This also reduces the stressful occurrences by minimising long queues forming at Front Desk.
- **Reduced wait time for guests:** As employees are able to perform the check-in procedure before guests arrive, the typical wait time is cut by 83%, from 6 minutes to only one for verification of information at the hotel lobby. At least 15% of users have rated the mobile check-in and check-out process as "excellent."
- **High adoption rate:** ~40% of all hotel guests now use the mobile check-in system. Business travellers under corporate bookings tend to check-in using their phones most consistently. Take-up from leisure tourists has also been climbing (~10% check in via phone pre-arrival).
- **Ongoing communication and feedback with less paperwork:** The hotel can now maintain guest communication and conduct mobile surveys to gather feedback. As information shared is synced and recorded electronically, the hotel has saved on cumbersome paperwork and archiving.
- **Best practice in mobile solution applied to other behind-the-scenes processes:** The hotel has expanded the use of QIKINN technology to Housekeeping to further enhance efficiencies and guest experience. All employees now carry a mobile phone which receives text prompts when there are tasks to be done (e.g. room cleaning, towel delivery). The solution has also been applied to the room release process – Housekeeping now use mobile phones to update room status on the PMS.

"Technology has developed a lot but as people we too need to develop. We need to continue to adapt our thinking, processes and operating procedures to enhance efficiency and effectiveness for clients and employees alike."

-- Nigel Vsandh
Front Desk Manager
Bay Hotel Singapore