Holiday Inn Singapore Atrium
Improves Responsiveness to Guests Through a Web and Mobile-based Request Management System

Summary

OPPORTUNITY
- High potential to streamline previous multi-step and labour-intensive workflow in handling guest requests
- Availability of off-the-shelf technology in the market which could address the opportunity

ACTION
- Invested in FCS e-connect, a job request management system to address guest requests via a web-based system and mobile phones
- Quick facts:
  - ✓ Rollout period of 4 months
  - ✓ Estimated project cost of S$100,000

RESULTS
- 67 % ↓ in time taken to fulfill guest request
- 80% ↓ in time taken to forward guest requests on to the relevant departments
- System can track data for analysis to improve on current practices and sharpen service anticipation through identifying common failure points in service

OPPORTUNITY	REDUCING DELAYS/ERRORS AND MANUAL LABOUR IN REQUEST MANAGEMENT

The ability of a hotel to respond to guest requests is an important contributor to guest satisfaction. Holiday Inn Singapore Atrium recognised the previous process was cumbersome, highly manual and had a high potential for mistakes to be made:

- Guests had to call in and relay their requests to the telephone operator or department coordinator
- The request would then be recorded manually and relayed to the relevant department for fulfilment
- The department would then dispatch their staff to resolve the request
- Once the job was complete, the department involved then had to inform the coordinator before the case could be closed.

From start to finish, the process required at least two phone calls. It also offered significant **opportunity for delays**. At times, the staff responsible for fulfilling the job requests was occupied and missed the calls, **setting off a chain of delays** that resulted in slow overall service. It also allowed for **high human error** when recording or communicating the guest request from person to person.

This lengthy process was exacerbated by the high volume of guest requests, lending additional urgency to improving the situation; hence, the hotel reevaluated ways for improvement to further enhance guest satisfaction.

CUTTING REDUNDANCIES AND AUTOMATING REQUEST TRANSMISSION

In a bid to enhance guest experience, and reduce errors and delays, the hotel installed FCS e-Connect, a web-based Guest and Staff Job Request and Work Order Management System. The system allowed authorised staff to receive job requests and messages, as well as retrieve guest portfolios and data via their mobile phones issued by the hotel.

With the system in place, the telephone operator who spoke to the guest simply had to input the request into the FCS e-Connect Guest Request Management System. The system then sent a text message to the relevant staff to inform them accordingly, who would then acknowledge via a text message. Once the request had been fulfilled, another text message would update the status in the system.

From an oversight perspective, department coordinators no longer had to call up and speak to individual staff – they could simply check the request status on the system. The time taken for guest requests to be fulfilled can also be tracked for internal review.

Key Steps

- **Identifying gaps in existing processes:** Previous process was manpower-heavy and inherently prone to human errors and subject to chains of delays. The hotel worked with the relevant departments to find ways to streamline the process and introduce automation where possible to reduce waste and errors. Beyond operations, the previous process also did not allow for systematic data collection and the FCS system would also plug this gap.

- **Briefing employees on impending change:** The hotel engaged employees to share with them how their workflow will be altered with the use of the FCS –Connect system; this was to allay concerns of "being replaced by technology" and to share with them the benefits to their own individual line of work (e.g. less time wasted transferring messages, reduced chances of error leading to complaints and team unhappiness).

- **Rolling-out training needed to deploy solution:** The hotel was realistic and understood that the technology employed can only be effective (and not cause more confusion) if employees find it user-friendly and adopt it. As the hotel installed the system, they rolled out phased, comprehensive training by first training the supervisors (to "train the trainers") and then get the supervisors to train their workers and also provide support to mature workers who may find the increased use of technology intimidating.

- **Investing in SIM cards:** As employees will be using data on their phones for work, the hotel issued SIM cards for employees for the use.

Key Success Factors

- **Hotel-wide focus on productivity**: The hotel's strategic focus on enhanced productivity and communication process creates an environment in which bottoms-up innovative proposals are not only welcomed, but championed.

- **The receptivity of hotel staff to the solution :** The staff welcomed the change as it reduced the manual labour that they have to put in each time to resolve guest requests. Also, it reduced miscommunication and internal conflict within the teams. They feel more empowered with the right tool to serve guests and hence are willing to undergo the training to learn how to use this tool to help them with their work. Eventually, employees were happy to embrace the system as it reduced the time they waste and allowed them to do their work better.

Project period: The FCS e-Connect Guest Request Management System was identified, fully **adopted and implemented over a 2-month period**.

Estimated cost: The adoption and implementation of the FCS e-Connect Guest Request Management System cost **S$100,000**, including costs of mobiles phones and SIM Cards requisited for the project.

RESULTS	RESPONDING MORE EFFICIENTLY – AND WITH FORESIGHT

- **Enhanced productivity through streamlined workflow:** The system streamlined the guest request process greatly. Previously, each request required multiple staff members, multiple phone calls, and filling in forms by hand. The new system has automated the process and reduced the number of links where service failure could occur. The new workflow utilises the employees' time more productively.

- **Increased responsiveness:** On average, *the time taken to fulfil requests dropped to 10 min from 30 min*. Within this, time taken to relay the request to the relevant department dropped from 15 min to 3–5 min instead. Hence, for *external and internal customers* (employees), the responsiveness has been greatly enhanced, reducing inefficiencies resulting from delays.

- **Reduced human errors:** With fewer links in the process, and a digital medium (as opposed to paper), the potential for human error to be introduced was greatly reduced. For the hotel, this has lessened the incidents of internal miscommunication, which may lead to the need for service recovery and related costs. For the guests, their requests are met more quickly and accurately.

- **Higher-level and forward-looking data analysis:** With its digital record of requests and time taken, the hotel can track and analyse patterns in the data related to guests requests. Armed with this knowledge, the hotel could better anticipate requests and refine its current practices to be more pre-emptive. For instance, the realisation that the most frequent request was for a toothbrush led the hotel to proactively place one in each room instead.