

HOSPITALITY Tech Advisor

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Sandals creates technological paradise

When vacationers go to the Caribbean islands, they're seeking seclusion, sunshine and sandy beaches. But the slow pace of paradise doesn't mean that the lucky hoteliers who manage and work its hotels and resorts can slow down with their guests. Rather, they must keep up a fast pace, always providing the latest in luxury, amenities and, of course, technology. At Sandals Resorts International, a collection of 17 Sandals and Beaches resorts poised in stunning locations throughout the Caribbean Islands, the IT staff is "diving in" to the technological advances of the hospitality industry. One of their key vendors, Visual One Systems, is helping the Unique Vacations-managed resorts keep up the technological pace in paradise.

Make me a match

The Sandals and Beaches resorts began looking for a technology provider in 1999, when they found that their property management system (PMS), Consolidated Hotel Services System, was vulnerable to the Y2K bug. As they began their search for a new system, they also decided to leave behind the UNIX environment that they had worked in with their last system, which wasn't very user friendly on the front end and did not allow the Sandals team to perform data extracts for report analysis. After developing a selection team which consisted of IT personnel and potential users of the system, including front office managers and rooms division supervisors, Sandals began looking at eight different applications that they had received product information on or had seen at other properties.

Two days later, a decision was made, and Visual One System was signed on to provide the resorts' new PMS. According to Jose Anne Brown, information services project manager at Sandals, "We selected the Visual One

Property Management System for a number of reasons. We liked the variety available in the product. And it's a Windows-based system, which is what we were looking for, and is very user friendly. The value for what we were getting in comparison to some of the other products was also a major factor in the selection."

Sandals began the roll out of their new PMS in March 1999, beginning with their most challenging property, Sandals Montego Bay. Three people from Visual One participated in the installation, and a number of the Sandals' IS managers were invited to review the product and see what the new system held in store. After ironing out a few problems in the installation, which were largely due to Visual One installing on and adapting to an unfamiliar platform, the roll out went smoothly, and after one month, the installation team was able to move to the next property. Visual One saw Sandals through the contracted installation of four resorts, and even stuck

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President

Robert N. Grimes

Publisher

Jerry Eimbinder

Managing Editor

Lori Runkel

Associate Editor

Allison Hearn

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Comments, suggestions or observations are always welcome. Please address correspondence to Lori Runkel, Managing Editor, at lrunkel@cyterpubs.com.

Jameson chooses InnPoints

Jameson Hospitality LLC has selected InnPoints Worldwide to provide GDS and Internet processing for its 132 Jameson Inn and Signature Inn hotels and toll-free voice reservation services for the Signature Inn hotels. InnPoints Worldwide staff will manage voice reservations, GDS bookings and Internet bookings for the hotels through its Web-based Hotel Factory central reservation system located at its reservation center in Albuquerque, N.M. The agreement also contains a provision for real-time, online bookability for the Jameson Inns and Signature Inns Web site.

OpenTable signs with MeriStar

OpenTable Inc. has been chosen by MeriStar Hotels and Resorts as the exclusive provider of restaurant reservation and customer relationship management for MeriStar hotel properties across the U.S. At participating MeriStar properties, OpenTable will build end-to-end solutions that will consist of the OpenTable electronic reservations books installed at restaurants throughout the property and access to a customized version of OpenTable's concierge solution — OTConcierge — for the front desk and corporate concierges. OpenTable will enable real-time, Internet-based reservation queries and confirmations for participating restaurants, and gather customer history into an extensive database.

Companies mentioned in this issue...

Clarity Retail Systems plc 01722 746200	www.clarity.plc.com
CyterShow (301) 315-8600	www.cyntershow.com
Fretwell-Downing Hospitality 0114 281 6060	www.fdgrouop.com/fdhd
InnPoints Worldwide (800) 401-2262	www.innpoints.com
Micros Systems Inc. (443) 285-6000	www.micros.com

Zoho looking for buyers

Zoho Corp., an online hotel-goods supplier, is seeking a buyer due to lack of funds and loss of a promised investment. The company notified customers that it will stop processing orders at the end of May if a buyer is not found.

Unirez and Benchmark sign agreement

Unirez Inc., provider of reservations services and application service provider technology, announced that it has signed an agreement with Benchmark Hospitality to provide reservation services and electronic distribution to all Benchmark properties. Unirez will provide seamless connectivity to all Global Distribution Systems as well as booking capability through other alternate distribution channels. Reservations can also be made at some property Web sites via the Unirez booking engine. **HTA**

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OpenTable Inc. (415) 551-1510	www.opentable.com
Powervar Inc. (800) 369-7179	www.powervar.com
Unirez Inc. (817) 416-5800	www.unirez.com
Tiger Communications plc 44 (0) 1425 891000	www.tigercomms.com
Visual One Systems (301) 926-2500	www.visualonesystems.com
Xiona Technologies Ltd. 44 (0) 7931 718 564	
Zoho Corp. (408) 469-4200	www.zoho.com

Sandals...

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around for a fifth to make sure the IS staff was sufficiently familiar with the program and had all of the reports they wanted the system to produce. After that, the Sandals team was able to complete the project themselves, and began tackling the remaining installations.

A happy marriage

Now that the system was in place, the next step was to decide how to maximize its potential. Because the Sandals resorts don't receive many of their reservations on property, with as much as 90 percent of their all-inclusive bookings coming from their Miami-based Central Reservations Office (CRO), many of the features that the Visual One System offers, such as yield management and rate management, were not needed at the resort level.

Instead, Sandals focused its use of the system on the front office features it provides, including things like reservations management, guest information, maintenance and a housekeeping dial in to update room status. Also, throughout the guest's stay, the Visual One PMS tracks all incidental purchases, such as phone calls, off-site tours and spa charges.

Visual One has also integrated its PMS with the Sandals Central Reservations System (CRS), a Sandals-maintained and supported application. Visual One provided an interface to the CRS that allows batched information to be sent daily to the resorts to update availability, reservations and guest information. Likewise, the Unique Vacations data warehouse receives updated customer information, including purchase and stay information, from each of the properties when the guests check out.

And with the wealth of information flowing between the PMS and the CRS, Sandals is making

strides in guest service and customer relationship management. The main users of the system, which include the front desk team, concierge and telephone operators, are able to readily access guest information in order to provide targeted service to the guests, as well as a feeling of familiarity and knowledge of who the guest is and what his needs are.

"We encourage everyone to learn a little bit more about the system so that they can be more informed and provide better service," says Brown. "And the quick reporting out of the system is a great benefit, because it provides quick snapshots of guest information and allows us to easily retain and look up historical information on our guests. We can also manage a number of things better now that we were never able to before, such as telephone calls, guest complaints and lost and stolen reports."

Satisfying relationships

Taking this process a step further, Sandals' managers use the PMS to aid them in their customer satisfaction program. Per the program, each of the Sandals' department heads gets a range of rooms that they call weekly to ensure that the guest in that room is satisfied. "A lot of them use the Visual system just to look up guest information and find anything that may be relevant to encourage conversation or find out a little bit more about them," says Brown.

The data extracts and reporting features, combined with the interface to the CRS, have also played a key role in Sandals' frequent guest program, called the Signature Guest System. Through these interfaces, all guest information can be shared with the marketing departments, who can then develop targeted advertising for repeat guests. And, because the company offers vacationers a number of different set-

tings, the Signature Guest program encourages them to discover the variety Sandals has to offer.

Says Brown, "People hop from property to property because all of the Sandals are different. The amenities are mostly all the same, but the countries, the architecture and the cultures of the people who are tending your needs are different." Brown adds that Sandals hopes to appeal to a wider range of customers than their traditional market: "Three years ago, we started the other arm of our hotels called Beaches Resorts. We had so many honeymooners and lovers coming to Sandals, we designed the Beaches Resorts for singles, couples and families, so the honeymooners could come back and vacation at the beaches with their kids."

A long honeymoon

And Sandals isn't done with the PMS yet. Rather, Sandals is constantly looking to improve their use of technology and get the most of their PMS investment. Currently, Sandals is already testing a credit card interface at one of the hotels, and they hope to implement the Visual One electronic key interfaces in newer properties with electronic locks. Plans to install the Visual One sales and catering software, point-of-sale software and guest activity scheduler are also slated for the summer of 2001.

In addition, Sandals also commissioned Ernst and Young to visit the hotels and provide a review to help Sandals develop a five-year plan with goals for technology and general efficiency. Sandals also took the initiative to ask its employees what technology they would like to see implemented across the properties in the upcoming years. Sandals, supported by a strong IS team and strong vendor relationships, seems to be having no trouble bringing technology to paradise.

— Allison Hearn HTA

PROPERTY MANAGEMENT

VENDOR	SYSTEM NAME	HARDWARE PLATFORM							OPERATING ENVIRONMENT					AVAILABLE FEATURES										
		PC Standalone	AS/400	ASP	UNIX	Linux	PC Lan	Web Based	Other	DOS	OS/400	Windows NT	UNIX	Windows 3.1	Windows 95/98	Novell	Windows 2000	Linux	Other	Hand-held available	Remote check-in	Remote check-out	Multi-property capability	Lobby kiosk check-in
AremisSoft Hospitality www.aremisoft.com (770) 590-4340	AREMIS	✓		✓	✓	✓					✓		✓		✓				✓		✓			
Central Point Technologies www.centralpointtech.com (954) 698-5151	INNvision PMS	✓		✓		✓					✓		✓		✓						✓			
	SharePoint Condo Management System	✓		✓		✓					✓		✓		✓							✓		
	HotelPMS.com			✓			✓						✓		✓							✓		
CMS Hospitality www.cmshosp.com.au 61 2 9440 9711	Presto!	✓				✓				✓		✓		✓								✓	✓	✓
Computel Computer Systems Inc. www.computel-computers.com (561) 994-5577	INN-CONTROL	✓						✓									✓					✓		
CSS Hotel Systems www.csshotelsystems.com (972) 548-9721	Inntegrity	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓				✓	✓	✓	✓
Fabco Systems Inc. www.fabcosystems.com (714) 579-3555	LodgeMaster for Windows						✓			✓		✓	✓	✓	✓							✓		
First Resort Software Inc. www.firstres.com (800) 872-3771	First Resort	✓				✓				✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓							✓		
Guestline Ltd www.guestline.com 44 0 1743 23 1232	Various systems available	✓		✓		✓	✓			✓		✓	✓	✓							✓	✓		
Hotel Information Systems www.hotelinfosys.com (949) 598-6262	CLS Software				✓					✓												✓		
	Paragon iSeries	✓	✓														✓				✓	✓	✓	✓
HotelTools Inc. www.hoteltools.com (800) 845-6638	Enterprise Application Suite			✓						✓		✓		✓		✓						✓		
HSI, a division of Micros Systems Inc. www.hsi-solutions.com (480) 596-5156	Jaguar/Griffin			✓		✓	✓			✓						✓						✓		
HSS Limited www.hssltd.com (602) 569-7248	FrontClerk 2000 and FCWIN	✓	✓		✓					✓		✓				✓						✓		
INNfinity Hospitality Systems www.innhs.com (800) 805-0595	Lodgical 2000					✓				✓						✓						✓		
InnQuest Software www.innquest.com (813) 288-4900 xt. 13	roomMaster 2000						✓			✓		✓	✓	✓								✓		

PMS Systems — Due to the large number of PMS vendors in the marketplace, we've split the vendor comparison chart into two parts, listed alphabetically. Next month's chart will include the remaining vendors. However, while we've tried to

Hostec theme: Impact of the Internet on operations, consumers

Hoteliers and restaurateurs converged on London's new ExCeL center in April for Hostec 2001, Europe's most comprehensive information technology event for the hospitality, tourism, foodservice, leisure and retail sector. Hostec, in its second year, attracted more than 2,000 attendees, a 40 percent increase over last year's attendance.

The event kicked off with a keynote address by Bill Oates, chief information officer at Starwood Hotels and Resorts, that focused on the tremendous impact of the Internet and how customers are driving technology trends in the hospitality and foodservice industries.

Oates was followed by an impressive palate of speakers who spoke on four tracks: foodservice/leisure/retail, hospitality/tourism, Internet technologies and general technology. The impact of the Internet on operations as well as consumer demands was by far the overriding theme. Other keynote speakers included David Ford, chief executive officer of Sodexo; Dr. Peter Bosshart, director of The Gottlieb Duttweiler Institut; and Robert Gaymer-Jones, vice president of operations at Whitbread Hotel Co.

The trade show floor held about 80 exhibitors from both Europe and the United States, many of which introduced new products at the show. Here are some of the highlights from the trade show floor:

▶ Columbia, Md.-based **Micros Systems** announced its new Internet-based point-of-sale product, iPOS. Part of the mymicros.net product suite, the iPOS solution's Offline Manager System ensures that the point of sale (POS) will continue to work in the event of Internet failure, and its fully featured handheld application offers flexibility in both traditional and non-traditional restaurant settings. Micros will release the iPOS systems in the

calendar third quarter. Micros also announced the general release of its 9700 Hospitality Management System. The Micros 9700 HMS is the company's newest POS for the leisure and entertainment industry, designed to integrate all functions of both front-end and back office restaurant service and retail revenue centers. The 9700 HMS uses touchscreen and keyboard technology for all aspects of POS operations, including server workstations and remote hand-held terminals.

▶ **Powervar** was on hand with its Security One Uninterruptible Power Manager solution, which is designed to safeguard retail EPOS computer systems with complete power protection against outages, surges and noise associated with dirty power. By cleaning and conditioning the incoming mains power to electronic equipment, the UPM safeguards system integrity and protects the components against degradation resulting from spikes and noise to lengthen their operational life.

▶ **Clarity** launched a new touchscreen hand-held order terminal, the Orderman. This terminal features faster ordering and no need for progress checking, 10-hour battery life and easy recharging, 'write-on' facility for customized orders and back lighting for use in subdued atmospheres. Clarity also showcased its EPOS solutions for all types of businesses, from fine dining to general retail. The suite of software modules covers all aspects of business operation, from EPOS management to reporting to stock

control and staff scheduling.

▶ **Tiger Communications** introduced Hotel 2020 ASP, a call accounting and integration product that has been developed to run efficiently over Internet and Wide Area Networking technology. Due to minimal bandwidth requirements for interfaces, it is possible to utilize Internet connectivity as a communication link between the individual properties and the central hosting location. The hosted solution can be connected to a property-based PMS or a centralized PMS.

▶ **Xiona Technologies** presented its new touchscreen system, QuickTouch, a multi-lingual guest-activated system that allows customers to carry out quick check-ins and check-outs. QuickTouch also allows guests to retrieve messages, check maintenance and housekeeping status and pay for their stay with a debit, credit charge or loyalty card.

▶ **Fretwell-Downing Hospitality** showcased Saffron, its Application Service Provider solution that has been designed to support multi-site catering operations that require management information for individual outlets, as well as for the overall business. Saffron can be introduced as part of a company intranet, with remote sites linked via an Internet Service Provider.

Hostec is produced and managed by Rockville, Md.-based CynterShow. The conference center, located near the London City Airport, opened in November 2000.

— Lori Runkel HTA