

PSMS ^{SMS}|GlobalGuest Module

Expanding Service Capabilities across Luxury Chain

Mandarin Oriental Hotel Group has always been well aware of how important accurate, up-to-date guest information is to its ability to provide superior service. In fact, the Hong Kong-based luxury chain attaches so much importance to personalized service that individual properties built their own extensive databases of their guests' histories and preferences.

"Providing our people with accurate information about the customer they're interacting with, so that they can provide great, memorable and lasting guest service, is a core element of what a luxury hotel company does," says Nick Price, Vice President of Information Technology at Mandarin Oriental Hotel Group (MOHG). "Knowing each individual guest, and doing our very best to accommodate their individual wishes, is fundamental."

The company has long sought ways to share all this valuable guest information across its 24-property chain, but it faced a significant challenge: MOHG chooses not to use a card-based customer loyalty program to uncover guest information—traditionally the most direct method for gathering data and for measuring guests' relative value to an organization.

Instead, individual properties' databases have been populated with information that guests provided on their own, combined with observations by hotel staff and management. "We don't even think of a plastic-card-and-points system as generating loyalty," says Price. "We believe loyalty is derived from excellent service and excellent attention to detail for each and every customer."

MOHG wanted to make greater use of its guest information resources, but without compromising its definition of customer loyalty. "MOHG had vast amounts of information about their guests, but it was very much 'siloed' at individual properties," says Rob Selwah, Vice President of Product Development at PAR Springer-Miller Systems. The lack of a centralized system also made it difficult for MOHG to provide consistent experiences for guests staying at multiple properties throughout the chain. This presented a particular challenge with VIP guests, Selwah explains: "The services and amenities that one property would provide to a certain VIP-level guest might be different from those at another property."



Doormen at Mandarin Oriental Hyde Park, London

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Nick Price, CIO/CTO, Mandarin Oriental Hotel Group

^{SMS}|GlobalGuest™ Solution Centralizes and Automatically Updates Guest Data

The solution MOHG chose to solve these issues is ^{SMS}|GlobalGuest, a module for the ^{SMS}|Host® Hospitality System created by PSMS using Microsoft®'s Dynamics CRM platform. ^{SMS}|GlobalGuest provides a centralized guest profile database, and makes relevant guest information available to employees at MOHG properties via Web services and fast Internet connections. Any additions or changes to a guest's profile are uploaded to the central guest database and made available to other MOHG properties in near real time, rather than via a traditional end-of-day batch update.

"Our goal was that a guest who goes to an MOHG hotel they had never been to before is seen and treated exactly the way they've been treated at the hotel where they've been a frequent guest," says Price. The ^{SMS}|GlobalGuest solution ensures not only that MOHG's most valuable customers are recognized chainwide, but that they receive attention and service at any MOHG property that's commensurate with their status.

"All customers deserve to be treated in a personal way, and they should be," says Price. "But there's also a recognition that a small percentage of our customers, perhaps 10%, deliver a substantial part of our business. So while there was something of a financial motive for implementing the SMS|GlobalGuest solution, by doing it we're also making the lives of all of our guests better."

MOHG currently has nine of its 24 properties subscribing to the SMS|GlobalGuest solution. The chain plans to have the solution rolled out to all its remaining properties by the fourth quarter of 2010.

Building on PSMS' Guest-Centric Functionality

Price notes that it made sense for MOHG to look to PSMS for the SMS|GlobalGuest solution. The chain has been a long-time user of PSMS solutions, including its SMS|Host Hospitality Management System. But the choice went beyond simple familiarity. "One of the reasons we originally chose PSMS, and I'm going back 10 years here, is that their system is very guest-centric," says Price. "It allows us to capture, store and then use important information on individual guests to provide good customer service wherever the point of customer interaction may be."

He adds that such interactions can occur both before and after a guest's stay as well as while the guest is on property, where there are a wide variety of service opportunities—with housekeeping, bellmen, food and beverage, reservations, the front desk, etc. "All these situations can be significantly improved through the provision of specific guest information," says Price.

In fact, a key element of the SMS|GlobalGuest solution is that the guest information is relevant to the user's job, and that it's provided to the user as an integral part of everyday guest service and business processes. For example, a wine captain would be alerted about a guest's favorite vintage of Cabernet Sauvignon, while a reservations agent would learn that a particular guest prefers an upper floor room.

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How SMS|GlobalGuest Works

PSMS was able to provide this level of integration because SMS|GlobalGuest expands on functionality in the SMS|Host system that was already being used by MOHG, says Selwah. For example, previously reservations agents were limited to their property's local database when searching for a guest profile. Now, the SMS|GlobalGuest Universal Lookup simultaneously searches in both the property's local database and in the central guest database, with a split screen displaying the results of both searches to the reservations agent. Assuming the guest has stayed at at least one other MOHG property prior to this visit, his local and central profiles are "married" and the guest is now identified as an MOHG GlobalGuest.

This capability has already provided a benefit at MOHG's Miami property. "A guest walked into the hotel and said he was a very important meeting planner who booked a lot of business into our New York property, and because of that he wanted



The Lobby of the Mandarin Oriental, Tokyo

a room upgrade,” says Price. “This happens all the time in hotels. Normally, if the Miami hotel had no information on this person, they might have given him the room upgrade, or they might not have. Or they might have spent time calling or e-mailing to verify that he was who he said he was. But with SMGlobalGuest, the Miami people could immediately search by name and other criteria to find that he was indeed an important meeting planner and they provided him with an upgrade. The guest was happy, and the hotel was happy.”

SMGlobalGuest also provides information about the relative value of each guest, by tracking the business activity a customer has had with all MOHG properties. Each property can then provide guests with services and amenities that are appropriate to their value level, and these services are now consistent throughout the chain.

To meet these technology and business requirements, PSMS chose Microsoft Dynamics® CRM 4.0 as the platform for the central SMGlobalGuest system, and the Microsoft SQL Server® 2008 64-bit (clustered) database for its central guest repository. SMDiplomat serves as the transport engine for communicating information between the central SMGlobalGuest system and individual SMHost systems at each property.



Mandarin Oriental, Miami

“When MOHG came to us looking for a solution for this challenge,” says Selwah, “we chose Microsoft Dynamics because it offers built-in Web services, built-in Web accessibility, full internationalization and scales to meet the most demanding volume of data.”

Building Profiles while Protecting Guest Privacy

While building a central database sounds relatively simple, it can actually be quite difficult, particularly without a traditional customer loyalty program in place. Simply matching names presents challenges: for example, variations on Nick can include Nic, Nicholas, and Nicolas, while variations on Price can include Pryce and Preiss. Long gone are the days when each person had only one phone number or even one e-mail address. SMGlobalGuest uses a number of matching criteria, including phone numbers, e-mail, addresses and other fields, to establish matches between the local property database and the company’s centralized database. All this is accomplished without compromising guests’ privacy or exposing sensitive information.

“One of our biggest challenges was gaining an understanding of global data privacy, and we found that it’s not only difficult but that it’s an inexact science,” says Price. “Another effort involved the clean-up and rationalization of the guest information we had in each of our hotels. Because we didn’t want to share junk information, we needed to do a really good ‘scrub’ of the data from individual hotels, along with alignment of different codes and comments.”

Improving Performance, Increasing Knowledge of Repeat Guests

MOHG employees have responded enthusiastically to the solution. “Good employees know that good information about the customer is fundamental to good customer service,” says Price. “They also know that if they have to receive an important guest without knowing anything about them, it can put them in an awkward situation, so this solution is helping them do their jobs better.”

On a corporate level, “one of the things that has genuinely surprised and pleased us is that there are actually more guests who have stayed at two or more properties than we previously thought,” says Price. “We had certain assumptions about the number of ‘multi-property’ guests, but we found in fact that there are significantly more than we initially believed.”



Guests have had almost no reaction to the solution—and Price couldn't be happier about that. "I would love to say that guests noticed a positive change, but customers in a luxury hotel just expect good service," he says. "By coming back to our hotels, they're giving us all the recognition we need."

Expanding ^{SMS}|GlobalGuest to More Properties and Reservation Channels

In addition to expanding the ^{SMS}|GlobalGuest system to more of its properties, MOHG is extending the solution to reservations coming from different sources. "Today the reservations that are 'matched' are those that come directly to individual hotels in one form or another," Price explains. "While that's a large percentage of our reservations, increasingly reservations are coming from web sites and global distribution systems. We will soon be 'matching' those reservations before they go to the individual hotel."

PSMS is also working on new features and capabilities to enhance the ^{SMS}|GlobalGuest system, including more refined algorithms for determining a guest's value to the company.

Price likes the PSMS systems' fast information presentation, even with properties as far-flung as MOHG's. "We're not a huge chain, but we're globally dispersed, so speed is of critical importance to us," he says. "Our customer representatives taking a reservation on the other side of the world can't be sitting there waiting seconds or minutes for a screen to refresh."

He also applauds the fact that PSMS and Microsoft work so well together. "It's very important that our industry benefits from up-to-date, modern technology, such as the Microsoft platform that helps application vendors like PSMS deliver good products," Price says. "Our industry hasn't always been a showcase of good technology, so it's great to see companies like Microsoft and PSMS in close partnership."



The Lobby of the Mandarin Oriental, San Francisco

Price sees PSMS and ^{SMS}|GlobalGuest as an integral part of Mandarin Oriental's business and its relationship to its guests. "When a chain of hotels advertises itself as a brand, that's an implicit promise to customers that they will be treated as individuals across the chain," he says. "The ^{SMS}|GlobalGuest system helps us fulfill that promise."

About Mandarin Oriental Hotel Group

Mandarin Oriental Hotel Group is the award-winning owner and operator of some of the world's most prestigious hotels, resorts and residences. Mandarin Oriental now operates, or has under development, 41 hotels representing over 10,000 rooms in 26 countries, with 17 hotels in Asia, 13 in The Americas and 11 in Europe and North Africa. In addition, the Group operates, or has under development, 13 Residences at Mandarin Oriental, connected to the Group's properties. www.mandarinoriental.com

About PAR Springer-Miller Systems

PAR Springer-Miller Systems is a leading provider of hospitality management solutions that meet the technology needs of all types of hospitality enterprises including city-center hotels, destination spa and golf properties, timeshare properties and casino resorts worldwide. The ^{SMS}|Host Hospitality Management System is distinguished from other property management systems with its truly integrated design and unique approach to guest service. The ^{SMS}|Host product suite, including more than 20 seamlessly integrated, guest-centric application modules, provides hotel/resort staff with the tools they need to personalize service, exceed guest expectations and increase revenue. For more information on PAR Springer-Miller Systems, visit our Web site at www.springermiller.com.

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