

Hospitality

Tech Advisor

July 17, 2008

Volume 24 , Issue 9

SPECIAL EDITION

HITEC 2008 Wrap-Up * Part Two *

Editor's Note:

Today we offer you the second in the double issue of our **HITEC 2008** Wrap Up.

We feature some more HITEC exhibitors who were showing new products or services, and details about vendors within both the In Room Entertainment and the Converged Network categories. In addition we offer you yet more general vendor news, and highlights from two of the Press Conferences that Accuvia attended.

What I have learned from this year's HITEC is that more and more vendors are talking about the much hyped convergence of technologies; both in the guestroom and out. They refer to the growing tendency to provide a hotel with one network which can support a wide range of applications. As Steve Carlock, of **BelAir Networks** comments, 'Convergence is a more affordable option for a hotel.' Similarly, **Swisscom** see convergence of technology as an important move in the near future. 'It's not going to happen tomorrow, as there's too much infrastructure already in place, and paid for,' notes Arndt Mielisch, but Swisscom, along with a host of other HITEC exhibitors, such as **Lorica** and **Wayport**, are looking very seriously at how they will provide hotels with converged technologies in the future.

The guestroom television is another point of increasing convergence, with companies like **NxTV** bringing out new converged platforms, and **Roomlinx** has released a new system that lets the guest do more and more through the guestroom screen via a specially designed console.



The Cybercenter in the registration area of HITEC 2008—provided by **Wayport, Inc.**



The HITEC registration area

We look forward to attending and reporting on **HITEC 2009**, which will be held **June 22-25** at the **Anaheim Convention Center** in Anaheim, California.

During HITEC, Accuvia ran another draw for a free Nintendo Wii. The lucky winner is **Michael Goshey** of **Carlson Hotels Worldwide**. Congratulations, Michael!



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New Products Released

Intello Technologies, Inc.

Intello, based in Montréal, Canada, provides i-hotel – secure, wired and wireless Internet Access Management solutions, and i-mpact, a web-based Digital Signage Content Management system, to the hospitality industry. At HITEC, the company launched i-Flight, the latest feature of i-mpact, whereby guests can now view live flight information from monitors located in a hotel's common areas, via the i-mpact system.

The new feature creates a differentiator for hotels, and also helps to build guest loyalty. Claude Senechal, VP of Sales & Marketing at Intello, said: 'Our hotel customers love the idea because they can now keep guests in the hotel longer, perhaps in the bar or restaurant or, in the case of a flight cancellation, can book the guest for another night's stay.'

As the i-mpact digital signage solution is web-based, real-time content is updated to multiple screens simultaneously, and as individual hotels have administrative access, they can offer guest details about meetings, events and local weather.

Also announced were new features for i-hotel, which allow hotels flexibility in controlling bandwidth within their property. As part of the new release a new pricing structure has been created so that guests can choose a free service for basic email and web browsing, or can pay for an upgraded service.

Intello also leveraged HITEC to announce its five-year anniversary, and was celebrating the fact that the company now has over 670 installations across North America.

Mintek Launches WinTrack PMnet

Florida-based **Mintek Mobile Data Solutions** provides hotels with automated asset management and preventive maintenance (PM) systems. At HITEC, the company released WinTrack PMnet, a web-based system that enables hoteliers to manage preventive maintenance, asset management, capital expenditure planning, work orders, and document & contract management, from one online location.

WinTrack PM, the cornerstone of Mintek's software suite, has always been a desktop application. With the new WinTrack PMnet, engineers responsible for overseeing PM at a property or multiple properties can now update and monitor scheduled PMs, rounds and work orders remotely.

Apart from enabling the monitoring of PM, WinTrack PMnet also allows users to track thousands of assets at multiple properties by centralizing access to asset information. 'What is unique about WinTrack PMnet is that it can track items such as furniture, equipment, beds or any other item throughout a system of hundreds of hotels,' comments Lind Hutton, Mintek's President.

Another integral part of WinTrack PMnet is WinTrack WORX, which enables anyone outside of the engineering department of a hotel to submit work orders via the browser-based WinTrack PMnet. The status of each work order can be viewed alongside the name of the engineer assigned to perform the task. The system automatically sends emails to keep staff informed about work order status.

'Hoteliers traditionally have used several, often inefficient methods to submit and track work orders,' says Hutton. 'These have included phone calls to engineering, written work orders, and shared spreadsheets.'

He tells how WinTrack WORX consolidates the best work order processes in one online tool, and ensures that no maintenance issues fall through the cracks. 'The end result is superior guest and staff satisfaction,' he adds.



HTA Hospitality Technology Advisor

Published bi-weekly by
Accuvia Publishing

10220 River Rd.
Suite 110
Potomac, MD 20854

www.accuvia.com

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IDEaS Launches Social Networking Tool

Accuvia met with Linda Hatfield, VP of Product Management at **IDEaS Revenue Optimization**, who began our conversation by saying that around four or five years ago, when IDEaS released their SaaS offering, they knew that they needed support around their revenue management product. 'We have always offered online learning,' said Hatfield, 'and two cool features we have are Show Me and Let Me Do, which allow users to simulate the use of a system while they learn about the numerous features.'

IDEaS also offers online support which includes access to monthly SLA reports, and last year this was bundled into their online community.

Hatfield was keen to discuss IDEaS' new release: IDEaShare – an enhancement request area that makes use of social networking. 'It helps us drive our development faster so we can see the priorities in our community, and share new ideas,' she said.

IDEaShare also supports the communication of what enhancements will be included in the next release and when those enhancements will be made available. 'This is something we've always done, but it wasn't previously online,' she continued.

'Revenue management strategies and tactics can be proprietary, and our clients don't always want to share, but they are able share what we should do next,' said Hatfield. It seems IDEaS customers very much like this new concept and IDEaShare is really taking off.

'Revenue Management is a unique discipline, and is very complex. There are experts all over the world, so if we can offer a virtual community I think we will all benefit from the interactions.' Linda Hatfield, VP of Product Management for IDEaS

Hatfield believes technology plays a prominent role in hotels, with social networking being one of the newest areas that hotels need to understand. IDEaS offers them a way to start

to get involved and understand the benefits of an online community that can help them be more comfortable in other online communities which are so popular today with guests. IDEaShare is free, but strictly for IDEaS customers, offered as part of their support services.

Hatfield then told how the company went about combining high touch through hi-tech. 'People don't have much time, so our community pages offer a useful task list directed at current issues, resource pages where they can get information, or answers to questions, and a forum for ongoing conversations with other members in the community. It's both an efficient and personalized service.'

Hatfield stressed how IDEaS solutions won't be successful without the people who use it. 'We want our users to be engaged with the system and with the community so they are able to achieve better results,' concluded Hatfield.

AltiusPAR's Guest Experience Ecosystem

AltiusPAR, software and service provider to the hospitality industry, launched its next-generation enterprise Guest Experience Ecosystem (GEE), which includes enhanced features for the AltiusPAR Internet Booking Engine (IBE) 3.0.

Hotels can now access a flexible solution based on a data-centric guest services framework that allows them to deliver personalized, automated services to their guests.

The GEE allows guests to configure and personalize their room during or after the time of booking. By logging into their profile through a browser they can access all of their preferences, creating multiple profiles such as "business", "personal", or "traveling with kids".

Also available are specific themes such as "relaxation", "romance" or "business" to set pre-defined parameters for their in-room configuration. Alternatively, items can be selected individually such as favorite TV content, music, preferred room temperature, and lighting, which are automatically adjusted once they check in at the kiosk and their RFID tag is activated.

Any changes made during a stay are automatically stored and the next time the guest checks in, their room will be configured exactly as they remember.

Connie Rheams, VP of Marketing & Business Development for AltiusPAR, comments: 'By creating seamless connectivity between customer preferences and their surrounding

environment, hoteliers can improve each encounter with a guest while also maximizing their revenue.'

AltiusPAR's IBE 3.0 utilizes the GEE to recognize guests and automate all the preferences and services to be acted on. It also continuously updates guests' preferences with every guest interaction at any touch point, for a real-time, 360-degree view of the guest.

On June 18, AltiusPAR announced the first implementation of its GEE with its existing client, **citizenM hotels**.



New Guestroom Technology

NxTV's New Converged Platform

NxTV, Inc., the first and largest IP VOD provider in the global hospitality industry, offers IP-based, 100 percent digital in-room entertainment (IRE) solutions.

On June 13, a new converged platform was announced, capable of offering hotels and consumers interactive, IP-based IRE and communications services. The scalable platform lets operators affordably create new recurring sources of revenue by giving guests personalized access to more forms of content and information on a range of end devices.

Hooman Honary, President & CTO of NxTV, said: 'We've spent 10 years improving what you now see as the converged platform, which provides unprecedented scalability and modularity.' Hotels can pick and choose their required services and applications according

to the demographics of their guests, and the type of business model they would like to enable.

A key component of this platform is NXTV's new IP Set Top Box (STB) the NXT1000, which can provide HD VoD and IPTV.

'We will be announcing a series of very innovative applications and services based on this platform in the coming months,' said Honary, adding that NxTV is one of very few service providers who architects and controls their end-to-end platform, including the STB. 'This allows us to target our customers' needs in an unprecedented fashion, and customize the solution at many more levels and much more cost-effectively.'

Another important component is NXTV's fifth generation "middleware," which pulls the

end-to-end architecture together. The new middleware enables high levels of customization at the user interface, backend interface, and applications integration.

Benefits to hoteliers of the converged platform include the ability to attract and maintain high-value guests via improved services; reduce start-up and operational costs of new builds; create and improve recurring sources of revenue; and build a more productive staff via a single point of management.

Benefits to consumers include access to any form of content using any type of delivery system; superior guest experience by having all content on demand; personalized access to consumers' usual social, online lifestyles via a unified user interface; and blended services between PCs and TVs.

INNCOM's New Smart Series

INNCOM, provider of integrated room automation systems to the hotel industry, unveiled the e⁴ Glass Series Smart Digital Thermostat and Switch, a new design-centric energy management solution (EMS) made of recyclable glass that controls room temperature, lighting, and more.

The Glass Series came about following a request by a major design company for an elegant yet functional EMS solution that could blend room controls into the design integrity of its newly refurbished guestrooms.

The product means that designers can now work in-room electronics into the overall guestroom design scheme, as the glass

face-plate of the thermostat and light switch serve as a blank canvas.

We met with John Tavares, INNCOM's VP of Marketing, who told us how more and more companies have interesting stuff for the guestroom, 'but are we going to make it all work?' he asked.

Tavares discussed INNCOM's recent partnership with **Lodgenet**, which allows the guest to manage all in-room controls over the television. Another is with **Timelox**, for the 3056 Tabletop Controller that enables room lights to come on gradually as the guest opens the door.

Tavares notes that INNCOM continuously integrates and cooperates with other

'We want it so that when you walk into a guestroom, you see INNCOM,' John Tavares, VP of Marketing for INNCOM

partners to essentially benefit the guest. 'We want it to be that, if you

have a guestroom, you will want to have an INNCOM product. A "pervasive" approach, if you like.' The editor asks if he means they want to become a household name? 'Well,' laughs Tavares, 'you didn't hear that from me...'

He explained how all INNCOM's devices talk to each other, as well as integrate and link to a property's back office software so that the hotel can monitor them, and elevate the level of guest service given.

'We enable better decision-making based on real-time information,' said Tavares, who concluded by reminding us about INNCOM's new logo, as part of the company's re-branding, in tandem with their new design-centric products.



INNCOM's new Glass Series EMS with room controls

Roomlinx Media & Entertainment System

Roomlinx, Inc. has been serving the hotel industry for nearly ten years, initially with wired and wireless Internet access. Now it also offers the Roomlinx Media and Entertainment System; a combination of In Room Concierge, In Room Entertainment, and In Room Business Solutions.

Michael Wasik, CEO, demonstrated the system, which includes a fully customizable Graphical User Interface (GUI), Roomlinx proprietary software and Media Console with USB and Optical drives. With the console, guests can surf the Internet on a wireless keyboard or with their remote control that has a built-in mouse.

Roomlinx has partnered with **Microsoft** and integrates with Microsoft's MapPoint, which offers a bird's eye view of where the guest is staying, and these maps can be sent to a guest's mobile, PDA, email account or GPS— where it can then be used in a car.

Also included in the system are the following features:

- A Radio Locator, which offers all local stations from a global perspective
- Gaming, which offers opportunities for web and PC-based games
- Travel, allowing users to print boarding passes to a public printer (using an access code) or at the concierge's desk
- Office, where guests can open a MS-compatible spreadsheet from a USB drive. This can then be saved and sent on via web mail

Wasik told how this fully interactive system leverages content already out there, and HD content put in by Roomlinx. 'The information is out there, we just aggregate it all in one clean interface and put it in the hotel room,' he explained.

The first customer to implement the system was **Jet Hotel**, and now **The Kessler Collection** and **Country Inn & Suites** have taken it on, and a few more



'We've found it's an on-demand world. Guests now want HD content on LCD screens, when they want. This is the tip of the iceberg in terms of where we, and technology, is heading.'
Michael Wasik, CEO of Roomlinx

customers are planned. Apparently Kessler is using Roomlinx as a one-stop solution, combining the Media & Entertainment system with Roomlinx HSIA. The product can also be bundled with FTG programming.

Roomlinx Media and Entertainment works in 4* and 5 * environments, as well as in Limited Service hotels. Roomlinx can provide the TVs if necessary, and Wasik said the financial model changes according to the property. Minimum installs are offered, and can be adapted as the business grows, and in addition the company offers a no capital outlay model.

Finally, Wasik told how hotels make revenue through proprietary & third-party advertising and e-commerce on the Console. He believes the system will increase hotel customers' F&B and room service revenues.

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Converged Network News

BelAir's News And Views

We spoke to Steve Carlock, Sales Director for **BelAir Networks**, whose head office is in Ontario, Canada. Carlock said that this was the company's most successful HITEC in terms of interest in their 'outdoors in' solution.

'The devices people carry are changing, so it's no longer about indoor coverage; loads of hotels are looking for the solution set that we've had for four years,' he said, adding that it seems as though end devices are catching up with what BelAir can already do, which is offer a Mobile Broadband Wireless Mesh solution to hospitality, as well as other markets.

'Hotels are driven to us due to the rise in these high-end devices,' he said. BelAir offer

a single infrastructure for indoors and out. 'It's all about leveraging the infrastructure and providing optimum efficiencies to a property,' he said. This single infrastructure allows for many different applications. 'It's happening a lot in hotels... a single infrastructure provides VoIP phone, POS, etc., which helps drive revenue from clients, as the hotel can be forward selling, and all through one network.' Carlock thinks it's all driven by cost. 'Convergence is a more affordable option for a hotel,' he stressed.

'It's not an arguable point that convergence is not a good idea,' Steve Carlock, Sales Director for BelAir

BelAir's most recent customers were

announced at the show. The **Crowne Plaza Houston Greenspoint** recently upgraded to property-wide high-speed Wi-Fi access in less than a week, with the help of BelAir. The network replaces a previous wireless network that had needed over twice the amount of access points. With BelAir, the hotel has only needed to use eight BelAir Networks nodes.

Another customer is the **Rosewood Mayakobá**, in Mexico. The property deployed a next-generation converged communications platform that leverages BelAir's wireless technology to support a wide range of applications including HSIA for guests, POS devices, VoWi-Fi phones and a text messaging rapid response system for guest service and safety throughout the resort.

Swisscom Hospitality Services

Accuvia spoke to Arndt Mielisch, Manager of Communications at Switzerland-based **Swisscom Hospitality Services**, and were joined by Steve Friedberg, of **MMI Communications**, who handles the company's PR.

Mielisch told how Swisscom Hospitality Services are system integrators, offering consulting, design, building and network management in seventeen countries. They are in 215,000 guestrooms worldwide, including **Hilton**, **InterContinental**, and **Marriott**. They also provide HSIA.

'There must be 20 IPTV vendors on the floor today, but in six years' time there will probably only be three,' he continued. 'Even six is too much.' Mielisch thinks that IPTV VoD offerings are not personal enough. People are more drawn to their favorite shows and channels, such as

sitcoms, or National Geographic. 'Ten years from now this will be an anecdote,' he laughed.

Friedberg commented that it's all about personalization of the guest, or 'delighting the customer'. He said that network services are key to how you do this, 'but who's going to make it work, and integrate it?' Swisscom believes in staged convergence, which will be driven by IPTV via offers and personalization, as this keeps the guest in the room. Added to this is the fact that people will have more and more devices to plug into the IPTV.

Mielisch agrees. 'Integration is key. Now we can only guess how many devices - but we do need to think about it for the future.' He said hotels need to think about who



designs these networks; who monitors them. Bandwidth needs to be monitored in each room. 'You need trusted and reliable integrators,' he stressed, 'and the chosen company should have experience, steadiness, and the financial means to run a network.'

Friedberg told how Swisscom has a vision. 'We see bandwidth doubling every nine months, but that interval is getting shorter all the time. We see more integrated devices in the guestroom,' he said.

We then looked at a prototype model of a box that hosts all applications but that also allows users to plug into LAN, WAN USB, memory card, SCART, and Phone... 'an intelligent network,' they call it.

'As it is now, it's a converter box,' said Mielisch, 'but it could evolve into a true media

hub.' With this piece of hardware, everything in the guestroom can go through a common backbone. 'It's not going to happen tomorrow, as there's too much infrastructure already in place, and paid for,' he noted, 'but the prototype goes some way to prepare for the future.'

Swisscom understands that not all hotel chains will have the resources to provide this convergence in-house. 'There will be nu-

ances between in-house and outsourced, but network management will be needed in both cases,' said Mielisch, who was keen to outline Swisscom's new roadmap:

1st tier: Integrate legacy systems into converged hotel network; 2nd tier: Manage hotel network; 3rd tier: Introduce cutting-edge guest applications.

Ironically, Mielisch said, it's often the 3rd tier

that triggers the first two tiers: i.e., a significant improvement in the guest experience brings about the need for greater system integration, convergence and, ultimately, new ways of sourcing the full range IT skills that hotels need.

This, he noted, is where Swisscom differentiates itself from its competition: through its comprehensive approach to meeting the hotel operator's needs.

Lorica Brings In The Lorica Room Center

New York-based **Lorica Solutions** provides converged managed networks for the hospitality industry, and is the developer of the Lorica Room Center (LRC), the only fully managed converged network specifically designed for the hospitality industry, which acts as a communications hub and monitoring node for all in-room devices, enabling new technologies like HDTV.

The company also offers wired and wireless HSIA and total management, monitoring, and help desk support through its 24/7 Network Operations Center.

We met Mark Holzberg, Chairman & CEO, who told how the company was founded around four years ago, as a spin-off from a previous company called **Synergy** that offered financial services to retailers and VARs. 'They started getting requests for

HSIA support and managed networks, so Lorica was formed serendipitously, or by chance,' said Holzberg. Following that, the company began getting requests for VoIP, so they began developing what is now the Lorica Room Center.

Holzberg bought Lorica one and a half years ago and finished the technology, then secured three hotel customers. Since then the company has grown substantially, and there is increasing demand for the LRC, with installations currently planned and underway in multiple locations. Lorica serves more than 170 hotel locations, including **Marriott, Starwood, Hilton, Mandarin Oriental, Choice, Trump International, Radisson, and InterContinental.**

Holzberg is now preparing his management team to move the company further forward, which leads onto Lorica's latest news...On

June 12 it was announced that Fraser Hickox, General Manager of Research and Technology for **The Peninsula Hotel Group** in Hong Kong, and global hospitality consultant, as well as being HITEC's newest Hall of Fame inductee, has joined the Lorica Advisory Board.

Holzberg comments: 'As Lorica prepares to aggressively expand outside North America and forge new relationships in Asia Pacific and the Middle East, his vast experience and insight in leading-edge hotel technology will bring an essential global dimension to our planning.'

'The product has a lot of potential and could represent a considerable saving in capital costs by combining the telephony, television and HSIA facilities, which together enable an opportunity to control a larger number of points,' said Hickox.

Way More Than Wi-Fi With Wayport

We caught up with Kevin McKeand, VP & GM for Hospitality, Healthcare & Retail at **Wayport, Inc.**, who was keen to explain what message the company wanted to convey at this year's show.

Based in Irving, Texas, Wayport is transforming its business from being an HSIA provider of eleven years to being a company who supplies converged networks. 'We're moving away from

competitors like **iBahn, Guest-Tek, and StayOnline**, and looking more at companies like **IBM** and **Perot Systems** as our direct competition,' he said.

At the end of last year, Wayport counted over 20,000 locations using their products, including 10,500 **McDonald's** restaurants, some **Starbucks** locations, and hundreds of hotels. 'Hotels need someone of our size to help them build converged networks. We are

already doing this for the foodservice sector, so now we've moved into the hospitality arena,' noted McKeand.

Wayport's new business objective is to help large, major brands build converged networks. *We're Way More Than Wi-Fi* is the company's new tagline. 'We enable application, servers and devices on a converged network platform,' said McKeand.



Press Conference News

GuestCentric Systems



Joao Trindade, Director of Marketing, spoke to the press about **Guest-**

Centric Systems's recent study of the hotel market in the US. The subjects were 300 properties of 80 rooms or less, and big chains, and the aim of the survey was to see how their online presence differed. The results proved that the gap is widening between the two sectors, and the differences between both sectors highlights the various opportunities and challenges that face the independents.

With offices in the US, UK and Portugal, GuestCentric provides SaaS to individual hotels, because they feel this sector has been under served, and has difficulty getting good service at a good price, in a way they can understand. The company was founded in October 2006, and started development in April 2007. They launched their product in May of this year, at the **Travel Distribution Summit** in the UK.

GuestCentric focuses on hotels in US and UK, as these have a more developed online presence, and a better knowledge of online tools, according to Trindade. However, he continued, requests are also now arriving from Asia and Spain. He told how the online tools that small hotels can afford are generally poor, and very focused on specific areas. 'It's hard for customers to book, and hard for hotels to do certain things, such as marketing, but non-branded hotels of under 80 rooms represent a big chunk of the market.'

GuestCentric conducted their study at a time when economics

are hugely impacting travelers. Online bookings declined in the US last year for the first time. 'Smaller hotels will be the first hit, so we aim to help them,' said Trindade. The survey was done to see what this sector thought about online distribution, not just their site. The results highlighted the fact that all the smaller hotels are happy with their website, but the top concerns were that these don't generate business, that they are costly, not user-friendly and that it is difficult to update pictures and content.

'They don't have the appropriate tools,' said Trindade, 'as their websites were built by a third party.' This is often a friend or family member, so the hotels can't really say anything bad, but it appears that most are struggling with the basics.

In terms of the larger, branded properties surveyed, the main concern is about providing up-to-date information to the visitor. Hoteliers understand that in order to capture business, they need to keep their websites fresh with promotions and provide a rich online experience.

Of note is the fact that only 44 percent of independents can take online bookings, as opposed to 93 percent of chains. Plus, 81 percent of chains use booking engines, yet only 18 percent of independents rely on these. Interestingly, 28 percent of independents see no point at all in taking online reservations, indicating a lack of trust in the process, and perhaps explaining the widening gap in adoption of booking technology.

"This gap indicates a real need for independent hoteliers to find available technologies to allow them to cost-effectively close this gap and gain advantages over the chains." Pedro Colaco, CEO of GuestCentric

Hotel Concepts

Bas Blommaart, CEO of **Hotel Concepts**, told how 2008 is an important year for the company, 'with lots going on.' First he discussed the company's laid-back approach, and the fact that announcements are only made once a product or partnership is finalized, or released. 'But we do try to show that we listen to the market, and to the latest trends,' said Blommaart.

He then told how Hotel Concepts has heard a lot about social networking, but realize that it's hard to sell a business using this medium. 'However,' said Blommaart, 'we do know it's important for

future generations and for the hospitality industry, so we built the Facebook Widget.' This small tool, which Facebook users can place on their home page, allows hoteliers to 'push' special offers to people who have shown interest in that destination. Offers are pushed seamlessly from Hotel Concepts' CRS and can be converted into actual reservations with minimal user interaction.

'You can always be too early with new technology, so it might be too soon.' Bas Blommaart, CEO of Hotel Concepts, talking about the Facebook Widget.

An important announcement for the company is their merger with **Brilliant hotelsoftware**. Blommaart told how the two companies have been talking and socializing for years, so have been toying with the idea for a while. 'The two companies make similar products, so we think there's synergy,' he said, adding that both are Netherlands-based, serving international markets, 'so it makes sense to get together.'

Some tasks will be merged, such as the help desk, and the HR and Finance departments will be joined together. Apparently there have been no job losses; 'but services have been improved.'

The two product ranges offered will continue to be marketed separately. There will be no merging of logos, addresses, or sales, 'as we take a different approach for each company's products,' said Blommaart. 'People buy them for different reasons and they are a good fit. Our products are very different and there's a different demand for each.'

Blommaart said the benefits of the merger can already be seen. Hotel Concepts was certified in January 08 as being PCI compliant; Brilliant

hasn't yet so they are using the gathered knowledge and experience to qualify Brilliant hotelsoftware in Q3 of this year.

Finally, Blommaart announced a new business unit of the two companies: RezExchange, designed to facilitate the delivery of reservations and inventory. RezExchange customers can manage the GDS, CRS, ADS and branded website channels from the PMS, and will receive all reservations from these channels directly into their PMS database.

'It's an affordable service, charged on a per reservation basis,' said Blommaart, adding that the service will try to offer direct connectivity in each country. RezExchange will be offered by both companies. According to Blommaart, other PMS products may follow, but for now RezExchange will be run as an independent business unit.



General News Releases

Janus Displays' Flight System Touchscreen

Janus Displays is a product of **Morrow Technologies**, provider of digital signage solutions to the hospitality industry for nearly 25 years. At HITEC, Janus Displays announced its launch of the new Flight Systems Touch Screen, whose first live customer is **Chicago Hilton O'Hare Airport**.

With the interactive system, travellers can now get flight information on demand, instead of waiting for the flight boards to rotate and display specific flights in the airport. They can easily sort flight data by airline or destination using an on-screen keyboard or a menu list.

Norman Kahan is Director of Technology Services at the Chicago Hilton O'Hare, and comments: 'When a guest finds their flight is delayed, they stay in the property and use our facilities rather than waiting in the airport.'

The property offers its guests the choice of eleven touch screens located throughout the hotel, as well as two static displays and 65 LED room boards; one for each of its meeting rooms. The Janus Display touch screens, in addition to showing flight data, advertise the hotel's restaurants, display meeting schedules and provide an interactive map of the hotel.

Two New Versions From SoftBrands

SoftBrands, Inc., global supplier of enterprise application software, announced the release of version 4.03 of its Epitome PMS software. Enhancements to the application include improved guest invoice management and user permissions.

According to Steve VanTassel, the company's Senior Vice President, this new release is 'exciting because it continues to support the business needs of our global customers throughout Europe and Asia.'

Also announced was the release of Core CRS version 3.7, which sees Core's Call Center application reworked to include a new look and feel combined with improved workflow, enabling a better user experience. In addition, new functionality for the software includes an improved waitlist management feature and new tools for the sale of property and rooms.

Both new software versions will be available in Q3.

NewspaperDirect Reports Record Growth

NewspaperDirect, provider of multi-channel content distribution, has announced record growth in the hotel sector with ND Press, its flagship print-on-demand solution, and Hotel PressDisplay, the largest online newspaper and magazine kiosk in the world. One year ago, 400 hotels had ND Press installed; a year later over 2,800 properties offer the newspaper service to their guests in either print or digital form, through NewspaperDirect.

NewspaperDirect is now considered a standard amenity by some of the finest hotels in the world, including **The Luxury Collection Hotels & Resorts**, **Sofitel Hotels & Resorts**, and **Restel Hotel Group**.

The Langham in Auckland is one of New Zealand's most exclusive hotels, and implemented the ND Press subscription management

feature which enables them to automatically download and print around thirty newspapers daily, as soon as they are available on NewspaperDirect's network and often before they are available to the general public. Printed newspapers are distributed each day to the hotel's Winery Bar and Club Lounge for guests to read at their leisure.

'We are very enthusiastic about the ND Press service because the popularity of the overseas newspapers is rapidly expanding,' comments Vanessa Crawford, Rooms Division Manager at the property. 'This is a wonderful tool for our hotel because it enables us to help our guests keep in touch with what is happening "back home" while they are staying with us, and also keeps our corporate guests connected with daily business news.'

SynXis Offers Various News At HITEC

SynXis, a **Sabre Holdings** company, provides hotel distribution, Internet marketing and channel management solutions to the global hotel industry, and operates full-service global call centers offering private label reservation services.

The company's most recent news is that their RedX Distribution Management System is now certified as PCI Compliant. SynXis is the first CRS provider to have achieved this status, and now RedX hotel customers can guarantee their guests the highest level of data security when they make reservations through online channels.

Also, the amount of Channel Connect sites in RedX continues to grow and now includes **Travelocity**, **Expedia**, **Booking.com**, **Groopie**, **Londontown**, **GolfHero**, **Kayak** and **Sidestep**. Channel Connect allows hoteliers to manage rates directly in RedX, so there is no longer a need to manage these through a separate extranet.

Seeing equally steady growth is The Technology Partner Program, which SynXis launched around a year ago. Some of the industry's major vendors have agreed to joint development, service, and support, in the best interests of their customers. Members now include **IDeaS**, **GuestWare**, **SoftBrands**, **MICROS**, **Travelocity**, **Hotel**

Concepts, and **Workmatrix**.

Finally, SynXis reports that hoteliers using the recently launched Guest Connect Booking Engine have already seen significant increases in volume of bookings and conversion rates from visitors to their websites. The booking engine was developed to offer hoteliers an easy way to customize the online shopping experience.

Remington Hotels recently implemented Guest Connect following the launch of a new website at its **Inn at Key West** property. By comparing before and after weekly statistics, they found that the Guest Connect booking engine produced over 250 percent more bookings than the old booking engine, resulting in over \$45,000 in incremental revenue each week for the 100-room property.

The Sonesta Collection – Hotels, Resorts, and Cruises also recently installed Guest Connect, and benefits from the application's new merchandising features designed to increase online sales and marketing. After switching to Guest Connect, Sonesta's conversion rates have been growing steadily, resulting in an increase in revenue produced from the online channel.

NORTHWIND Enhances ResWave

NORTHWIND-Maestro PMS announced new online revenue enhancements for its ResWave web booking product suite, which

compliments NORTHWIND's Web Connection functionality. ResWave now includes online Dining Table Reservation

Management, dynamic Guest Experience Customization, and multi-property package booking & fulfillment. ResWave enables operators to drive greater online revenue with Web Services that their leisure and corporate guests are increasingly demanding.

All ResWave functionality is integrated with Maestro's real-time yield management to optimize property income from all revenue channels. The application allows hotels to experience greater productivity because guests can reserve a wide range of income-generating add-on package and non-package property activities with their room booking, without having to contact hotel staff.

The full suite of additional ResWave online service capabilities includes: Dynamic Package Management, Group Rooming List Management, 360-degree Guest Preference Tracking, and SMS PDA Communications.

We spoke to Ivana Johnston, Marketing Consultant for NORTHWIND, who was keen to stress how the concept of Web Connection is that: 'it's not about the technology, it's about connecting to the guest.' She told how NORTHWIND wanted to use technology to get closer to their customers, and so found a way to allow guests to self-serve, and then be known to the hotel on arrival, which makes for a more pleasant stay.

'The single database helps,' continued Johnston, 'and Web Connection means guests can decide via dynamic packaging exactly what they want. It's a personalized experience.' Also, if the hotel is multi-property, guests can book other hotels within the chain without having to re-register all personal details. 'We call it "Web Connection" because it connects the guest.'

She stressed how it's also about centralizing the guest experience; making it easier to communicate with them, as opposed to using traditional marketing methods. 'Guests are smart and don't buy it any more,' she said.

The editor commented on the attractiveness of the booth, which looked much like a retro lounge, complete with funky lightshades and a high ceiling. 'We didn't want to spend three days in a booth, so decided to make it like home,' replied Johnston. 'I'm excited as a consultant, because it's not about the technology, but about the guest - hence the "industrial chic" look of the booth.'



NORTHWIND's 'industrial chic' booth

Easy RMS Growing Globally

Phil Robart, Director of Sales & Operations, North America for **Easy (Ez) Revenue Management Solutions Ltd.**, initially told us about the company's newest product, Ez-MEETING, which is not yet market-ready, but will represent 'a whole new quantum leap', as it can optimize group business based on all meeting space, rooms and revenue.

The product is hailed as a 'revolutionary Function Room Management, Forecasting & Optimisation module' to complement the EzRMS Product Suite, and is designed specifically for conference hotels. We will bring you more details about Ez-MEETING in our upcoming Event Management issue of HTA.

Robart also spoke of how the company is set to double in size

following an agreement in the Asia Pacific region with one of the three largest hotel chains in the world. Since January, installations have been completed in almost ninety new properties for this chain, which as yet cannot be named.

In addition to this major agreement, in the last six months Easy RMS' US figures have already exceeded annual sales for 2007. The company's most recent US win is **Great Wolf Resorts**, who have just implemented the EzRMS Internet Product Suite across their entire portfolio.

Ez RMS have expanded globally with new offices in Beijing, Sydney and Dubai, making a total of twelve offices worldwide. today.

Marcus And London NYC Select Mitel

News from Ontario, Canada-based **Mitel Networks Corporation**, provider of communications solutions to a range of industries, including Hospitality and Retail, is that **Marcus Hotels & Resorts** will deploy Mitel Hospitality Solutions with the aim of improving the guest experience,

while giving the resort more insight into how well it is meeting customer needs.

The Mitel communications system and cordless handsets integrate easily with the chain's PMS, which will allow housekeeping staff to key

a code into a room's phone when clean, so front-desk staff know whether a room is ready for new guests. Plus, the Automatic Call Distribution (ACD) feature enables the chain to generate call-performance reports that immediately answer customer service questions.

In addition, **The London NYC** has implemented a unified communications solution from Mitel to improve the guest experience and the coordination amongst its hotel staff.

The property will deploy over 1,200 IP phones in its 561 suites and staff offices, and by customizing the graphical interface on the Mitel 5300 series IP phones, guests will have one-touch access to room service or spa appointments. Through its new network, The London NYC will also offer guests free calls to London, and reduced rates across North America and other parts of the world.



Colubris' New Customers And Features

Waltham, Massachusetts-based **Colubris Networks** is a global provider of WLAN solutions to the hospitality industry and at HITEC showcased several new customer deployments and announced major enhancements to their WLAN solution.

Rosewood Hotels & Resorts, who manage ultra-luxury properties throughout the world, has deployed Colubris technology at its newly opened **The Mansion on Peachtree Hotel & Residences** in Atlanta and at **Rosewood Mayakoba** in Riviera Maya, Mexico. The two properties are using Colubris WLAN to offer guests secure Internet access, support mobile POS devices, and dispatch staff to service

guests using wireless telephones.

In addition, **Lenox Hotel**, in Boston, has deployed a Colubris wireless network to provide its guests with HSIA.

New features included in The Colubris Intelligent Mobility Solution enable ISPs and hospitality companies to deploy a range of customizable services. The application offers substantial deployment flexibility, payment vehicles, and network deployment models.

LodgeNet Expands Its Portfolio

LodgeNet Interactive Corporation, based in South Dakota, announced a suite of new media and connectivity products that, combined with the company's existing products, offer a comprehensive set of interactive solutions to the hospitality industry.

The new products include VOD Basic, a new, more economical digital-to-the-room (D2R) VOD solution; IPTV Advanced, a new IP-based HD video on demand solution; Free-to-Guest (FTG) Basic, a new streamlined satellite TV solution that offers a range of HD television channels to hoteliers; and the HD Built-In Program, which integrates LodgeNet's in-room terminals into TVs specifically designed

for the hospitality industry.

The new products further expand LodgeNet's portfolio, which was enhanced last year following the acquisitions of **StayOnline** and **On Command**.

'As technology changes, LodgeNet will continue to lead in developing innovative and reliable new solutions based on a clear vision of the future direction of media and connectivity for the hospitality industry,' commented Scott Young, SVP & Chief Marketing Officer of LodgeNet. .

Merchant Link Enhances TransactionVault

Merchant Link provides PCI compliance, data transport services, and technology to merchants, POS system providers and credit card processors. The company handles over 1.8 billion transactions annually for its portfolio, which includes over 120,000 hotels, restaurants and ballparks.

For the hotel industry, Merchant Link provides TransactionVault, which

has been implemented by over 5,000 customers in the past nine months, and has over 2,000 customers waiting.

TransactionVault was recently enhanced with a unique key to each credit card number used so customers' transactions can be securely linked with their other purchases and transactions.