



Guest Services at Your Fingertips: Digital Touch Screens Deliver Hospitality

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In recent years, there has been a message repeated throughout the hospitality industry that hotels can't keep up with new technologies; that they have fallen behind what the average guest has in their home. Security, content fees, the sheer growth and volume of bandwidth demanded by travelers; certainly the hospitality industry has had more hurdles to clear than the average home owner in order to deliver on-demand technologies like HD content and sufficient bandwidth. But there may be opportunities to "wow" guests with technologies that deliver enhanced service and operational efficiencies, while creating a memorable guest experience not within the customer's familiar daily realm.

Imagine implementing a new service at your hotel and then having over 80% of your guests utilize it in the first few weeks. That's exactly what happened at the Royalton in New York when they placed iPads in their guest rooms. It's almost as if they were irresistible. Intelly Corporation developed and provided the software for the Royalton's iPads, software that delivers more than 35 hotel services to guests and all at the touch of a finger. Intelly's Interactive Customer Experience (ICE) is an interface that connects with guests through touch screen, television, smartphone or laptop and is fully integrated to a hotel's PMS, POS or other management software.

This software enables personalized messaging from multiple hotel departments to specific guests, based on parameters like length of stay, rate codes, or guest history, all delivered in the guest's preferred language. And the delivery? Here is the really fun part: engaging images and video, interactive maps and wayfinding, immediate reservations and ticketing, and many other services are literally at the guest's fingertips. The iPad in particular- sleek, wireless, and still something most guests probably don't have at home- begs to be handled. And once the iPad is in a guest's hands, they are just a few touches away from a transaction.

Touch screens of any kind are novel enough yet familiar and easy to use. Consumers have used touch screens for years – at airport check-in kiosks or ATMs. The surface computers used in the lobbies at Sheraton and Intercontinental hotels have proved to be popular service differentiators. "The technology has been around for more than 10 years," says Amy Leong, a director at Gartner Research, a firm that analyzes technology trends. "The iPhone brought the touch screen into the limelight, but now consumer electronics makers realize the user interface will drive the next wave of [product] differentiation."

But it is not just the technology that creates a touch screen's appeal, it is the content, the GUI, the design that gives these screens their irresistible quality. The goal is to deliver an *experience*, not a product. "Consumers won't buy a mobile device purely for the touch UI," said CK Lu, research analyst at Gartner. "Touch technology is just an enabler, and ultimately, it is a compelling user experience — which includes good UI design, applications and services — that will make or break a product."

From the hoteliers perspective these systems are much more than just novelty items. The next generation applications available today boast full system integration. Intelly's ICE uses state-of-the art application programming interfaces (APIs) to share data with property management, food and beverage, golf, spa, restaurant reservation and other systems, presenting real-time information to guests and eliminating the need to have staff re-enter data. This improves staff response time dramatically. The control system forwards the request to the appropriate party and tracks all follow-up and response times, creating an organized system of traceable checklists, reminders, and tools needed for instant service and employee accountability.

This is exactly what next generation guests desire and what next generation hospitality needs: a quick and easy way to understand the best ROI comes from technology investments that address both sides of the hospitality equation.