



HEDNA

Hotel Electronic Distribution Network Association

2005 White Paper Series

Executive Summary

Successful Content Management for Hotels

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HEDNA's Mission

The mission of HEDNA is to increase hotel industry revenues and profitability from electronic distribution channels and to be the foremost travel industry association advancing hotel electronic distribution. This will be done by:

- Optimizing the use of current technology
- Influencing development of current and emerging electronic distribution channels
- Education
- Providing an opportunity for open exchange among members

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In the world of hotel distribution, content management has become increasingly more difficult as additional third party distributors are selling hotel brands. This is not only true for distributor-owned Web sites, but also applies for affiliate Web sites. Onward distribution of hotel data has been an ongoing challenge for hoteliers for many years and at the heart of that challenge is the management of a hotel's proprietary content.

In 1997, HEDNA commissioned a content management white paper entitled "*Onward Distribution of Hotel Information via the Global Distribution Systems*", written by Alyson Dombey of Partners in Marketing, to address the issues facing hotel companies with global distribution system (GDS) distributed data eight years ago. The purpose of the paper was to investigate the issues of GDS content being onwardly distributed to a new audience via the Internet.

In the 1997 paper, the impact of GDS onward distribution on the hotel industry was examined from four angles:

1. The new channel structure that included defining accountability and scope.
2. New relationships within the channel that included re-defining the business model, revisiting the GDS customer, maintaining the business equilibrium and problem management and liability.
3. Market exposure that included defining distribution channel choice and differentiating onward distribution bookings from traditional GDS bookings.
4. Effective channel marketing and support that included tailoring information to the new channels and developing a single data standard.

Though some of the issues highlighted in the original paper have been resolved for GDS onward distribution, there are similar challenges in 2005.

Since 1997, the problem has been exacerbated by onward distribution of data beyond the GDS channel, led by the majority of online sites, and by the introduction of new booking channels such as mobile phones, handheld wireless devices and interactive TV (iTV).

The purpose of this paper is to review the current issues that face hotels with the broadened scope – how diligent content management has become more essential in an even more fragmented distribution environment.

How hotel properties are displayed both online and through offline GDS systems is in large part how a hotel's brand is perceived. Protecting that brand and how it is portrayed by others is a significant part of this paper.

Many IDSs have hundreds of affiliates who repurpose hotel data for their specific customers, customized to their look and feel. The operative word there is "repurpose", rightly implying that they may not have the same purpose or goals that a hotel company does when promoting a hotel.

One hotel company interviewed commented on the complexity of content management as follows:

"It is indeed challenging to manage content for a large number of hotels and brands in multiple databases. Though we have introduced an internal single-point-of-entry approach for content management, we are still faced with challenges to keep it accurate and fresh, to respond quickly enough to market changes and to provide enough data for appropriate search parameters on our Web sites."

There has also been a change in the type of data required to sell hotels effectively. Rich media content, image libraries and maps were previously not a necessary part of hotel distribution. But today, they are one of the more important aspects of selling a hotel effectively on a Web site or via iTV. Customization for particular customer types and individual customers, as well as for different media, is also an increasing expectation of consumers.

The requirements for mobile phones and wireless devices vastly differ from the Web. The requirement to manage multiple content databases, with varying or non-existent standards, has increased for hotels and consistency has become much more challenging.

According to Ann Rockley, president of the Rockley Group and professor of enterprise content management at the University of Toronto, content management is more complex than most organizations understand:

"Today's businesses are overwhelmed with the need to create more content, more quickly, customized for more customers and for more media than ever before.

*They need to control their enterprise content and determine how to leverage their Web content to address all of their customer information and media needs."*¹

Many large, and some small, hotel companies are investing in varying ways to implement systems that enable them to better manage content. Some hotels purchase state-of-the-art, expensive systems, such as the Starwood Hotels purchase of Documentum. Some determine to develop solutions in-house, the approach elected by Cendant Hotels. Still others purchase less costly off-the-shelf solutions, such as the Gaylord Hotels implementation of CommonSpot Content Server. Each hotel company must decide what is best to suit their distribution strategy.

With the increase in importance, as well as volume, of content management for hotels, HEDNA believes this topic must be addressed again in 2005 from several new angles to better educate and equip hoteliers to manage their content effectively. For the purposes of this white paper, electronic content management is defined as employing both human and technological resource to facilitate creating, updating and publishing information in order to effectively market and sell a hotel in electronic channels. At times, automation is employed and at times, content management is completed manually.

Within this white paper, the following topics will be addressed:

1. The history of content management and the hotel industry;
2. Content users and requirements of each;
3. Content management segments;
4. Electronic content management channels;
5. Key industry challenges including maintaining consistent databases, policing brand standards, management of onward distribution, methods of displaying room availability, multi-lingual content and more;
6. Best practices;
7. Hospitality-specific content management company overviews;

¹ *Enterprise Content Management: The Next Frontier* by Ann Rockley

8. A checklist providing direction for those hotels or hotel companies that desire to implement a content management strategy and process.

The focus of this paper is to address management of content on electronic channels, such as the GDS and Internet distribution systems (IDS). The content analyzed will be static content, such as descriptive data, pictures and rich media, as well as variable content, such as rates and availability.

Full enterprise content management, which would include print content management, RFP content management and internal content management for employees, will not be addressed. However, the principles and strategies of enterprise content management will be reviewed. This is defined as the creation, capture, delivery, customization and management of content across an entire enterprise, encompassing all content that must be managed.

In writing this paper, many key industry executives were interviewed. Their input and perspective has been truly invaluable. The executives are:

Heather Richer	Director of Revenue Management of Chicago Hotels, Kimpton Hotel Group
Roland Tanner	Executive Vice President, Lanyon Inc.
Don Galbreath	Ecommerce Marketing and Operations, Marriott International
Paolo Boni	Vice President and CEO, VFM Interactive
Henry Woodman	President, ICE Portal
David Elton	Managing Director, Leonardo
Sally Richards	Director Business Development, Leonardo
Christopher Chong	Vice President Sales & Business Development, VRX Studios
Glenn Fernandez	Vice President Product Management, WizCom
Sheila Rice	Vice President Content Licensing, Northstar Media
Beth Koesser	Director Database Content, Northstar Media

Hermione Lincoln	Director Global Content Management, Starwood Hotels & Resorts
Larry Hall	President and CEO, Hotel Booking Solutions
Joy Jennings	Public Relations Manager, Pegasus Solutions
Cheryl Weldon	Vice President, Major Accounts, Worldspan
Diane Allen	Product Line Manager, Agency & Corporate Solutions, Worldspan
Paula Drum	Vice President, Revenue Management & Reservation Sales, Cendant Hotels
Jeff Huggins	Director of Online Operations, MMG Worldwide
David Vis	eCommerce Practice Creative Director, Web & Content Management Consultant, Solutionz Group International, Bangkok
Chicke Fitzgerald	Founder & CEO, Solutionz Group International
Jimmy Suh	Vice President of Revenue & Distribution, Kimpton Hotel Group, and President, HEDNA
Tiffany Topcik	Vice President Hotel and Supplier Relations, ABC Corporate Services, and Vice President, HEDNA
Noreen Henry	Director, Travelocity, and Treasurer, HEDNA

HEDNA and the Solutionz Group partnered together to educate the hotel industry on a series of topics throughout 2005. This paper is the third in the 2005 white paper series.

HEDNA is a not-for-profit trade association whose worldwide membership includes over 200 of the most influential companies in the hotel industry. The association was established in 1992 to further the electronic distribution of hotels throughout the world. For more information regarding HEDNA, please visit www.hedna.org.

The Solutionz Group is a business development and strategic consulting group, headquartered in Tampa, Florida, with offices around the world. Caryl Helsel and Kathleen Cullen are authors of the white

paper series and are hospitality industry veterans, as well as past president and vice president of HEDNA respectively. For more information on Solutionz Group, please visit www.solutionz.com.

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