



At Atlantis, cashless = control

At the start of 2003, all 230 of the MICROS point-of-sale (POS) systems at Kerzner International's Atlantis, Paradise Island, a lush destination resort and casino in The Bahamas, accepted cash as well as a variety of other tender methods. A growing percentage of the outlets have taken advantage of the MICROS 9700 Hospitality Management System's (HMS) ability to support a cashless environment at the resort, and Atlantis' management are pleased with the revenue increases and better control of their cash.

That's the result of the focus on moving to a cashless tendering environment through a combination of the Atlantis room key card system and its MICROS 9700 HMS. When a guest checks in at the resort, he or she receives a magnetic striped key card that operates the VingCard door lock, tracks play activity at the casino, and allows for purchases throughout the resort via a link with the property management system. The card is imprinted with the guest's name, and Atlantis employees ask for the guest's room number at the point of sale to confirm a match. Guests are also given the option

to pay with a credit card.

The project has already proven a win-win-win for guests, Atlantis management and employees. Guests have gained the convenience of leaving cash at home, and the system has improved revenue at the outlets where it's been implemented through increased sales and reduced shrinkage inherent in cash tendering. Employees benefit because The Bahamas' law automatically provides them with a set percentage of sales as a gratuity, and that sum has risen through increased recorded sales, notes Des Parker, senior vice president of information technology for Atlantis.

Giving up cash

When you attract tens of thousands of annual guests, as well as visitors from cruise ships and other hotels, getting it right the first time is a key step to any project.

Atlantis certainly considered that when consolidating five POS systems for its food and beverage and retail outlets into MICROS's 9700 HMS two years ago. That system delivered ease of maintenance, faster transactions, better data access, improved controls, and increased

sales and service from using handheld units.

Therefore, when Atlantis began to consider a cashless system in 2002, senior management wanted to make sure the upsides would far outweigh any downsides for the project.

First it weighed the various solutions available, including debit cards and campus card systems. Finally, it chose to go through a test phase by removing cash as a tender method in select locations. The resort used the guest room charge function that was already included in the MICROS 9700 HMS, sending cashless transactions through the property management system.

Step one was setting up appropriate processes and controls within the MICROS suite and enacting new procedures and employee training programs to ensure smooth operation. Atlantis also created outlet signage to alert guests to the new system. The food and beverage management team drove the success of this project by making sure that the correct processes were in place and that there would not be any adverse effect on guest service.

Next, Atlantis launched a

survey with a limited number of guests, contracting with an outside firm to collect guest opinions on a cashless approach. "Based on that study, there was not a lot of guest resistance, and the overall consensus was that the program would be accepted positively," Parker recalls.

With this positive feedback in hand, Atlantis chose to proceed with the rollout of a pilot which implemented cashless in select locations. The results have been impressive.

"We've seen some significant improvement in returns from outlets that have gone cashless, and we're expecting that to continue," says Parker. The system also eliminates cash shrinkage.

Back office operations have also been rendered more efficient. Typically, security personnel are deployed throughout the vast resort to pickup cash from cash drops and deliver it to the cashier's office, where the cash is reconciled against reports from the MICROS 9700 HMS.

A cashless system greatly reduces the need for those steps. Instead, purchases are added directly to the room folio and settlement is handled via the credit card securing the hotel stay, eliminating the manual process.

And while the additional fees resulting from higher purchase totals were a consideration in going cashless, Parker says they're well worth it. "The savings from not handling cash and dealing with shrink provide a huge return on investment," he notes. "You can improve your profit by controlling shrinkage."



Atlantis attracts non-guest visitors such as cruise ship passengers, guests from nearby hotels, and those strolling Paradise Island's beaches, which are public by law. Therefore, about 10 percent of Atlantis' POS terminals will continue to accept cash at select locations, including areas like beach bars. In the

future, Atlantis may add a system to enable those visitors to go cashless, as well. Another idea is to provide key cards for the children of guests, with spending limits set by the parents.

Even before the implementation is complete, the operator

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Atlantis continues to survey

is thrilled with the results. The MICROS cashless key card system "allows us better control of cash because money is not changing hands as much. We're maximizing the revenue opportunities and improving controls." **SS**