

Engage the Hotel Staff with the Right Technology and Watch their Increased Satisfaction Rub Off on Your Patrons



A discussion with Debbie Young, Director of Food and Beverage at Cypress Bayou Casino Hotel, on their recent transition to a suite of Agilysys products to optimize Food and Beverage Operations

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THE STATUS QUO

For many years, the hospitality industry has run on two things: happy patrons, and legacy technology. Front- and back-of-house systems that worked consistently and didn't cause disruptions became entrenched in the fabric of many properties. But a new wave of industry opportunity has presented itself. Patrons have expectations of a mobile-friendly experience, with speed and convenience reaching new levels of demand. Info-Tech Research Group spoke with Debbie Young, Director of Food and Beverage at Cypress Bayou Casino Hotel, to understand how they are addressing these new challenges with a new technology solution from Agilysys.

Cypress Bayou Casino Hotel was one of those properties where software that was performing adequately went largely untouched for years. The Point-of-Sale (POS) solution, for example, was in place long enough that the solution was rapidly approaching its end of life. The POS would need to be migrated to an alternate platform to continue with the same vendor, but that migration required moving to a brand-new platform and building a brand-new database from scratch.

The vendor had also recently undergone an acquisition, resulting in the local support that Cypress Bayou Casino Hotel had once enjoyed being cut off. Response times started to elongate, the knowledge of the tier 1 and 2 agents began to taper off, and the overall experience was on the decline.

Additionally, the recent changes in EMV liability meant a greater emphasis needed to be placed on credit card safety and security. Chip-and-pin technology was a new requirement that had to be factored in to the POS purchase decision to protect the property from fraud and other liability claims.

With that in mind, Cypress Bayou Casino Hotel decided to explore the market for an alternative solution. Consistent with Info-Tech's observations, the team started this exploration in industry standard fashion, by asking their neighbours what they used.

"The end users have told us that it's much easier to use, they prefer the user interface, particularly the ability to customize their screens. Compared to the 'ancient dinosaur' that we had previously it has been night and day."



“We reached out to several people that we knew used the product—former employees now at other properties—understood what they were using, how they were using it, and how well it was performing. We heard good things about several of the Agilysys solutions, so we knew it was worth a look.”

That look came in the form of a bid process between Agilysys and the incumbent, the result of which was selecting a multi-product Agilysys solution including InfoGenesis POS, InfoGenesis Flex, rGuest Pay, and rGuest Analyze.

THE ROLL OUT

InfoGenesis was slated as the first piece of the puzzle to be put into the environment. The planned deployment was to not only replace the existing solution, but expand the footprint to include additional venues like their concert hall. There was a lot to integrate, learn, and deploy, and a joint effort was required between both the Cypress Bayou Casino Hotel staff and the Agilysys team.

“The high level of experience with the [InfoGenesis] solution was evident among the team members, which fulfilled one of our key reasons for selecting Agilysys in the first place. I don’t think we would have seen that same familiarity if we had gone with the incumbent’s new solution.”

Training consisted of a three-week on-site presence which included several Agilysys team members. The various user groups cycled through the necessary learning which included opportunities to be hands-on with the technology in a “safe” environment. The biggest difficulty for the IT team was being able to capture knowledge across all of the different distributed components. It took some clever “divide and conquer” tactics to split up to cover more ground, and reconvene to share the learnings.

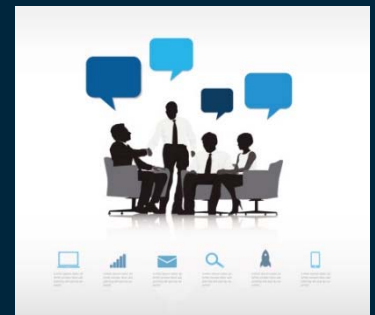
REALIZING THE BENEFITS

POS technology’s effectiveness is often defined not by the number of successes, but by the number of failures. Where the previous solution resulted in IT being called out to change out dead hardware on a semi-weekly basis, InfoGenesis has brought a new level of reliability. There are still the occasional growing pains associated with learning a new system, but the calls for support to fix critical issues has dropped off substantially.

Cypress Bayou Casino Hotel has also seen improvements in inventory control since adopting the Agilysys platform. Eatec has enabled a greater level of granular insight into, and control of, the forecasting and procurement across the restaurants.

“Agilysys’ reputation in inventory control was one of my key reasons for leaning towards, and ultimately moving forward with their solution.”

“Shing and the whole crew were fantastic, helping us get up and running. We debated holding him captive—he was that good”



KEY BENEFITS

- Major reduction in IT support requests to fix or replace malfunctioning hardware
- Three weeks of on-site training facilitation to get up and running
- Very limited custom programming required to integrate the solution to existing environment

But the greatest gains have been felt at the user engagement level. The staff are commenting on the vastly improved interface. The solution went live in August, 2016, and in the past few months the user feedback has been positive across the board. Too often the hospitality industry focuses exclusively on the patron, forgetting about the people who are most influential in the patron's satisfaction—the staff. But InfoGenesis has enabled Cypress Bayou Casino Hotel to provide a rich user experience to their front-line staff, enabling them to, in turn, provide the best experience to the patrons.

“The clean and streamlined flow and the ability to customize their screens enable them to be more efficient, and provide better customer service. On the customer side, at our retail shop they are getting a cool little place to sign their name on the digital pad—it really feels like we’ve moved into the 21st century!”

THE NEW OPPORTUNITIES AHEAD

The journey has only just begun for Cypress Bayou Casino Hotel. The value InfoGenesis is providing at a tactical, daily operational level to the staff and patrons will soon evolve into a rich, integrated, strategic asset when paired up with some of the other solutions. Agilysys Eatec, will be the first point of integration, but the opportunity is not limited to the F&B space.

“Once we get Analyze in I have a feeling we are going to see a world of difference in reporting and analytics. We look forward to seeing real numbers behind the improvements we’re feeling in the staff satisfaction through the staff performance management, and we look forward to other operational efficiencies in reservation and inventory management.”

Across the entire operation—the hotel, restaurants, retail shop, and casino—the Agilysys platform will support the delivery of not only the every day customer service expected from the property staff, but also provide a series of rich data sources to enable business decision making that will drive value at all levels of the organization. The uplift in the front-line staff satisfaction will permeate throughout, and when combined with the new waves of rich customer insights, will drive an enhanced customer experience, improved loyalty, and ultimately, a positive impact to the property's bottom line.

