

## INNOVATION AT ALBION

West Bromwich Albion's Point-Of-Sale (POS) Solution Enhances The Guest Experience And Provides Improved Management Information

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## SOLUTION AT A GLANCE

- > **Industry:** Hospitality
- > **Challenge:** 27,000+ stadium with 28 executive boxes, 6 hospitality facilities and 40 food and beverage kiosks needed to maximise guest satisfaction and optimise operations by tracking sales and stock control in real-time
- > **Solution:** InfoGenesis point-of-sale solution with advanced touch screen terminals and mPOS wireless handheld devices by Agilysys
- > **Results:** Superior guest service and improved operational efficiency with real-time data reports for improved financial controls and stock management

In 2006, West Bromwich Albion Football Club (FC) implemented InfoGenesis POS™ by Agilysys at its stadium The Hawthorns,

continuing a longstanding commitment to innovation that has included introducing a revolutionary stilecard access system. “From day one, the advanced touchscreen terminals and wireless handheld devices provided our hospitality staff with the tools they needed to optimise operations and maximise guest satisfaction,” says Mark Firth, Catering Manager, West Bromwich Albion.

## The Business Background

The Black Country club, known as “the Baggies”, was formed in 1878. Its 27,926 seat stadium includes various hospitality and foodservice facilities. The East Stand, which opened in 2001, has 28 executive boxes with eight guests in each. The executive boxes offer waitress service and packages that include four-course hospitality with wine and refreshments served at half time. Other hospitality facilities include the Richardson Suite, Bassett Suite, Pennington Suite, Allen Suite, Executive Club and Glidden Suite. In addition, some 40 service points at food and

beverage kiosks operate in the concourse areas.

Relegated from the Premiership in 2006, Albion narrowly missed out on promotion back into the Premiership in 2007, until finally securing promotion in 2008. However, the experience of relegation was an important catalyst for revamping hospitality operations. “It’s important for any club to provide an enjoyable match day experience and to maximise revenue from food and beverage operations,” says Firth.

## The Need for Change

“Before we installed this solution, we had traditional cash registers and waitresses taking orders in the VIP areas on conventional order pads,” Firth continues. The concourse kiosk staff used only cash drawers, and there was no tracking or recording of sales. As a result, it was difficult to track activity, provide meaningful reports or understand what product mix was needed. An external contract caterer manages

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outlets in the concourses and previously the reporting structure was maintained on a month-by-month basis, which was unacceptable to our business model. Whilst we manage the VIP areas in-house, our reporting systems needed improving.”

The club’s requirements were clear. “We wanted to track sales and improve stock control in order to see what was sold, where and when,” says Firth. “We wanted all this information instantly, in real-time, after a game and at half time, to see our exact position and have an accurate sales record. We wanted to combat shrinkage and the potential loss of money, whether deliberate or accidental.” By installing the InfoGenesis POS solution, the club was able to address all of these areas and gain the required business benefits.

In 2005 Phil Everitt, the club’s IT and Special Projects Manager, attended a Skidata Access Control user group meeting. As an Agilysys partner, Skidata provides the club’s season ticket and access control systems. “Agilysys presented its hospitality solution,” says Everitt, “but we were not in the market at that time. However, I later revisited the concept with our Catering Manager, Mark Firth and Michelle Davies, our Operations Director. As a result, a reference site

visit to Manchester United was arranged to see the system live. The benefits were immediately clear to us and, at the next board meeting, Michelle tabled her report and outlined the investment required. A follow-up presentation by Agilysys took place before the board agreed to implement the solution into the East Stand VIP areas. They wanted to assess the results before committing to further expenditure for the concourse facilities.”

Everitt says it was important that Agilysys had a strong track record working with other clubs and stadia with similar challenges to Albion’s. “The InfoGenesis POS solution from Agilysys at Manchester United is identical to ours,” he says. “United had many of the same issues, such as shrinkage.”

### InfoGenesis POS at Albion

Albion’s POS solution was initially deployed in two stages, first in Executive Boxes in the East Stand for the 2006-07 season, and second in the concourse kiosks for 2007-08. The solution is founded on high performance point-of-sale and stock control capabilities and includes award-winning InfoGenesis by Agilysys software.

In the East Stand VIP areas, the software is complemented by proven hardware: five IBM





SurePOS touch screen terminals together with eight Motorola wireless handheld devices using mPOS by Agilysys technology. In addition, 40 IBM SurePOS intuitive terminals are installed for the kiosks in concourses across three of the four stands.

With a customised solution specifically designed for high-transaction, multi-revenue, multi-outlet stadia and leisure environments, the club is now benefiting from:

- Increased receipts for each game
- Superior guest service and faster turnaround
- Improved operational efficiency - real-time data enables improved financial controls and stock management
- Total visibility of sales and the cash situation
- Accurate insights into sales in outsourced foodservice kiosks
- Assured service levels throughout system uptime

“With sales data and management reports, we can now see instantly on a match day, in real-time, the operational business. When you have that level of detailed information you can resolve any issues which may arise,” says Everitt. “And with

staff needing to login to the system, we can also monitor staff performance and productivity more closely.”

### Return on Investment

“The system has generated increased receipts in the VIP areas,” says Firth. “As a consequence of this, we have had to develop improved operational procedures to facilitate demand. We have already installed additional terminals in these areas, and for the 2008-09 season we will have installed 21 more IBM SurePOS terminals and four additional mPOS mobile hand-held devices within our newly refurbished Halfords Lane stand.”

Everitt says West Bromwich Albion is very satisfied with its solution from a technology perspective: “It was very easy to install and has proved reliable. We only have a short time window before a game and a limited opportunity at half time to serve up to 28,000 corporate guests and stadium supporters in a timely, friendly and efficient manner.”

“Throughout, our experience with Agilysys has been exceptional. I’d have no reservations in recommending their hospitality solutions to other stadia and arena venues.”



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Agilysys, Inc. is a leading provider of innovative information technology (IT) solutions serving corporate and public-sector customers, with special expertise in select markets, including retail and hospitality. We provide technology solutions – including hardware, software and services – to help customers resolve their most complicated IT needs. Our expertise includes enterprise architecture and high availability, infrastructure optimization, storage and resource management, identity management, and business continuity; along with software and services designed specifically for the retail and hospitality markets. We operate from locations throughout North America, and in the United Kingdom and China, with headquarters in Cleveland, Ohio.

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