

Set-up to succeed

As we slowly emerge back into the light from the darkness of the pandemic, hoteliers everywhere will be accentuating what sets them apart from the competition in order to bring back guests as quickly as possible. While in many cases this will be a continuation of the unique features that brought success in the past, there will be numerous hotels searching for new offerings aligned to the changing requirements of their customer base, writes **TigerTMS** CEO John Owen.

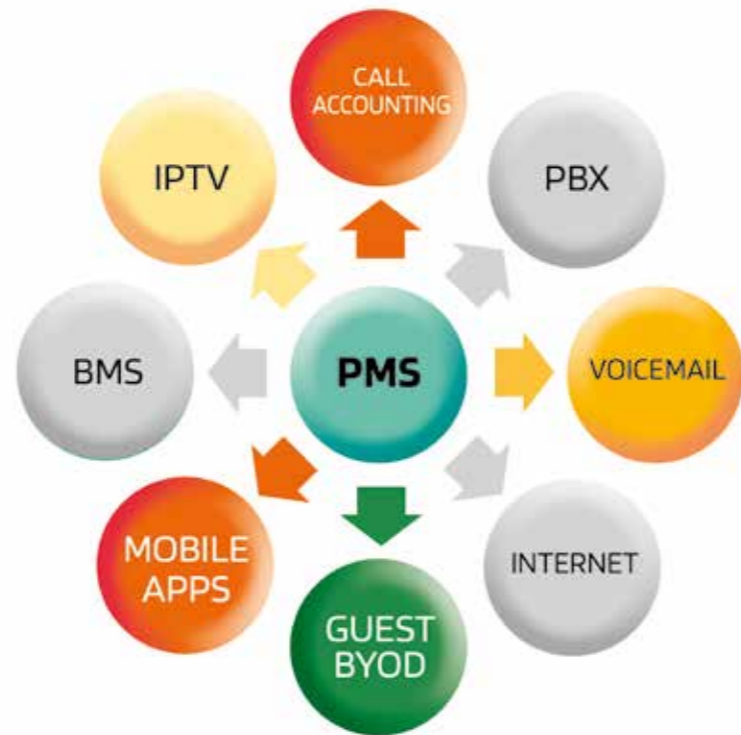
Guests today are tech savvy and are increasingly looking for automated solutions managed through their own mobile devices, which provide ease of use throughout their stay. These needs can range from check-in/out, directory information, access control, messaging and voice calling, and F&B ordering. It's a given that these facilities are allied to the convenience of accessing their own content on the large-screen TV in the room. While there are a plethora of very good solutions available in the market to satisfy this demand, the implementation process is frequently very difficult, time consuming and costly – and this is because of existing set-ups within hotels.

What is wrong with the traditional set-up?

A property management system (PMS) is, quite rightly, the most important and indispensable application within any hotel, and has been positioned at the centre of the software architecture since the advent of modern PMS system in the 1970s (see diagram on this page).

As can be seen, the PMS is directly connected to every other application, and there will be a licence fee for every connection. For any new interfaces, there will be additional costs and potentially lengthy delays as the new connection is built. This set-up serves the requirements of the PMS provider very well – a captive customer with many opportunities for additional income. If you have ever tried replacing a PMS you will know what an upheaval it can be. It is not something to be considered lightly.

In short, this set-up is unnecessarily complicated, expensive and time consuming. To become more efficient, hoteliers ought to migrate to more flexible architectures where applications can be



An example of traditional hotel software architecture.

added or removed easily without onerous costs and delays, while retaining full connectivity with the PMS. This is precisely the function of middleware.

The better option

Middleware connects different applications to each other, allowing data to flow between them. Wikipedia describes it as 'software glue', but it's more like 'software oil' as it lubricates the system without adhesion to any component parts.

Middleware allows the easy introduction of new applications (that satisfies the current requirement for mobile device solutions), enabling hotels the freedom of choice for 'best-of-breed' resolutions to their requirements. It also significantly reduces the hotel's outlay in annual support costs as there is no need for multiple

interface licences – one connection will suffice. The PMS retains its position as the most important system and continues to be connected to all other applications.

Now for the good news

Most hotels are already running a middleware platform – but are simply not realising its full potential. The existing PMS to telephone system (PBX) connection often has voicemail and call accounting applications linked to it using middleware software (see diagram over the page). This platform can be easily extended, and other applications connected to it, removing the need for direct connections to the PMS. This is a straightforward migration that can yield multiple and significant savings, radically changing the approach to the deployment of new applications.

Take TV systems for example – the new Netflix-enabled solutions allow the guest to log in to their account as they do at home. However, this needs a connection between the system and the PMS to validate user identity. The TV system manufacturers are not going to develop an interface for every different type of PMS – they rely on middleware providers to do this.

Similarly, middleware can facilitate the easy introduction of other new applications or changes to the existing line-up. The hotel can now react quickly to market trends and offer applicable, relevant solutions without having to wait many months for a new interface to be developed by the PMS provider.

Agility and flexibility

Middleware brings agility and flexibility to the hotel's set of applications being used, providing greater freedom of choice for solutions to be offered to their guests. Not only for applications used now, but additional ones required for the future, saving considerable amounts of money and effort.



A distributed middleware architecture.

One final advantage for a distributed middleware approach concerns hotel brands with multi-flag properties, something that is increasingly popular in today's environment. Here, middleware enables each of the sub-hotels (which might well have their own PMS) to share the same central resources – such as telephone systems or Wi-Fi management systems, massively reducing the capital outlay and ongoing support costs. Middleware is the essential piece of

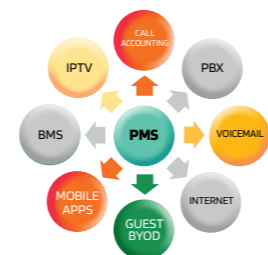
software for every hotel – the 'oil in the machine'. Hoteliers should let the PMS do what it does best, but leave the connectivity to open, scalable software that brings savings and freedom of choice to every hotel – benefitting guests and hoteliers alike. ●

Go to the TigerTMS website or www.hmi-online.com to watch a short video about middleware.

www.tigertms.com

The Gold Standard in Middleware

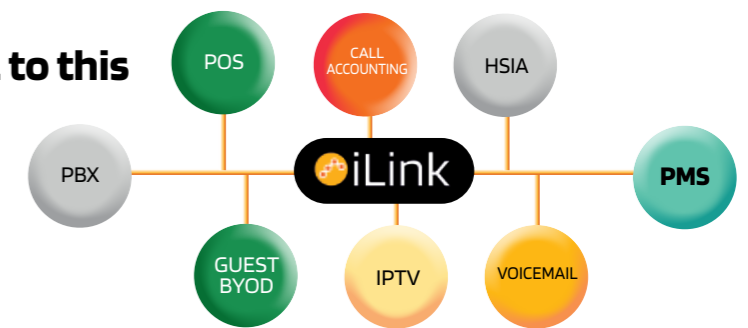
10 Reasons to go from this



PMS Centric Architecture

- ✗ Cost – Licence charge for each interface
– Ongoing Support charges per interface
- ✗ Speed – Interfaces can take months to develop
- ✗ Risk – Everything relies on the tie-in to the PMS

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Distributed Architecture using Middleware

- ✓ Scalability – Add and remove applications easily
– All applications connected to PMS
– Agile and flexible architectures
- ✓ Freedom – 000's of ready built interfaces to choose from
- ✓ Cost – Lower entry and support costs
- ✓ Speed – Fast deployment
– React quicker to consumer demands
– Reduce on-boarding time
- ✓ Optimise your business
- ✓ Share resources across multiple PMS systems (dual-flag properties)
- ✓ Deliver improved guest services

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