

Chapter 2: Troubleshooting Information Systems at the Royal Hotel

Introduction

In early May 2015, after his first year in the master's program at the Very Famous University (VFU), Blake Cantera landed a summer internship with Fancy Consultants & Company (FC). Upon receiving FC's call, Blake was thrilled. FC was a highly regarded local IT consulting firm serving the needs of clients ranging from independent mid-sized hotels to large multinational grocery chains.

While small and nimble, FC afforded the opportunity to work with large clients on cutting-edge projects. It also offered significant potential for personal growth and, with its flat organizational structure, FC prided itself on picking independent and self-reliant young consultants who'd work immediately on projects rather than toil in the "analysts limbo" for years. This was the most appealing aspect of FC for Blake, who knew that he would be able to do some real work over the summer.

After a brief introduction to FC systems and culture and a two-week orientation discussing the FC approach to consulting, Blake was assigned to his first account. As expected, this was a relatively small account. On the bright side, Blake was sent alone to manage the whole project, from start to finish. He was thrilled; July had not even started and he was already doing some real work!

The Royal Hotel

The Royal Hotel in New York City was a luxury all-suite hotel primarily serving an executive clientele visiting Manhattan on business. Typically, these business guests stayed for three to six days, during which time they used their suite as a temporary office. Thus, Royal Hotel's management had positioned the property to cater to the many needs of this busy and

demanding audience. Amenities included in-suite plain paper fax, printer, and copier; three two-line telephones with voice mail and remote message alert; high-speed Internet access; and plasma TVs and entertainment centers in each of the 482 guest suites. The Royal Hotel also provided three restaurants and a coffee shop on the premises, a 24-hour business center, a fitness center, suite dining, laundry service, complimentary shoe shine, and dedicated high-speed elevators. While business fluctuated in relation to the economic cycle, the Royal welcomed over 150 thousand guest per year bringing in total revenues of upward of \$30M.

This made for a fairly complex operation that needed to run smoothly and consistently. Given the high percentage of repeat guests it was important that guest rooms be spotless and consistently in working order.

The Task

As he arrived at the property for a one-week assignment, all expenses paid, Blake thought to himself with a smile, "I can get used to this . . ." But, with just enough time to take a shower, he had to get ready for a dinner meeting with the general manager (GM).

The Royal Hotel's GM was a no-nonsense, old-school hotelier with a distinctive German accent. He quickly zeroed in on the task, in response to Blake's comment about the "very good" quality of service provided by the Royal Hotel:

Our level of service is unacceptable! We are very good by most hotels' standard, but we are not "most hotels." Our guests are extremely discerning; it is completely unacceptable to have a light bulb out in the bathroom when the guest checks in, particularly if she is a returning guest. And that's not as bad as a stain on the carpet or a clogged toilet. I had one of my best customers call down to report a clogged toilet last week; can

you imagine? Unacceptable! I need you to make sure this never happens again.

As he sat listening to the GM, Blake briefly questioned the wisdom of taking on so much responsibility so quickly; he had not even finished his master's! But this was a brief moment of doubt, and he remembered one of his father's famous sayings: "Did you want the bicycle? Now you have to pedal!" Blake silently chuckled to himself and tuned back into the GM's tirades with a confident smile. He already had the answer to the problem.

The Solution

After examining the property and interviewing a number of people, including the directors of housekeeping, maintenance, and IT, Blake recommended that the Royal Hotel adopts M-Tech's Cappuccino! Rapid Response Solution (see Case Appendix for a description of the product). In his presentation to the executive team, highlighting the main advantages of the proposed information system, he mentioned the following:

<BL>Rapid response: The Cappuccino! application enabled the use of a phone interface, allowing housekeepers to report problems with the room (e.g., light bulb out) as soon as the problem was identified rather than having to wait until the housekeeper ended the shift and verbally communicated the problem to the maintenance department.

Quality control: Since the new information system allowed immediate reporting of problems, it reduced the chance of "slippage through the cracks" occurring when housekeepers at the end of the shift forgot to communicate the problem. It also eliminated the risk that maintenance would forget or claim it did not receive the request.

Preventive maintenance: The maintenance department would be able to identify recurrent

problems and stop them before they occurred again.

Reporting: Management would be able to extract a number of extremely valuable reports from the system (see Case Appendix for details). This would allow managers to reward best performers and motivate employees.

Upon receiving the go-ahead from the executive team, Blake negotiated with the vendor for the application license, configuration and start-up costs, and support, and a week of onsite training. But as he was preparing for the upcoming roll-out and implementation, he was called to a new account. This unexpected call was bittersweet. Yes, he would not be able to see his very first project through, but the partner at FC must have noticed his performance since he was being reassigned to a project with a regional credit union in Cortland, New York. Not quite New York City, but the project was larger and more high profile. This was a good move for a summer intern!

As Blake handed the Royal Hotel project to his replacement and classmate at VFU, Jack Scarso, he was a bit nervous. Having been on a couple of teams with Jack back at school, Blake did not hold him in the highest esteem. Yet, telling himself that Jack deserved a fair shake, Blake turned over all the paperwork and his draft information system design, adding a word of caution:

Jack, the GM is very impatient about this project. Make sure you don't let his anxiety for an operational system rush you into a half-baked design. This is a complex operation, there is a heck-of-a-lot going on here. Good luck!

Sic Transit Gloria Mundi¹

A month and a half had gone by since Blake left the Royal Hotel. While he heard from Jack a couple of times regarding minor questions, he assumed everything had gone well. He felt good about the quality of the material he had left with Jack, as well as the quality of the Cappuccino! application and the contract he had negotiated.

He had missed staying at the Royal Hotel, having traded down to a Ramada Inn across the street from the bank headquarters. But he felt good about the project as he wrapped up the documentation. A full-time offer was a sure bet!

"Here it comes," Blake smiled as he recognized the cell phone ring tone associated with his boss's personal cell phone. As he picked up, Blake quickly realized he was in for a surprise. Blake's boss sounded quite unhappy as he said,

What happened at the Royal Hotel? I just got a call from the GM over there. He said that they did what you and Jack proposed and they wasted a bunch of money on a system nobody is using! I had my doubts about Jack, but I thought you'd have no problem with this project. You don't start school for another two weeks, right? My assistant just booked you on a flight back to NYC; you should have confirmation in your inbox.

Blake realized that this was not the time to voice his own doubts about Jack. Rather, he simply took ownership of solving the problem and began modifying his plans on the fly. Out were the pre-class barbeques and trading summer internship stories with classmates. Two

weeks was probably just enough to attempt to straighten out the mess made by Jack. Blake's attempts to get in touch with Jack were futile. Jack's internship had ended and he was backpacking through the woods of Utah to, as he put it, relieve stress and recharge his batteries before school started again.

Upon returning to the Royal Hotel, Blake found that the machine dedicated to Cappuccino! was sitting in a corner collecting dust. It looked like it was abandoned soon after roll-out, a suspicion confirmed by the director of IT, who mentioned that the installation and training session had been smooth sailing. Employees had been very eager to learn about the system but seemed to lose that interest rapidly afterward.

The director of housekeeping and the director of maintenance did not have much to add, simply noting that employees found the old manual system to work much better for their needs. The GM, on the other hand, had much to say, his German accent more pronounced than ever. The words were still ringing in Blake's ears as he left the meeting: "I invested a lot of money in this software. You better deliver all the results you promised in your presentation."

As Blake prepared to troubleshoot this failed information system and to devise a solution to make it work, he remembered the words of his information systems professor at VFU: "Focus on the information system design, not the technology investment!" "Therein lay the solution," Blake thought with a tinge of hope.

¹ A phrase meaning "thus passes away the glory of the world" used to remind us that nothing is permanent and that we must stay humble. As Blake found out, so fleeting can be the fortunes of a summer internship.

Discussion Questions

1. Despite having relatively little specific information about why the system failed, what do you think are the main reasons for such failure?
2. How could you fix these problems?
3. Reflecting on this experience, what do you think were the main mistakes, if any, that Blake made in handling the engagement?

BENEFITS



Cappuccino!

Solve tomorrow's issues today

01

Improve Response Time

Cappuccino!'s unique telephone interface and alphanumeric pagers can log and dispatch work requests in under a minute and without human intervention.

02

Eliminate lost calls

Whether entered over the telephone or at the terminal, Cappuccino! tracks and ages work orders until they are completed.

03

Ensure Proper Follow-up

Real time graphs of work order aging facilitate the follow up process for dispatchers.

04

Expand Reporting Pool

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Cappuccino!

Rapid Response

No matter how comprehensive your preventive maintenance program is, issues like burnt light bulbs, leaks, and guest requests are unavoidable in any hotel. Cappuccino! helps your staff report, respond to, and resolve issues like these faster than ever before!

Reporting

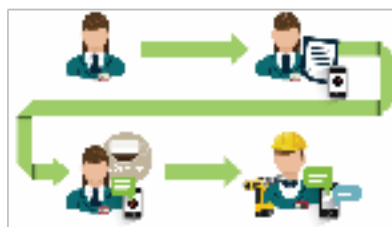
Housekeepers are in the guest rooms everyday and they must be the hotel's eyes and ears. With Cappuccino!, they can report deficiencies directly to the computer.

- No more hard to decipher work order tickets.
- No more busy signals or holding for a dispatcher.
- No more language barriers.

An automated attendant walks them through the reporting process step by step in the language of their choice - English, Spanish, French, and Chinese, to name a few. In a matter of seconds, Cappuccino! automatically generates, prioritizes, and dispatches a work order to any tablet, smartphone, touch tone phone or PDA so they get corrected before a guest is affected.

Response and Resolution

The resulting work order contains all of the information that response personnel need to complete the call. Whether it's a toilet overflowing, or a guest who needs towels, your staff will be able to respond faster than ever before! Response staff can then use the same automated attendant to tell you when they've started and completed the work.



Cappuccino! turns your hotel staff into a proactive team working together to maximize guest satisfaction by solving tomorrow's issues today!

Meanwhile at the Hotline

Instead of spending their time answering employee calls and entering data into a computer, your hotline operators and guest service agents are now free to focus on guest requests and monitor all pending calls at Cappuccino!'s visual Dashboard (shown next). In the end, the issue is resolved, often before a guest ever even notices, and the detailed work order history is being maintained by the computer automatically.



Inspection

Tracking your team's performance is an important part of maintaining the highest levels of quality. When your team is performing well your property is at its best. Cappuccino! makes it easy for you to measure your team's performance and analyze quality levels on your property.

The Quality Check Challenge

Room inspections have traditionally been nothing more than filling in a paper form by hand and manually calculating a score at the end. Sometimes this raw data is entered into a computer manually in order to create reports which can be used to analyze quality levels and performance. This traditional process is time-consuming, tedious, and costly. Because of these challenges, manual room inspection forms are often never entered into a computer for analysis and are simply kept in an employee file.

Cappuccino! helped me convince my Manager that we were understaffed by comparing our available man hours to the workload in the system.

BENEFITS



05

Reduce Housekeeping costs

Cappuccino! is the most efficient way to collect inspection data. No more tedious paperwork and timeconsuming data entry. Inspector does it all.

06

Improve Quality

With Cappuccino!, defects in your guest rooms will not go unnoticed for long. Inspector is sure to catch anything that your Rapid Response and PM programs happen to miss.

07

Increase Productivity

Trends will virtually leap out of Cappuccino!'s report generator to show you how well your team is performing. Once armed with this kind of data, you'll be able to target training programs and increase productivity like never before.

08

Eliminate Clipboards

Cappuccino! allows you to run a truly paperless preventive maintenance (PM) program. PM Tasks, Meter Readings, Equipment Survey's and Daily Rounds can all be performed on the mobile app

09

Save Data Entry Time

The Startup Wizard sets up fully load-leveled schedules for you with a minimum of typing and data entry. The simplified PM data structure streamlines data entry and keeps things simple.

10

Mobile

Cappuccino! untethers management from their desks where guest and staff engagement is more critical than ever.



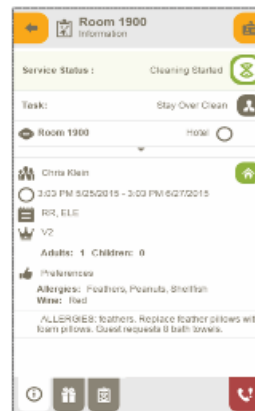
Mobile Capabilities

Cappuccino! provides features that were previously available only on a PC so users can access information via tablets and smartphones. Utilizing a team-based approach, service orders are automatically directed into group "buckets." Staff members can be assigned to single or multiple teams, thereby receiving notice for only those requests that pertain to their skill set. This better utilizes the strengths and abilities of individual employees which reduces costs and increases productivity.

Smart Scheduling

Cappuccino! is designed to handle one of the most common issues guest room attendants encounter: trying to clean a room only to find that a guest is still in it. Cappuccino! provides guest room attendants with a way to set a time to return later and then re-issues the room to the most appropriate guest room attendant when the time has elapsed. This ensures that no room is forgotten and staff members are utilized to maximum effectiveness.

When cleaning a room, guest room attendants are provided with information about the guest and their preferences. In addition to the guest name, special instructions can be provided such as their desire for extra pillows.



Empower Staff Members

Instead of spending their time answering employee calls and entering data into a computer, your hotline operators and guest service agents are now free to focus on guest requests and monitor all pending calls at Cappuccino!'s visual Dashboard (shown next). In the end, the issue is resolved, often before a guest ever even notices, and the detailed work order history is being maintained by the computer automatically.



Key Features

- Requests are received and handled by staff members on the field
- Guest related issues include guest name for recognition
- Every step is tracked including start, complete, response time, issue and more
- Guest initiated requests are flagged as incident or request
- Upon completion, issue is flagged for follow-up by guest agent
- Escalation rules ensure prompt attention

Cappuccino! provides a simple but thorough system, and we couldn't be more pleased with the solution...

