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REFERENCE CASE

Maintaining top class service made easy with automation

For companies operating in the highly competitive holiday industry, simply providing travel services, accommodation or leisure activities is no longer enough to ensure success. Holiday firms need to be increasingly adaptive to the needs and demands of their customers. The speed at which holiday companies are able to respondon issues affecting a holiday experience is crucial if they are to provide a level of service that generates healthy repeat business.

High seas and high expectations

Carnival Corporation is one of the largest holiday companies in the world. Its success in providing quality cruises through familiar brands including P&O Cruises and Cunard has made Carnival the most profitable company in the leisure travel industry with a net income of $1.8 billion. Today the company operates a fleet of 98 ships and hosts approximately 200,000 guests sailing on its vessels at any time.

> **"**Carnival operates a fleet of 98 ships and can have 200,000 guests at any one time.**"**

Carnival UK places huge value on the respect its brands represent in the market: P&O Cruises has been operating vessels for more than 170 years; whilst Cunard is synonymous with British refinement, impeccable service, fine dining and sophisticated adventure. Even so, the company was keen to explore how technology could improve the high standards of service for which its cruises were renowned.

Managing customer expectation in the holiday industry has traditionally meant holidaymakers fill in a questionnaire during, or by the end of, the holiday. The cruise industry is no different, handing out paper questionnaires to cabins in multiple languages. Leisure companies using these manual data capture systems to evaluate service have been limited in the capability to respond, since turnaround for the process could take as long as six weeks to complete.

For this reason, Carnival UK turned to document expert Arena Group and automated document processing specialist ReadSoft, to provide a more timely system that would reduce the delay in processing the data and minimise any adverse effect on holidaymakers.

Getting back on course

By providing its assisted printing process, Arena Group enabled Carnival crews to enter ad-hoc questions into pre-printed questionnaires. These 'floating questions' would be more timely and relevant to passengers on a specific cruise, generating responses to new or unusual incidents that occurred. In order to gain real value from these responses Arena also designed a bespoke application for Carnival UK to quickly capture and interpret customer feedback while passengers were still on board the vessel.

At the heart of this system was Readsoft's FORMS application. FORMS is designed to remove manual input of data, automating information extraction from forms: whether surveys; order forms; tax sheets; or as in this case customer satisfaction forms in order to accelerate business processes. The software can automatically extract information from forms in any format - paper, faxes, internet forms, email, XML, digital images such as TIFF, JPG, PNG and BMP - and processes the information to any system.

> **"It helps the business maximize existing resources and make significant savings."**

FORMS goes to work

Fully capable of handling small surveys to nationwide census taking, FORMS provided the perfect basis for Arena's shipboard application. By automating capture, fewer resources would be required to process the paper forms. The responses could be simply scanned by a member of staff on board, and because the system did not require manual keying of information errors were reduced to a minimum, preventing wastage and saving costs.

The system can highlight items rated as 'fair' or 'poor' and handwritten comments may be extracted, especially important when alongside poorly rated questions. These generally indicate a requirement for customer service. This is made possible through FORMS incorporation of optical character recognition (OCR) capability, which means the software can recognise and process data whether it is machine-printed, or represented in a barcode, check box, circle, table, matrix format, or, as in this particular case, hand writing.

Once the data is extracted a full report can be generated quickly at the point of service delivery. By completely replacing the manual process, report generation was reduced from a period of weeks to less than two hours, well within the necessary timeframe to ensure passenger issues can be identified and rectified on the spot. Richard Parker, Systems Analyst Passenger Services at Carnival UK said this, "helps the business maximise existing resources and make significant savings."

FORMS delivers output in a simple text file making it easy to integrate with any statistics system, ERP system or archive. For the crew of the Queen Elizabeth, Arena's application produces a single report, ensuring relevant staff such as bar managers, restaurant and dining staff or cabin stewards can hone in on specific service issues. By being able to correct problems that are identified by individuals, the crew is able to make sure passengers feel well cared for, receiving a better than expected level of personal service during their voyage. The speed and reactive nature of the service also means issues can be addressed or avoided prior to the next sailing.

Simon Shorthose, Managing Director, ReadSoft UK said, "Arena Group's system for increasing the accuracy and speed of forms processing demonstrates the flexibility and variety of applications to which our document processing software can be applied. If it can improve customer service on board Cunard's Queen Elizabeth, then imagine the possibilities across the entire holiday industry, from hotels, venues and attractions, through to a range of leisure activities and events, which previously couldn't hope to match White Star Service."

1. Carnival UK turned to Arena Group and ReadSoft to improve its survey processing in order to get faster and more accurate feedback from its customers and to be able to respond faster..

2. ReadSoft's FORMS solution is being used for automatic information extraction.

3. A company spokesman said the software solution "helps the business maximize existing resources and make significant savings".

4. Carnival Corporation is one of the largest holiday companies in the world with a net annual income of US$1.8 billion.

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