

Case Study



Contact Center & CRM

Hilton Hotels Improves and Expands Existing Call Center Infrastructure with MicroAutomation Solution

The Challenge:

Hilton Hotels Corporation, based in Beverly Hills, California, and Hilton International, a subsidiary of London-based Hilton Group PLC, have a worldwide alliance to market Hilton, the world's best-known hotel brand. Collectively offering nearly 2,400 hotels in more than 65 countries worldwide, both companies are recognized as leaders in the hospitality industry. Carrollton, Texas-based Hilton® Reservations Worldwide (HRW) is jointly owned by Hilton Hotels Corporation and Hilton International Corporation to provide reservation services for the two entities.

Through its network of call centers, HRW books reservations for all Hilton brands worldwide including Hilton®, Conrad™, Doubletree®, Embassy Suites Hotels®, Hampton Inn®, Hampton Inn & Suites®, Harrison Conference Centers®, Hilton Garden Inn®, Hilton Grand Vacations Company®, and Homewood Suites® by Hilton. HRW handles in excess of 31 million calls annually, resulting in more than nine million reservations.

In 1999, Hilton acquired Promus Hotel Corporation, a deal that diversified its luxury holdings to include numerous mid-priced properties. The acquisition, however, also complicated HRW operations because Promus reservation call centers were technically incompatible with those of Hilton.

As the number of hotel brands being supported through the call center increased, so did the amount of 800 numbers and other direct-dial numbers that customers called to make reservations. The reservations group needed a way to improve agent productivity, permitting agents to handle the rising call volume without draining resources or budgets. HRW needed an efficient method for identifying the calls coming in for specific brands, and transferring that information to agents along with the call.

There were also technical inconsistencies between the Promus call centers and HRW's. The components comprising Promus' call center infrastructure — switches, ACDs, etc. — were different and incompatible with the existing HRW call center framework. Providing inter-operability required the identification of a standard interface that allowed product and process consistency across all call centers.

After acquisition of a rival hotel chain, a major national hotel chain quadrupled its number of hotel properties significantly increasing the call volume in its call centers and introducing some new business and technical challenges.

HRW handles in excess of 31 million calls annually, resulting in more than 9 million reservations annually.

The new system streamlines global call center operations, resulting in an additional 24 hours per day of customer contact per location.

New solution provides screen pops of reservation information.



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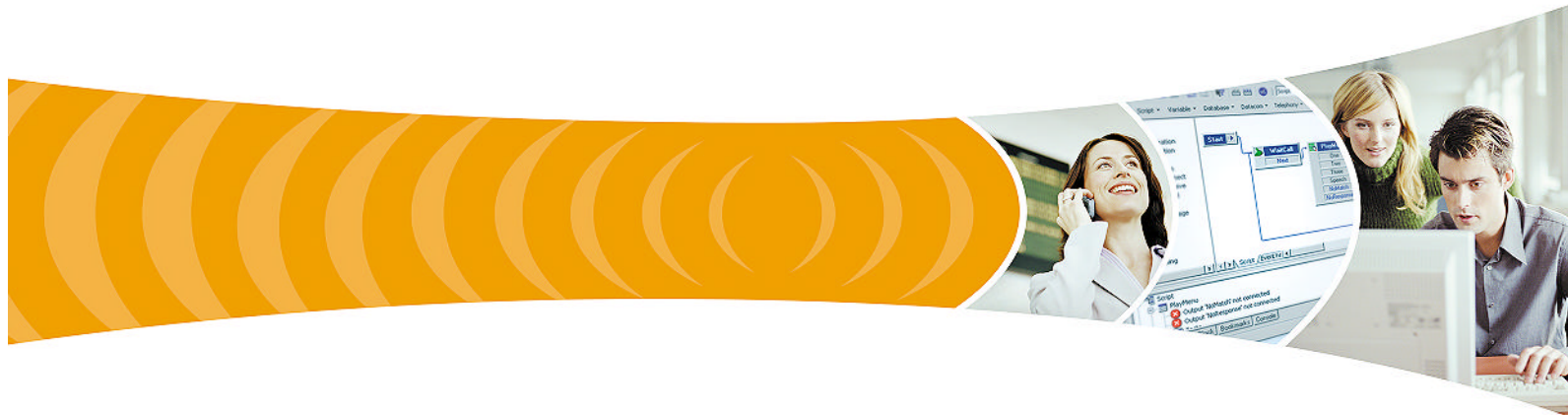
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The call center agents also needed access to the reservation systems of the various hotel brands, giving them the ability to cross-sell other available Hilton properties should they be unable to fulfill a caller's first choice. Yet, Promus' reservation systems used a different back-end database and access to the information in both databases was not possible.

Finally, with six domestic call centers, several call centers in Europe and Asia Pacific, and agent counts ranging from one hundred to four hundred per call center, the contact center applications needed to be extremely scalable. Though HRW has several international call centers, they selected the Glasgow, Scotland site for the initial international implementation. After deployment, the solution would need to scale to include the other international call centers as well.

The Solution:

At the time of the acquisition, Promus had a call center infrastructure that had been designed and implemented by MicroAutomation, a Manassas, VA-based provider of call center and contact center solutions. The infrastructure included computer telephony integration (CTI) and interactive voice response (IVR) solutions that proved to be cost-effective, efficient, and scalable. HRW selected MicroAutomation to upgrade the HRW infrastructure and to build a coordinated voice/data synchronization (screen pop) application that would increase call center efficiency to enable agents to handle the higher call volumes.

MicroAutomation designed a solution based on Envoy CT Connect™ software and its own CallCenter Millennium CTI middleware product line. Envoy CT Connect software provides the standard interface needed for CallCenter Millennium to communicate and share data with the various switches in the HRW and Promus call centers.

The decision to use Envoy CT Connect software was twofold as Suresh Gursahaney, president and CEO of MicroAutomation explained, "We chose Envoy CT Connect software primarily because HRW has a variety of switches at its different call center facilities, and Envoy CT Connect gave us a standard, single product solution for integrating all locations. Providing a cost-effective solution was also a prime consideration."

When a call arrives at a call center, the telephone switch uses Dialed Number Identification Services (DNIS) to identify which Hilton brand the customer is calling. The switch then uses the Envoy CT Connect software standard interface to pass the DNIS information to CallCenter Millennium.

Using the DNIS data, CallCenter Millennium enables Hilton's reservation front-end client to locate the proper hotel brand reservation and room availability information and display it on the agent's desktop as the call is routed to the agent. If accommodations are not available for the caller's choice of hotel, the agent can click an onscreen button to start a search of the other reservation database. Within seconds, the agent can cross-sell an alternate Hilton property.

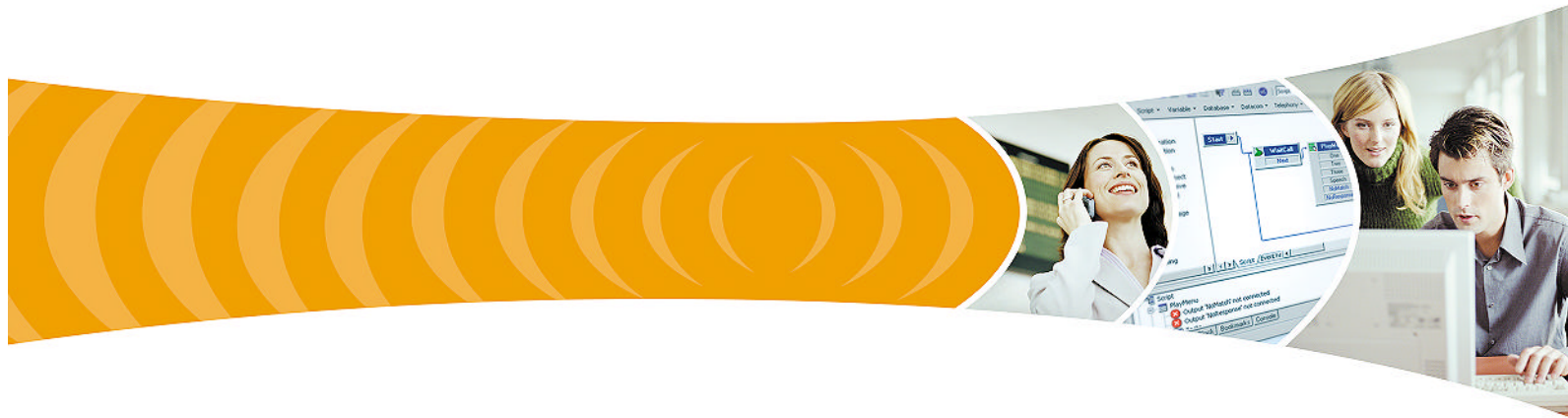
HRW wanted to automate specific portions of the reservation system, further enabling agents to handle additional transactions and reducing the time and agent expense associated with each call. MicroAutomation implemented an IVR solution that provides automated reservation confirmation. Once an agent books a reservation, the caller is transferred to the IVR system. CallCenter Millennium coordinates the simultaneous delivery of voice and data from the agent to an available port on the IVR servers. The IVR then reads back and confirms the caller's reservation information, freeing the agent for the next customer. The caller can request to be transferred back to an agent from the IVR or opt to be transferred to Hilton partners for car rentals or airline reservations.



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The Results:

By utilizing Envoy CT Connect software and CallCenter Millennium to implement the DNIS and IVR solutions into their call center operations, HRW estimates they added more than twenty hours per day of additional customer contact at each of its call centers.

The Envoy CT Connect software-based solution expedites the sales process, reduces the associated agent costs, and improves customer satisfaction. As agents are now better able to cross-sell properties, HRW decreased the number of inbound calls from customers who now query several properties by dialing only one number.

Through the vast amount of caller/customer information collected in the unified database, HRW can make more informed decisions as to how to market their various brands more effectively. They can also identify and develop marketing programs and campaigns to better serve their more loyal customers.

About MicroAutomation:

MicroAutomation is a leading provider of contact center solutions including CTI; multimedia contact management; IVR; web; speech recognition; text-to-speech; workforce management; monitoring; and management reporting. MicroAutomation offers its award winning CallCenter Millennium products along with requirements consulting and complete solution design, integration, and implementation services. CallCenter Millennium products provide flexible, fully customizable inbound/outbound contact management functionality to meet the specific needs of any contact center environment and application. And by integrating CallCenter Millennium products with complementary products from partners like Envoy Worldwide, MicroAutomation is able to provide total departmental and enterprise-wide contact center solutions. Additional information is available on the MicroAutomation web site at www.microaut.com.



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