Cannes Carlton Intercontinental: Alert at your service

The Carlton hotel, the legend

A true legend in Cannes for nearly a century, the InterContinental Carlton hotel has hosted since its construction in 1911, international stars and royal family members, who made this hotel one of the most prestigious hotels in the world. The biggest, the most famous, the richest have resided and still reside. This hotel is a myth, it is the focus of thousands of photographers and bystanders during the Cannes International Film Festival. Two films have even been realised inside: "The hand on collar" in 1954, with Cary Grant and Grace Kelly, and "Four Stars" in 2005 with Isabelle Carré, José Garcia and François Cluzet.

The facade of the hotel has been classified as historical monument in 1989. Inlays, marble, glass, leather, precious woods, the Carlton is an architectural gem that offers a refined upper-class clientele. Its 343 rooms and 39 suites with a fresh and bright atmosphere, are decorated in a glamorous Hollywood style. On the top floor, no less than 7 suites over 2500 m2 benefits from a unique panoramic view over the bay of Cannes reinforcing the stars legendary universe.

The hotel has 14 prestigious rooms, like the Grand Salon, giving the possibility to organize conferences, receptions, cocktails or gala evenings. Ideally located on the Croisette, it benefits from a magnificent view over the Mediterranean Sea and a private beach where its customers can enjoy all the recreation of the sea: resting in the shade of parasols, swimming, water skiing, sailing ...
High quality service for a demanding clientele

The service is obviously is the core strategy of a hotel dedicated to hosting upper-class personalities often very demanding. Everything has been implemented to meet the needs of VIP clients: restaurants, safety deposit box, concierge, laundry, currency exchange, porters, fighters, carriers, international press, airline counters and car rental, private beach ... The Carlton has not skimped on the means to meet all expectations.

A fully equipped Business space offers services dedicated to business secretary, mail, photocopy, fax, high speed internet access, computer services, mobile phone rent, and even a private limousine service.

At the heart of the process, the high availability and the immediate reaction of a dedicated staff to its customers contribute to the satisfaction of all their desires in a record time. "Our goal is to respond quickly to customer demand," says Stéphane Prosperi, IT manager of the Carlton. "We have therefore initiated a comprehensive approach based on three key words which are: responsiveness, speed and quality of service. A global IT reorganization 5 years ago enabled us to make greater enhancements with the installation of an ASCOM mobile telephone system along with the interactivity of the Alert Software" he says.
Alert at your service

To handle the customers’ demands, the Carlton hotel has been equipped with the Espresso software, a dedicated application in the hotels domain to manage tasks. The customer contacts a call center, which creates a mission statement on Espresso.

Before the use of Alert, an operator had to contact the right person to tell him its mission, a task even more tedious than most of the staff was not equipped with a telephone, nor any bipper. "When I entered the Carlton 12 years ago," recalls Stéphane Prosperi, "it was common to see the hotel staff running! "Not easy indeed to find one of 40 hotel's maids in the maze of corridors ... Once the right person found and the order of a mission given, there was still for this person to find a telephone, contact the Espresso voice server, identify with his PIN, enter the number of his mission, and enter his code telling that the person his in charge of this mission. And once the mission is accomplished, once again contact Espresso to notify his mission was completed. "A complete waste of time and energy for the staff, which necessarily affect the quality of service," said Stéphane Prosperi.

A new system was developed with Ascom to equip the entire hotel staff with DECT (Digital Enhanced Cordless Telephone), enhanced wireless telephones which enable free internal communication. A first gain of time to reach the right person anywhere. "But it is the interactivity enabled by the Alert software between the Ascom phones, the service staff and Espresso management system that has been a revolution in our operations. On the client side, as on the staff side, one push is enough now! ," Said Stéphane Prosperi.
Thanks to the "instant service", the customer directly contacts the call center to express his request, which is immediately translated by Espresso into an order, for example, “tidy room 346.” Thanks to Alert, an SMS with the mission order is sent directly to the person concerned, in our example, the maid assigned to the room N° 346. If she refuses the order, or if the phone is on its dock at the time of the call, the mission order is then sent by Alert to all the present cleaning ladies of the floor (whose phone is not on its dock).

The cleaning lady in question has to press only one button on his telephone to tell the system that she handles the request. Then, the stopwatch is started for this mission. It stops when the maid will signal to the system, again by a single tap on his phone, that the task is completed. A detailed tracking of tasks is performed in order to continuously improve the service. "We have classified the requests and set a target response time for each of them. Alert enable us to track the response time on these tasks live and to adjust the system. For luggage carry, we set a target of 15 min: the 340 requests registered during the month of August were treated in 9 minutes. In contrast to get the laundry, we had also set a target of 15 mn, and for the 675 claims in August, the average response time was of only 24 minutes … In all cases, Alert really enables us to monitor the service quality.

Practically, Alert connects itself to the Espresso voice server, still in charge of monitoring and managing the tasks, and replaces the operator for the tedious tasks.

A true technical challenge…

"Carlton had contacted us to develop a mobile phone solution to dispatch missions orders from Espresso to the hotel’s staff based on the customer requests," recalls Jose Rodriguez, head of validation and development at Ascom. "We needed to make our phones interactive to enable operators to manage their tasks on their screen. Ascom works with Micromedia International for over 15 years and we immediately thought of Alert to solve this technical challenge. We have always maintained a win/win partnership with Micromedia International where its technical efficiency and its responsiveness has never been thrown off the scent. Alert enabled us to add features to our phones to meet the standard problems as well as specific needs requiring additional developments, such as for the Carlton.

The specificity of this system introduced at the Carlton is based on a diverted use of Alert as a task manager, interfacing with a dedicated software. A double technical challenge which required on one side to integrate Alert with the Ascom DECT, and on the other side to allow Alert to communicate with Espresso. An even more difficult challenge that Espresso is a more or less closed system and that it was impossible to get the codes”, said Rodolphe Latta,
integrator of the solution for Micromedia International at Carlton. The only way to interact with the software was: the phone. "We programmed Alert to replace the operator: Alert retrieves all the necessary variables (operator code, task code, command code ...), Dials the server number Espresso voice, gives identifiers of the operator and pretends to be him paying the duties in place by an automatic transmission of variables," says Rodolphe Latta.

Another technical difficulty: the requests volume to be processed. With 300 to 700 customers to satisfy continuously, and some 30 000 missions registered each year (3800 only for August), manage so many information in real time without saturating the bandwidth was not easy. "Initially, the orders were sent in parallel to all the concerned staff. But sending 10 messages to 40 people at the same time was taking up to … 20 minutes! To increase the efficiency, I completely reprogrammed the system to target immediately the right person. The spread of the request is only performed in a second phase, if the mission was not accepted by the targeted person, or if the group is not too important, as for the baggage handlers", says Stéphane Prosperi. Mission orders cover applications as diverse as a pair of slippers to bring, a car to drive out of the garage or the assistance for an Internet connection.

But Alert does not only manage client requests. It also helps to maintain the whole hotel. A light bulb to change in an office? The hotel staff as a client can generate a mission. The BMS which automatically ensures the technical maintenance of the hotel is coupled with Alert, as the fire monitoring system of the fire site.

"It’s very simple," says Stéphane Prosperi, "Alert us has become so useful and necessary that is now wondering how we ever managed without it before! Without Alert, it would be very difficult to meet the demands of a clientele that is increasingly demanding with the responsiveness required."

... and human!

However, the biggest challenge remains human … "The most difficult for us was to overcome resistance to change and to persuade the staff that the goal was to improve the quality of customer service and not to track staff," recognize Stéphane Prosperi. "Changing habits was our biggest challenge!"