Biltmore
CORAL GABLES ~ MIAMI

Case Study

The Biltmore Hotel

Business Solutions from IGEL Technology

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The Biltmore Hotel

The Biltmore Hotel, a four-star, four-diamond resort with 275 guest rooms and suites, is situated on 150 acres near Miami. Built in 1926, the Biltmore is a national historic landmark that has hosted many prominent guests, including presidents, movie stars and even the infamous Al Capone. Over the years, the Biltmore has passed through many incarnations, including a post-World War II stint as a VA hospital, but today it is again a place of elegance, beauty and calm. With an extensive golf course, famous pool, and world-class amenities, the hotel offers its guests the best of both worlds – the excitement of Miami in a European-style luxury resort.

Business Solutions from IGEL Technology

"The Biltmore is a historic hotel, but we are committed to providing our guests with an exceptional experience supported by the most modern technology, as exemplified by our new state-of-the-art Conference Center of the Americas," said Brad Garlock, IT director for the Biltmore Hotel. "To better serve customers at our restaurants, bars, spa and shops, we decide to replace the computer monitors that employees used for retail transactions with the most secure, technologically-advanced systems. The challenge was finding a solution that offered the capabilities we needed along with the elegant look and feel we desired."

The challenge

- Increase speed and ease of retail transactions through touch-screen monitors with credit card swipe capabilities
- Deploy solution that not only supports the Biltmore's infrastructure, but also fits its elegant aesthetics
- Implement state-of-the-art technology while also reducing costs

The hotel's IT team began its search for point-of-sale (POS) terminal that offered both touchscreen technology and built-in credit card swipe capabilities to make retail transactions both faster and easier. While a number of companies offered these features, the options were limited by the Biltmore's need for a compact 12-inch monitor with an 800 x 600 resolution. In addition, the solution needed to be sleek and unobtrusive to complement the design of the hotel. After determining that their current provider couldn't meet all of these requirements, Garlock and his team selected ELO TouchSystem's Entuitive 1229L touchscreen monitor as the optimal solution.

"Even more challenging than finding the perfect terminal was determining how to integrate it into our existing environment, which included a custom POS application, called Refine, that we developed in-house eight years before," explained

Garlock. In order to make the Elo terminal work, the Biltmore team needed to find a thin client solution that would work with its Citrix server and Linux platform. Initially, the team had difficulty finding a vendor that was willing to customize their solutions to support the terminal we wanted. Then Modcomp Systems and Solutions introduced Garlock to IGEL.

The Solution – IGEL Winestra 4210 LX

Garlock wasn't familiar with IGEL, but he was impressed by the company in their first meeting. "When we gave the IGEL team our list of specifications, they told us it would be no problem to implement them," he explained. "What set the IGEL team apart was their willingness to customize their thin clients based on our unique needs." The Biltmore decided to purchase 30 IGEL Winestra 4210 LX thin clients, which IGEL then adapted to work with the ELO monitors. IGEL's Winestra series are flexible thin clients featuring an expandable PCI slot, a local web browser, terminal emulation capabilities and a broad set of I/O ports. The sleek look of the IGEL thin client fit the hotel's sophisticated image, providing the processing power and memory required to support the Biltmore's applications within a small footprint.

"The implementation of the thin clients was extremely smooth," Garlock noted. "With the help of the dedicated IGEL team, we were able to get the devices up and running without any problems, and quickly train the staff members who would be using the new systems." The Biltmore team was so impressed by the technology and service that they decided to also purchase a number of IGEL's all-in-one Elegance models for use in their back offices.

The Elegance thin clients feature an integrated LCD with a Smartcard reader/writer housed in a high-quality, attractive industrial design. The move from standard PCs to the IGEL's thin clients has not only streamlined the Biltmore's retail and behind-the-scenes operations, but has also greatly increased the security of its guests' profile and credit card information, a critical priority for the hotel.
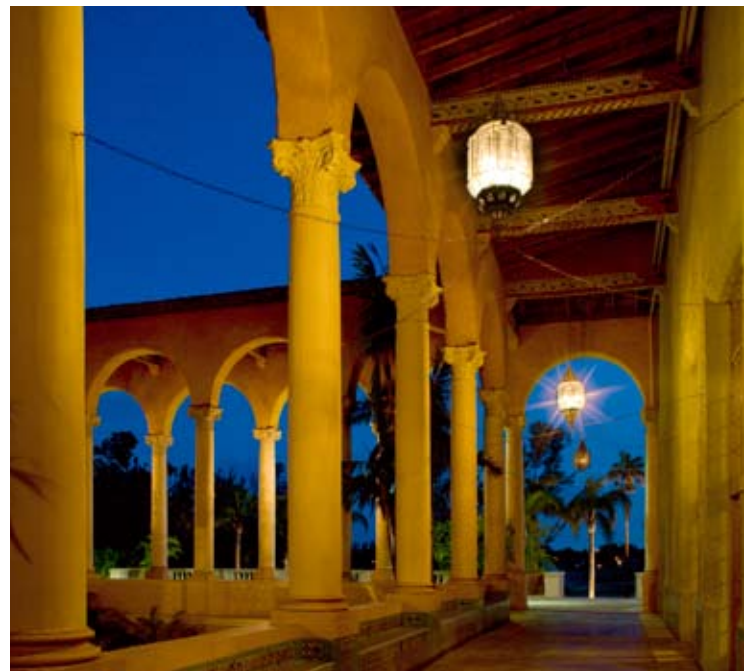
Customized to a Business's Needs

By choosing IGEL thin clients, the Biltmore was able to implement a total solution that met all of their key requirements: a small and sleek POS terminal with touchscreen and credit card capabilities integrated with their Citrix server, Linux platform, and the hotel's custom POS application. Best of all the complete solution was significantly less expensive than the hotel's original PC-based system.

"In addition to being dependable and secure, the IGEL-based system was nearly two and a half times cheaper than what we currently had in place," Garlock added. "When you couple that with lower maintenance costs and longer lifespan of the technology, investment in the new solution was almost a no-brainer."

Many functions. One device.

Advanced Manageability

Each of the Biltmore's IGEL thin clients came bundled with the company's complementary Remote Management Suite (RMS), easy-to-use yet extremely powerful software that allows IT support to remotely manage their IGEL thin clients, keeping support costs to a minimum. RMS allows Garlock's team to centrally and efficiently manage its thin clients, including all of the hardware and software settings, with the point and click of a mouse.

"We've found that the new system is a huge time-saver for our IT team," Garlock praised. "If any problems arise, we can fix things immediately without having to actually go to the shops and restaurants located around our vast hotel." RMS takes efficiency one step further by allowing organizations to quickly make changes to many thin clients at once using grouping and profiles, and automatically setting up thin clients with the right profile when they first attach to the network. "The ease of managing the IGEL thin clients has allowed our support team to work faster and more efficiently, enabling us to better service our employees and ultimately the hotel's guests."

Superior Customer Service

"The technology itself is excellent, but what really won us over was the customer service," Garlock said. "Throughout the process of selecting and installing the thin clients, our IGEL team was supportive, helpful, and always quick to get back to us." Garlock was particularly impressed by IGEL's ongoing support, noting that there was no red tape to getting new or repaired hardware the few times a problem arose. "We simply had to fill out a simple online form, and the replacement equipment was shipped promptly."

"We haven't had any major crashes or problems, but I am confident that if we ever did, IGEL would be there immediately to help," Garlock said. "The durability and reliability of the machines has been really impressive. Based on our experience so far, we expect them to last for a long time to come."

The solution

- IGEL devices integrated the Biltmore's touchscreen, credit card enabled terminals with their unique and elegant environment
- Integrated solution reduces IT hardware and maintenance costs
- Ongoing customer support extends lifetime value of IGEL thin clients

Conclusion

With IGEL thin clients, the Biltmore Hotel has been able to provide its staff with easy-to-use terminals for point-of-sale transactions while protecting the credit card information of its customers. Since purchasing the thin clients last year, the IT team has continued to use IGEL to fill additional needs, implementing all-in-one IGEL Elegance thin clients and considering additional models. "We look forward to a continued relationship with IGEL," adds Garlock. "We've not only been impressed by their technology, but by the high quality of their customer service, which continues to exceed our expectations."

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