

CASE STUDY

Modified kiosk software propels Uniguest to become hotel market's leading Internet kiosk reseller

To offer hotels safe and affordable public Internet kiosks, Uniguest turned to PROVISIO's customizable kiosk software. The resulting package lets hotel chains give customers safe Internet access, putting information about in-house amenities at their fingertips.

Access to a secured self-service Internet connection is something most travelers expect from the hotels they choose. In fact, access to the Internet can be a consumer's deciding factor; it can shape the customer-service experience not only at a hotel but an airline, apartment complex, healthcare facility and other service-oriented businesses.

The problem

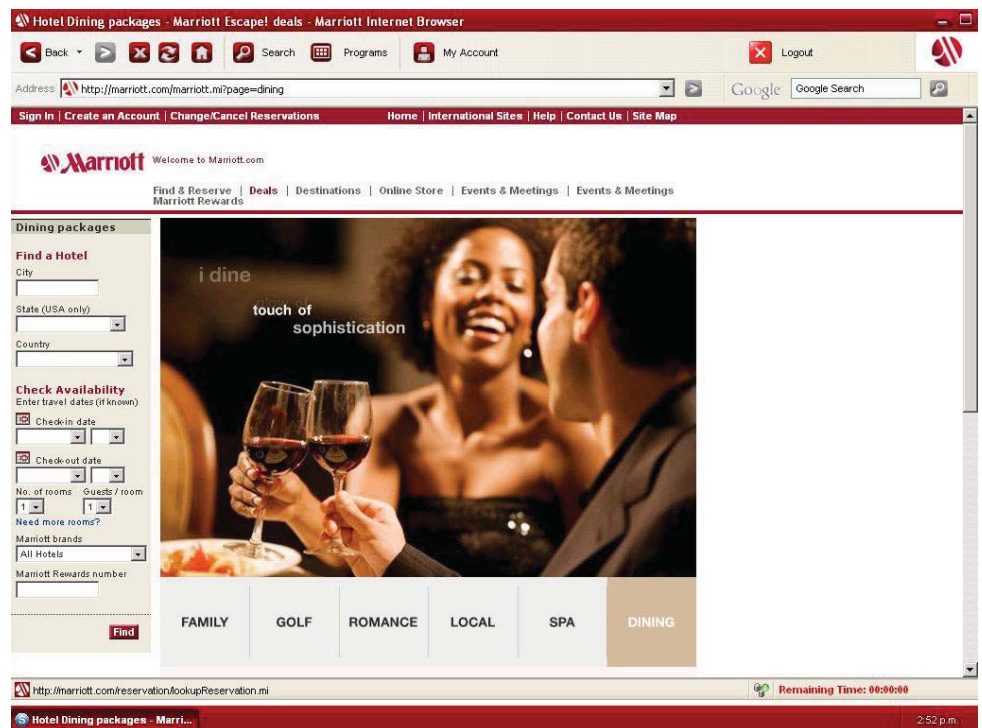
Hotel guests in particular demand Internet access that not only protects against viruses and identity theft but also prevents children from being exposed to adult content. Most hotels seek to offer secure Internet kiosks as an option that can reduce liability and provide a consistent, branded service throughout all of its properties. However, many don't have the IT staff required to offer and maintain public Internet services as a competitive, cost-effective marketing advantage.

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software engineering



Uniguest customized PROVISIO's Internet kiosk browser software for its Secured Advantage package, which is easy for hotel franchises to manage and quick for them to deploy.

Uniguest, a Nashville, Tenn.-based provider of secure public computer systems, has the solution hotels need to simplify the process.

Through a partnership with kiosk provider and software-engineering firm PROVISIO, Uniguest has implemented an Internet kiosk program for hotels that is easy to manage and quick to deploy. The off-the-shelf, easy-to-modify package also reduces a hotel's Internet liability and total cost of ownership.

The solution

Uniguest's Secured Advantage offering enhances hotels' established franchise standards for managing and securing public computers, including all customary security protection protocols, as well as PCI compliance.

The core of Uniguest's Secured Advantage package is PROVISIO's complete secure Internet kiosk browser software, which Uniguest modifies and bundles with a custom user interface, hardware, deployment services and help-desk support.

The customized user interface, provided by Uniguest, allows hotels to leverage their franchise-branding standard to further the hotel's in-house amenities as well as point users to local restaurant and entertainment information.

Uniguest is one of more than 100 resellers around the world using the software products of Chicago-based PROVISIO software products to provide solutions for customers who require front-end browsers and back-end technology to manage their kiosk terminals. Uniguest also is the largest reseller/provider of similar public computer security applications for airlines, apartment complexes and long-term health facilities.

Secured Advantage uses PROVISIO's SiteKiosk and SiteRemote software tools, which are engineered with features and functionalities easily modified by Web developers in myriad industries. Resellers with basic computer skills simply walk through the configuration wizard to choose the browser, user interface templates and layouts appropriate for the industry and kiosk application. Once installed, the visual components may be customized further by customer administrators using JavaScript.

SiteKiosk provides the numerous templates and layouts designed to fit various needs. The software allows interface customization with

commonly used buttons and features. Additional templates and skins are available for download at no additional charge. The integrated browser displays the same content as Internet Explorer, such as Web pages, images (.gif, .jpg, .png and .bmp), videos, Flash and PDF files, etc., while protecting against any manipulation by the end user.

PROVISIO's SiteRemote server application allows administrators at a single remote location to monitor, manage and configure multiple kiosks that run SiteKiosk. Users can define a job task and assign it to an individual machine, groups of machines or even all machines at once. SiteRemote is based on the Microsoft .NET Framework and runs on Windows 2003 Server in combination with the Microsoft SQL Server database.

The communication architecture provides constant communication between a SiteKiosk terminal and a SiteRemote server, even from behind firewalls, and automatically sends an alert by e-mail or SMS in the event of an error. Secure communication between client and server is established via an encrypted protocol similar to HTTP (TCP Port 8086).

PROVISIO also offers SiteCafe, allowing Internet café developers to manage credit and customer accounts stored on one or several hundred SiteKiosk client machines from one central location — whether clients are connected by a local network or the Internet.

The results

Uniguest's hotel offering also includes hardware and software from — and service for — suppliers such as Dell, Sony, HP, Microsoft, PrinterOn and others. Uniguest helps lower total cost of ownership by providing customers with a complete 24/7 help desk, computer repair team for diagnosing and fixing faulty hardware and an IT development consultant for future upgrades and modifications.

The result is a single-point, turn-key solution for hotel chains' Internet kiosk offerings.

The Uniguest software package provides several features, built into the PROVISIO browser — such as strong, regularly updated software defenses against user fraud — on which hotels can confidently base their Internet kiosk service offerings. To prevent children from exposure to adult content, an Internet content filter scans in real time and blocks Web sites that contain suspicious content. The PROVISIO filter includes

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— Shawn Thomas, founder and chief executive of Uniguest

a database of more than 600,000 forbidden domains and several thousand allowed domains. Free updates are automatic, and hotel network administrators can expand both lists to block or allow any domains they choose.

The session-based refresh feature in the bundled PROVISIO software removes all previous hotel guest user data after each session and resets the Internet kiosk to starting state without a reboot. The reset also removes temporary Internet files, usernames, passwords, cookies and any other files saved by a guest on the hard drive. It features strong antivirus and antispyware tools on a regular and automatic basis, updated to prevent known threats.

As a software reseller, Uniguest selected PROVISIO's plug-and-play software package. "It is the best on the market, providing inexpensive yet powerful technology easily modified for hotels and other industries," said Shawn Thomas, founder and chief executive of Uniguest.

"Hotel customers state that one of the biggest benefits to them, besides strong Internet kiosk security, is their ability to perform quick, easy, custom modifications for their specific properties," he added.

Thomas said his reseller partnership with PROVISIO "helped us become the leader in the hotel market, with the largest number of customers and kiosk workstations managed to date." More than 2,500 businesses currently use the Secured Advantage application on more than 3,500 workstations, with roughly 80 to 100 workstations added per month.

About the sponsor: PROVISIO is a market-leading software development company providing comprehensive turn-key software products to secure, monitor and control computers and kiosks in a public environment. PROVISIO has the largest installed base of kiosk software products worldwide.