PREVENTIVE MAINTENANCE & RAPID RESPONSE SYSTEMS

KEY COMPONENTS OF QUALITY MANAGEMENT APPLICATIONS

by Geoff Griswold

Rapid response and preventive maintenance can be stand-alone or just two parts of a broader scope of quality assurance, management systems for hotels. In the broader application, quality management consists of rapid response and guest requests, preventative maintenance, quality inspections, guest recognition, across-brand (enterprise) management and guest comment tracking/history. Each of these parts has an important role in guest relations.

Because of the prevalent role of preventative maintenance and rapid response, the balance of this discussion will focus on these applications. But be aware that many of the suppliers mentioned within this article offer some or all of the modules to the total quality management solution.

First, some clarification of terms is required. Service orders are requests generated for any staff activity, such as guestroom deliveries, extra towels and such. Work orders (usually associated with the engineering department) are a subset of service orders. From the engineering perspective there is a distinction between work orders and preventative maintenance (PM) tickets. Work orders are unplanned (reactive) events where PM is planned (proactive) events. Work orders can be generated from a variety of departments: housekeeping, front desk or food and beverage where PM work is usually scheduled by the engineering department.

All hotels have some form of work order system, but the degree of preventative maintenance systems and schedules can vary widely. Shannon Dicken, chief engineer at a hotel and conference center in Decatur, Ga., said that while his property's partially automated work order system is adequate, full automation of the PM side would be of great benefit to the facility.

The value of proper preventative maintenance cannot be overstated. A recent lodging industry white paper estimated that properly maintained equipment can last 20 percent to 50 percent longer than the same equipment that is not maintained. Not only is the useful life increased but also PM can cut downtime significantly and reduce energy consumption. Think of that increase to your bottom line.

Rapid response systems are an integral part of automated work order/PM applications. Some devices are automated answering systems based on PC technology including intelligent voice/modem card(s) while others utilize graphic screen input.

The voice-activated systems can respond to a hotel staff caller in the language of their choice, accept a code to identify the problem or request and generate the appropriate work order. These systems are also used for generating broader service orders.

As with all automated systems, the initial setup of the main databases is critical to the proper performance of the applications. Phil Sprague, a building/energy engineer in Minneapolis, Minn., said emphasis should be placed on the importance of a complete equipment list and accompanying PM schedule.

The following is a sample of suppliers in the preventative maintenance and rapid response market. It is not intended to be all-inclusive nor is it an endorsement or recommendation of the companies mentioned below.

Is it preventive or preventative maintenance?

According to a word definition Web site [www.wordreference.com] there is no such word as preventative, but the American Heritage dictionary states that the two words are interchangeable.

Perhaps the Web site needs an upgrade.

Seattle-based **Diversified Computer Corporation** (www.guestware.com) offers GuestWare, a customer relationship management (CRM) product containing rapid response and rooms maintenance modules. GuestWare's rapid response allows hotel staff to enter guest requests in less time than it takes to write them down. This is achieved through customized "hot buttons" and drill-down menus to log the request rapidly. A status screen classifies calls as new or dispatched thus enhancing follow-up procedures. The system provides graphs for response time analysis and goals, dispatch time and labor productivity. Also provided are reports on request frequency, requests by time and day, and problems by room section. Other reports include top 10 incidents, recurring problems and trend analysis.

GuestWare's newest version 3.0 includes a room preventive maintenance module and a unique SmartRunner application that dramatically improves the user interface with Motorola Timeport two-way pager with GuestWare's rapid response.

Miami-based **Management Technologies** (www.m-tech.com) supplies a complete suite of quality management products including the Espresso! family of products.

Included in Espresso! are such modules as preventative maintenance, rapid response, rooms inspections and PMS interfaces.

Leo Acosta, director of sales and marketing for Management Technologies, said the importance of a telephone-based rapid response system must be emphasized. He said the multiple language capability, ease of entering simple codes to identify work required and completed, and the ability to promptly dispatch service orders are key features.

PM-Works is an ASP product offered by Management Technologies that requires no capital investment or onsite server. The system can deliver work orders to either a Web-enabled PC, an on-property fax or they can be accessed via touch-tone phone.

Management Technologies also offers an enterprise solution called hotSOS (pronounced hot sauce), a hotel service optimization system. The product is Internet based, uses a small "client" on the local PC to enhance performance, and provides a complete quality management system for use by chains. For example, a cluster of branded hotels in the same city could pool their workforce and schedule maintenance with more efficiency as well as share their guests' preferences with each other.

Dunedin, Fla.-based **Mintek Mobile Data Solutions** (www.wintrack.com/pminfo) is the developer of WinTrack PM, a mobile maintenance solution that provides proof of all maintenance tasks and daily reporting to corporate engineering. Through a Symbol handheld device an engineer has the ability to display all assigned work for that shift. The work is divided into unscheduled and scheduled maintenance. Since the handheld is a two-way device, the engineer can update the status of each task as it is completed, including his own comments and follow-up suggestions. The handheld updates the computer system at the end of each shift. After update, the system can produce a summary report for management showing open work orders/PM along with an estimated labor time to complete them.

WinTrack PM also automates PM rounds (site inspections) and the guestroom inspection process.

New York, N.Y.-based **Metromedia Software** (www.hotelexpert.com) offers the HotelEXPERT rapid response system and related products. HotelEXPERT tracks service orders through a series of screens. The call screen accepts all requests and provides pull-down menus to select codes and other items. The pending screen displays all open calls and can be viewed by a single department or a combination of departments.

By double clicking on any row, management is provided with the details of a call. The timer screen provides an audible alarm for time-sensitive calls associated with guests and tracks the exact status of each. A query and answer screen provides management reports such as calls by duration, calls by task and average response by department.

Taking a different approach, **Servidyne Systems**, based in Atlanta, offers the Winscore computerized maintenance management system

Courtesy of Management Technologies.

The hotSOS guest call assistant puts all guest information at your fingertips.

(CMMS), which makes extensive use of bar coding technology utilizing hand-held reading devices. Bar codes are assigned to each piece of equipment or location where work is to be performed. This enables the system to identify how, when, where and by whom work was performed on each piece of equipment and the length of time it took to complete the work.

GuestWare's SmartRunner on the Motorola Timeport makes it easier to report and respond to maintenance issues.

Score is a computerized system using paper work orders in a service bureau environment. Work orders are mailed to the property each month and returned for input into the central system.

While each supplier mentioned here offers products to address preventative maintenance and some offer automated rapid response, there are significant differences.

• Mintek (WinTrack), stresses its strength in mobile computing.

• Servidyne (Winscore) is an engineering company offering such services as energy audits, HVAC maintenance training classes and an engineering hotline.

• Management Technologies, although evolved from an engineering background, offers a complete quality management solution.

• Diversified Computer Corporation (GuestWare) offers a complete customer relationship management system including rapid response.

• Metromedia Software (HotelEXPERT) offers quality assurance modules along with an interface to a powerful PM package.

Each hotel or chain must decide which of the above areas of expertise is most important when considering automation of PM and rapid response. Some

WinTrack PM users scan a bar code as a part of their daily rounds. Once scanned, users are prompted to take action or capture readings before moving to the next part of their rounds.

entities may require additional engineering expertise while others may desire a complete quality management solution.

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