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THE POSSIBILITIES ARE INFINITE

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Susan Thomas – ITdirector, Premier Travel Inn

SUMMARY OF KEY FACTS

Organisation
Whitbread - Premier Travel Inn

Overview of the project
In July 2004, Whitbread acquired hotel group Premier Lodge and merged the company with its own chain, Travel Inn, to create Premier Travel Inn (PTI). Whitbread chose Fujitsu to help ensure that business critical systems, such as those fundamental to reservation, management and corporate needs, were integrated effectively across the new estate.

Services delivered
Following the agreement of the merger Fujitsu implemented new integrated IT systems in the hotels. Including:

- Network communications installation
- Procurement and installation of hardware and systems
- Configuration of Premier Travel Inn applications and systems

Benefits
- New merged hotel chain was able to trade at the planned timed
- Successful implementation ensured no hotels had to close due to system failure
- Close partnership enabled Fujitsu and Whitbread teams to adapt and respond as the merger progressed

Customer's Challenge

In July 2004, Whitbread acquired hotel group Premier Lodge from The Spirit Group and merged the company with its own chain, Travel Inn, to create Premier Travel Inn, the UK's leading value hotel company. With the 141 Premier Lodge hotels, the newly formed company encompassed 457 hotels, with a combined 28,000 rooms.

Operating in the highly competitive industry of value hotels, Whitbread knew that bookings had to be maintained throughout the merger process and it would be essential to have the critical IT systems, used for reservations and management, successfully integrated in order to avoid site disruptions due to systems failure. It was also fundamental that the hotels were able to run as normally as possible throughout the process, so a team had to be sourced that would be able to work around the needs of the individual hotels.

Susan Thomas, IT director at Premier Travel Inn, says: *"From the very early days of the negotiation process it was clear that IT was going to be a crucial part of the project. We needed to find a partner who we had a high level of confidence in to enable us to integrate the hotels' IT systems within a tight deadline and with minimum input from Spirit. The capabilities, scale of resources and speed of response demonstrated by Fujitsu ensured that we had a lot of trust in the team from the beginning."*

Fujitsu's Solution

Whitbread approached Fujitsu during the initial phases of the negotiation process with Spirit to develop a comprehensive and viable plan for the IT integration that would ensure each hotel to trade as a Premier Travel Inn on the day it was converted. Fujitsu provided strategic information and analysis that allowed Whitbread to demonstrate how the project could be successfully completed in the six month time frame.

Due to the successful relationship developed during the planning stages of the acquisition, Fujitsu was chosen by Premier Travel Inn to provide the engineering services to integrate and implement the new systems in the hotels.

Susan Thomas comments: *"We were working to very tight deadlines and needed to develop a flexible and fast moving approach to the project in order to complete the integration in time. From the beginning I relied on and trusted the approach and decisions the Fujitsu team was taking on the project, which makes a refreshing change. The partnership became so strong that the Fujitsu team felt more like a critical part of the business rather than a supplier.*

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"The size, complexity and timescales of the project meant that there would almost certainly be issues arising. However, Fujitsu's ability to learn from any concerns we had and respond quickly, meant that the project was able to progress within the tight deadlines we had to work to."

To ensure all the hotels in the new chain were completely integrated, Fujitsu installed new network connections so all the systems and applications worked together. The team also sourced and installed new hardware in all the hotels, including PC's and printers for front and back of house. The existing equipment was configured to ensure it worked with the new systems and applications for reservations and the management of the hotels.

During the integration process Fujitsu was able to work around the business needs of the hotels. Susan Thomas comments: *"Due to complexities of hotel management we were only able to carry out installations in the hotels for two days a week, which does not fit with normal engineering schedules. Fujitsu's flexible approach ensured that we were able to work around this, and at the height of the project we were converting 50 hotels per week to the new brand, including integrating the IT systems."*

One of the most critical parts of the project was to ensure that by the November deadline the back-of-house and reservation systems of Premier Lodge had no reliance on its parent company, The Spirit Group. This took three months and involved the implementation of a separate wide area network to ensure the systems were connected with Whitbread's central IT infrastructure.

Whitbread uses enterprise resource planning software to run its group-wide human resources, payroll, finance and purchasing systems, so these had to be installed in the new hotels.

Benefits to our Customer
The whole programme was delivered on time and on budget. The close partnership developed between Premier Travel Inn and Fujitsu ensured the merger of the two hotel chains took place successfully and all hotels were able to continue trading with no site disruption due to system failure.

Following the integration of the hotels, there has been an increase in hotel occupancy rates, improved efficiency, and lower IT costs. Reservations made through the combined companies' newly-branded website were up significantly within a few days of transferring the reservations systems to Premier Travel Inn.

Our Expertise
Fujitsu Services is one of the leading IT services companies in Europe, Middle East and Africa. It has an annual turnover of £1.99 billion, (2.86 billion) employs 15,200 people and operates in over 20 countries. It designs, builds and operates IT systems and services for customers in the financial services, telecom, retail, utilities and government markets. Its core strength is the delivery of IT infrastructure management and outsourcing across desktop, networking and data centre environments, together with a full range of related services, from infrastructure consulting through integration and deployment.

Headquartered in London, Fujitsu Services is the European-centred IT services arm of the Fujitsu Group. The Fujitsu Group is a US$44.5 billion (34 billion) leader in the provision of IT systems and services for the global marketplace.

For further information contact:
Nikki Cope / Sarah Townsend
McKenna Townsend PR
Tel: + 44 (0) 1425 472330
Email: nikki@mckennatownsendpr.com

Graham Goulden
Fujitsu Services
Tel: + 44 (0) 1753 604736
Email: graham.goulden@uk.fujitsu.com

ASK FUJITSU
Contact us on +44 (0) 870 242 7998 or
askfujitsu@uk.fujitsu.com or visit uk.fujitsu.com