

## Check-In Technology Helps Hard Rock Hotel and Casino Biloxi Win Big

**NEXTEP SYSTEMS** provided kiosks to the popular hotel and gaming destination to speed check-in and improve the customer experience.

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### The players

**NEXTEP SYSTEMS**, based in Troy, Mich., is a leading provider of self-service solutions for restaurants, casinos, airports, hotels, stadiums, arenas, delicatessens and other high-volume food-service and hospitality venues. NEXTEP's core business revolves around self-service kiosks, online ordering and digital signage.

**Hard Rock Hotel and Casino Biloxi**, located on the Gulf Coast in Biloxi, Miss., is owned and operated by Premier Entertainment Biloxi LLC. The property features a Hard Rock Casino with 1,200 slot machines, 50 table games and a poker room. The 12-story hotel offers 318 rooms and suites, a fitness center, a unique beach pool with underwater music features, five restaurants and a lounge. The property also features The Rock Spa, an Aveda Concept Spa and Hard Rock Live, a concert and entertainment venue that can accommodate more than 1,800 guests.

### The challenge

Hard Rock officials noticed that on days when the hotel was completely booked, large numbers of hotel guests arrived at nearly the same time. The resulting

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backlog at the hotel's front desk was a situation officials wanted to alleviate.

"We wanted to give our guests another option," said Rob Weir, director of technology for Hard Rock Hotel and Casino Biloxi.

The Hard Rock Hotel and Casino had already experienced the benefits of self-service kiosks in conjunction with its Players Club cards. Guests at the casino can swipe their cards at kiosks to check their comp balances, print coupons for perks such as a free buffet and automatically enter promotions and drawings.

Because of the success of the Players Club kiosks, a self-service check-in kiosk seemed like a logical step. Weir had his doubts, however.

"I had tried check-in kiosks years ago at another company and I think it was just before its time," he said. "If you made your

reservation using a coupon you couldn't check in using the system, and it was just very difficult to use."

### The solution

Weir was visiting the Global Gaming Expo in Las Vegas in November 2009 when he ran into officials from NEXTEP SYSTEMS. The company unveiled its new self check-in/check-out solution for hotels at the show.

"I was really impressed with it," Weir said. "It is very user friendly, easy to use and it is very flexible."

NEXTEP SYSTEM's hotel solution was a natural extension of the company's experience in other segments of the hospitality vertical, says NEXTEP president and co-founder Tommy Woycik.

"Our experience providing self-order solutions to casinos across North America made hotel self check-in a natural 'next step' for us," he said. "After all, most of our casino customers have adjoining hotel operations and NEXTEP has already earned a leadership position in hospitality venues."

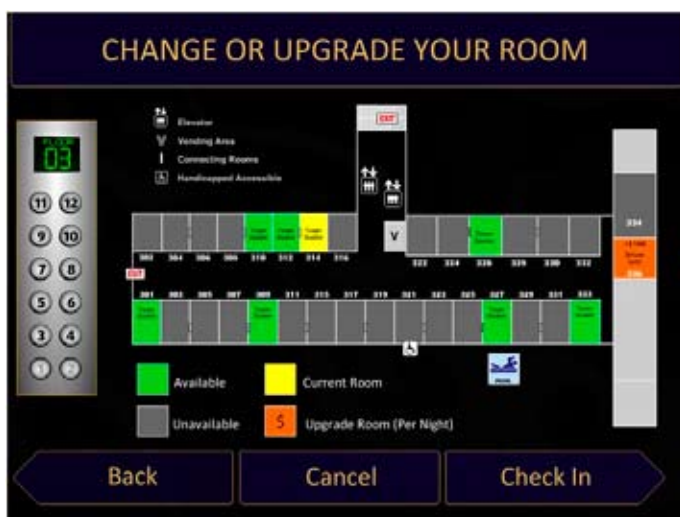
NEXTEP's experience in the gaming and hospitality markets meant they had already developed and tested interfaces to the leading point-of-sale and property management systems. The check-in process and graphics simply had to be tailored to Hard Rock's brand.

Teams from the Hard Rock and NEXTEP worked to adapt the kiosk to the hotel's needs.

"We looked at it and made some recommendations on some things we



The user-friendly interface on NEXTEP's self-service kiosk allowed hotel guests to easily check in and check out, saving time and improving the customer experience.



The kiosk allows guests to see a map where their rooms are located, change or upgrade their rooms via the touchscreen display and change their credit card information for billing purposes.

wanted to see and some additional functionality," Weir said. "They listened to all of our concerns and made the necessary changes. From our perspective the development process was pretty smooth."

The Hard Rock Hotel and Casino went live with two kiosks in early April, positioning them near the front desk where they could be seen by guests entering the lobby. For

the first few days, hotel staff encouraged guests waiting in line to try the new kiosks.

When a guest swipes his credit card at the kiosk, the screen pulls up the reservation and displays a map of the floor where the room is located, including the room floor plan and the location of amenities such as the pool and the elevator. Guests are offered the opportunity to change or upgrade their rooms via the touchscreen display and change their credit card information for billing purposes.

“So, for example, if we have a guest who is handicapped, they may want to be in a room closer to the elevator,” Weir said. “They have complete control over that.”

Guests are then asked how many keys they want, and the kiosk encodes and dispenses the requested number.

If a guest should arrive early, the kiosk offers the opportunity to enter either an e-mail address or a cell phone number.

“They can go have lunch, see a show or whatever they choose while they are waiting,” Weir said. “Then, when the room is ready, they will automatically receive an e-mail or text message.”

When guests are ready to depart, they can check out and settle their accounts at the kiosk. If they are headed to the airport, they can use the kiosk to check in for their flights and print boarding passes.

“Check-in and check-out usage obviously peak at very different times. Providing check-out and boarding pass capabilities on each kiosk results in additional benefits for travelers and better ROI for Hard Rock,” said Woycik.

### The results

Although the check-in kiosks have only been online for a few weeks, guests already seem to be pleased with the devices, Weir says.

“We have heard from guests and so far the ones who use it say they love it,” he said. “It sure beats standing in line. In my opinion, it’s easier to use than an ATM.”

The company is considering adding additional functions to the devices. Ideas include a “virtual concierge” feature that would allow a guest to enter the name of a restaurant or other attraction and have the kiosk print out directions.

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— Rob Weir, director of technology, Hard Rock Hotel and Casino Biloxi

“NEXTEP’s remote management capabilities allow customers to add functionality over time without significant additional expense. While everyone seems pleased with the solution today, it will be even better a year from now,” Woycik said.

Officials from other Hard Rock complexes are also watching the project, Weir says. The parent company operates a total of six hotel and casino complexes and seven freestanding hotels around the world.

“We’ve also have had a lot of interest from our competitors,” Weir said. “We had some people from other hotels come in to take pictures of the kiosks.”

Weir was extremely satisfied with the company's partnership with NEXTEP SYSTEMS, he says. When Hard Rock officials requested some last-minute additions to the features of the kiosk, NEXTEP was able to handle the request with ease.

"They were extremely flexible throughout the process," Weir said. "They've been great to work with."

***About the sponsor:** NEXTEP SYSTEMS, based in Troy, Mich., is a leading provider of self-service solutions for restaurants, casinos, airports, hotels, stadiums, arenas, delicatessens and other high-volume food-service and hospitality venues. NEXTEP's core business revolves around self-service kiosks, online ordering and digital signage.*