

Self-service payments speed lines at Miss. casino

With a self-service split-tender application developed by NEXTEP, IP Casino Resort Spa improved patron experience, cut expenses and reduced wait times for patrons at the food and beverage line.

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In Fall 2007, IP Casino Resort Spa in Biloxi, Miss., invested in six Casino Express kiosks to improve its payment options, decrease the amount of time its patrons had to wait in line and increase efficiency among wait staff and food-service cashiers.

Developed by Troy, Mich.-based NEXTEP SYSTEMS, the Casino Express is a touchscreen self-service ordering system that allows IP's customers to order and pay for their own food and beverages at the Back Bay Buffet. And the key to the solution's success, said food and beverage director Kurt Lind, is its split-tender feature — which allows customers to pay for their purchases with cash, credit, debit, a room charge or an IP Rewards card.

Self-service ordering systems offer customers a variety of ways to pay.

The problem

“A lot of our players have player cards, whether they get points for their play or they simply have, let's say, X amount of money on their cards. So they need to have the ability to pay for their orders with two forms of payment,” Lind said. “If they had \$25 in cash and wanted to put the rest on a credit card, we wanted to offer the option. And finding a kiosk that offers split payment was not easy.”

It goes without saying that casinos want to rely on self-service ordering to improve the



efficiency of food-ordering. After all, the less time the patron spends in the food line, the more time he spends on the casino floor dropping tokens into slot machines and laying bills on the blackjack table. But casinos have struggled to get the self-service component just right, said Tommy Woycik, president of NEXTEP.

“The kiosks are great, but the automation of split tender is what makes us unique,” he said. “Kiosks generally speed up the queues — the lines — but what has happened with some casinos, they’ve tried to roll out kiosks with limited payments. So the only type of payment the kiosks accept is a credit card. And when they try to limit the tender, it poses problems.”

The solution

A myriad of payment options made the difference for IP, Lind said. The ability to seamlessly integrate the kiosks with the POS was another selling point. All six of the Casino Express kiosks, which run on Microsoft Windows, easily integrated with IP’s MICROS 9700 POS System.

“Now we can run as many as 400 people per hour because we have significantly cut the amount of time people wait in line,” Lind said. “It’s also labor-saving.”

Lind says the casino has cut the number of cashiers it uses during peak hours from five to three, and the expectation is to reduce those three cashiers to two.

“Split tender is what made this solution successful,” he said. “I looked at a queuing company that dealt with issuing driver’s licenses before I went to NEXTEP. They were good at queuing people, but they weren’t good at getting the transaction. With that system, they would issue a ticket, and that was not as effective as this type of system.”

The other piece that made NEXTEP stand out? The NEXTEP solution was up and running and ready to roll out.

“We have special split-tender system that we have designed for all of our deployments, not just for casino systems,” Woycik said. “Because it’s a standard feature, we can roll out our kiosks right away, and that’s something that IP Casino appreciated.”

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For the casino environment, this solution proved successful, but it's not for every environment, Lind admitted. Fine dining or casual dining would not make a lot of sense for the self-service split-tender options offered by the Casino Express kiosk. But for a buffet, it's perfect — and it's an application IP plans to use elsewhere within its facility.

“We are looking at putting these kiosks in our sports lounge at each table,” Lind said. “The customers would come in and place their own order and then have a food runner run the food out. We're just looking at it right now, but it is something we are reviewing closely. If we all agree, it could be something we have implemented by the end of this year.”

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