
SYSTEM SELECTION

When selecting a new property management system (PMS) for a hotel, the leadership should be very thoughtful about its selection. Given the investment in dollars, training, and reliance on it, the PMS needs to be able to meet many of the hotel's needs.

For the Pacific Rim Bangkok Hotel, it is important that they select a system that will be reliable and will connect to the already established reservation and customer information systems to keep room vacancies and other data in sync at a moment's notice. Selecting a new PMS should fit as seamlessly as possible into the currently running operations already.

SIDE NOTE: I WORK AT DISNEY'S POP CENTURY RESORT AT THE FRONT DESK. I CHECK IN GUESTS AND I WORK IN THE BACK-OFFICE OPERATIONS WHERE I MANAGE THE ARRIVALS FOR THE DAY. IT IS A COMPLEX TASK, SO I'M DRAWING A LOT OF MY EXPERIENCE OF WHAT MAKES A GOOD SYSTEM FROM THAT. I ALSO WORK IN DATABASE / APP DEVELOPMENT. SO, I GET THE PAIN OF HAVING TO DEAL WITH SYNCING DATA.

MEMBERS OF THE PMS SELECTION TEAM

Generally, anyone who touches rooms or guest information should be part of the selection team. This includes the obvious front desk and operations staff, but also would include housekeeping, food and beverage, and engineering departments.

The food and beverage department needs access to the system to allow for charges and adjustments to be made to any guest room. While they do not need access to customer information such as traveling party and address, their systems need to be able to post a charge or a credit back to the room. The room would have a credit card or dining plan credits attached, and F & B needs to be able to reach those.

Engineering and Housekeeping need to be able to update the status of rooms so that the front desk or the artificial intelligence or some central reservation system knows the exact moment a room is ready. These departments are in charge of the readiness of the room; if a shower door is broken, housekeeping needs to stop the room from being given to the next guest, and engineering needs to 'punch' the room as 'vacant clean' so that housekeeping can get back into the room for a touch up and then inspection.

STEPS IN SELECTING THE PMS

The above stakeholders should gather and walk through the steps that helps them find the best PMS. Stakeholders first must decide on their organizational needs. I'd suggest they describe it in narrative form, describing the purpose of their hotel, what goals does each department have, and how can technology help. In the narrative the team can concretely describe the features they need.

Second, they review their current systems to see if these already meet the goals and objectives. This should include the features of the PMS as well as the current hardware, current training investment, and people with expertise on the current system.

Third, defining the budget is useful. Our book suggests that this could limit the discussion if done at this stage, and I can see the point. Ultimately if the PMS organizes their operations so that people are in ready rooms faster, there's no overselling, and revenue increases, the PMS is worth whatever investment.

Fourth, the team will write up a Request for Proposal

Next, the team selects one or two to demo and let their current operations experts (from all departments) play around with the options to see which one comes the closest to fulfilling the narrative they described.

Finally, they do the implementation. Whatever hardware is needed for the software is purchased or upgraded. Training happens, and people start using it.

PMS FUNCTIONS

The Pacific Rim Hotel needs the following to make sure all flows smoothly in their operation.

1. The hotel needs a cloud-based system. Having to replace a hard drive that fails occasionally is just not worth it. On-Prem systems are outdated and provide fewer backup strategies. Cloud based systems also give every work terminal and mobile device access to the system.
2. They need to be able to connect back to the main Opera reservation system, customer information system, and other corporate software.
3. Operational folks need to deal with assigning guests' rooms, moving guests for requests or other needs, adjusting lengths of stay, close rooms or put on out of inventory, see the status of rooms, and all other operational aspects. They'd also need to be able to create a reservation for walk-in guests.
4. Front desk folks need to be able to mark a guest has arrived, to access their information, and check in a guest. Front desk folks should be able to enter requests / needs and assign a room to their guest.
5. Housekeeping needs to status rooms.
6. Engineering needs to be able to stop rooms for engineering needs if necessary.
7. Rooms Manager needs reports to see all the KPIs they are interested in seeing.
8. Food and Beverage needs to post charges to the room. This usually is handled via their POS and the guest's key card or other device, such as a Magic Band. Since this department uses the Micros 8700 POS, they need their two systems to connect, sending charges from the POS to the room.

EVALUATION CRITERIA AND METHOD

The criteria I'd use is the following. I'd use a weighted evaluation method in this approach as some of the criteria have greater implications in Pacific Rim's operations.

Criteria	Description	Weight
Fit for the organization	Does the PMS handle the Pacific Rim's guests, the rooms, the food and beverage, housekeeping, and engineering needs?	25%
Integration capability	Is the PMS able to keep in sync with other corporate systems?	25%
Ease of Use	Will experts in each department adapt to this easily? Will new employees understand how to use it.	20%
Training, Documentation, Support	Is there quality training provided by the vendor? Is there thorough documentation? How fast can we get support from the vendor?	10%
Vendor Reliability	Has the vendor been around awhile? What other hotels are using the system? Do they appear to be growing?	10%
Scalability	Can the system easily scale in case new properties are added?	5%
Cost	Is the cost justifiable?	5%

RECOMMENDED PMS

OPTIONS

Preno: <https://prenohq.com/>

Mews: <https://www.mews.com/en>

Cloudbeds: <https://www.cloudbeds.com/>

HOW TO CHOOSE

I would lead the stakeholders in the selection team to review each option. We would do the following:

1. Divide the group into three teams.
2. Each team focuses on one of the options. They read through the site, review videos.
3. Work with the vendor to get each team a demo of the service.
4. Give each team 2 weeks to spend time in their demos.
5. Meet back together at the end of the demo session and review each team's thoughts. Write up the feature set, ease of use, and other selection criteria. List details each member discovered.
6. Eliminate one of the options.
7. Give everyone a demo for each of the two options. Give them 2 more weeks.
8. At the end of the two weeks, let the team decide which one we'll go with.