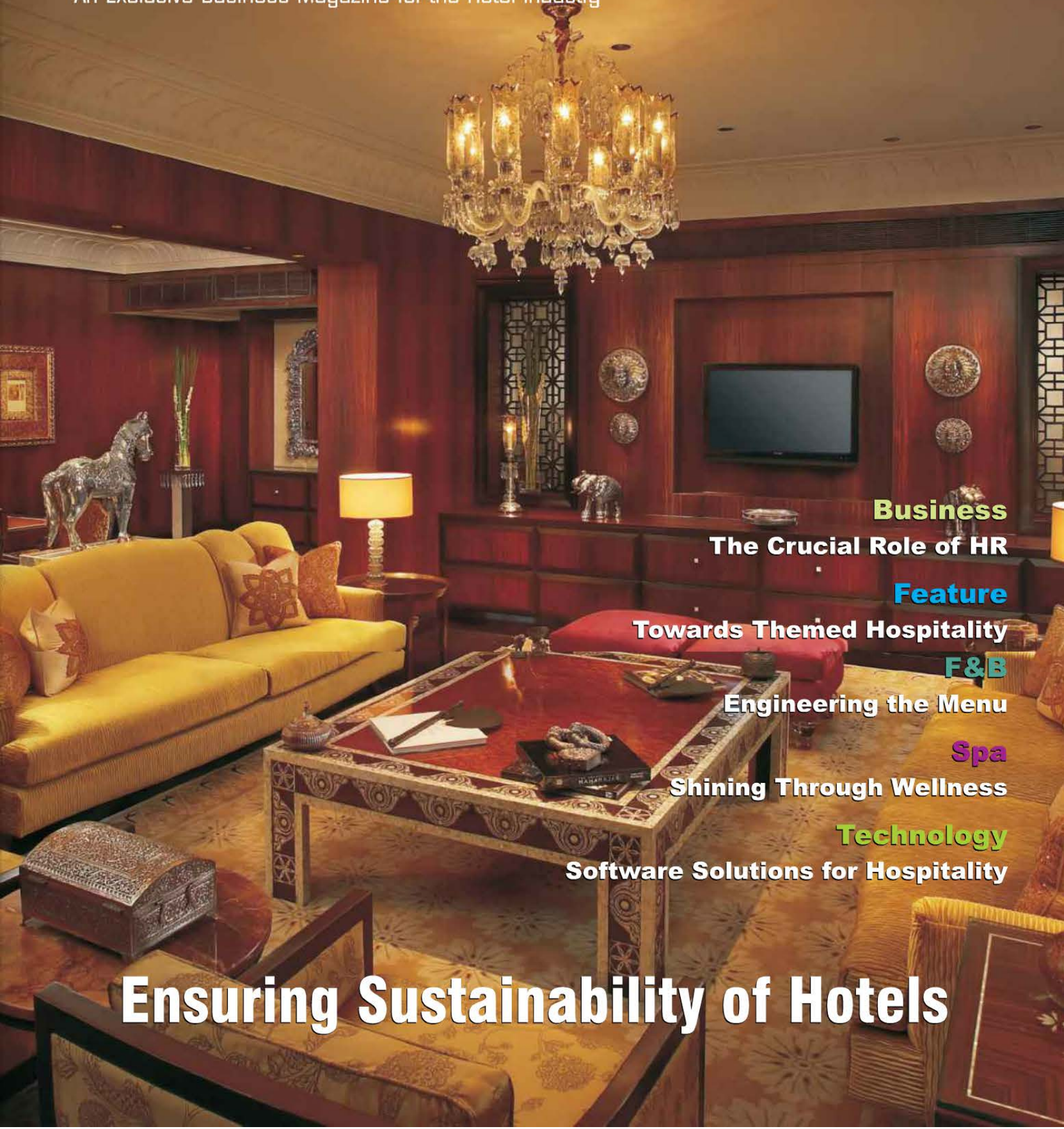


HOTEL

Business Review

An Exclusive Business Magazine for the Hotel Industry



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Ensuring Sustainability of Hotels

Sophisticated Software Solutions for Hospitality



Like numerous other industries, hospitality industry of post-modern times also needs to bank heavily on a slew of software technology solutions to automate and streamline hotel operations, which include optimising or at least systematising the use of manpower, leveraging multiple distribution channels to grow occupancy, and eventually increasing the profitability of a property.

Bangalore-based IDS Next Business Solutions Pvt. Ltd. is one of the reputed names which have been technologically facilitating hotels across the globe. IDS Next's hospitality technology solutions cater to the needs of hotels across various market segments, ranging from large hotel chains and independent hotels, to resorts, restaurants and clubs. **Swarnendu Biswas** from Hotel Business Review spoke to **Binu Mathews, CEO of IDS Next Business Solutions** about various aspects of hospitality technology solutions offered by their company. Below are the excerpts of the interview:

Kindly explain briefly how IDS Next's software solutions facilitate the workings of the hospitality industry. Besides facilitating online reservations, in which other areas do your company's software solutions help towards the functioning of the hotels? Explain briefly one such functioning

IDS Next is a pioneer in the field of hospitality technology in the Indian hospitality industry. We offer a host of ERPs (Enterprise Resource Planning) designed to suit the needs of hotels, depending on their size and requirement.

We do not believe in a 'one size fits all' philosophy; and have carefully crafted several ERPs to address each and every segment of the hotel industry. Right from small hotels or lodges offering limited

services to large star hotels (both stand-alone and chains), we offer different ERPs keeping in mind their niche requirements. We also empower resorts, clubs and F&B outlets with our software solutions.

Our ERPs have been designed to automate operations in every department of a hotel be it front office, finance, accounts receivables, point-of-sale, inventory, maintenance, banquets and conferences, sales and marketing, HR & payrolls, F&B costing and more. Our FortuneNEXT 6i Suite of Enterprise class solutions are highly integrated and run on a single database.

We help hotels to free their staff from doing unproductive data entry and get them to spend more time productively engaging with guests. Hotel operations

are mission critical and we offer 24/7 technical support to ensure that the large number of hotels using our software are up and running at all times.

Kindly throw some light on your partnership with RezNext

IDS Next also has a unique partnership with RezNext. Through a smart and intuitive dashboard called ReD, the IDS Next hotel ERP is empowered to assist hotels to manage a host of distribution channels, online reputation and revenue and also access a business intelligence tool. Through the RezNext interface, hotels can get connected to a host of traditional OTAs (online travel agents) and new-age channels so that hotels can beat the competition, reach a larger number of

potential guests and maximise revenues.

The partnership between IDS Next and RezNext offers online reputation management tool which helps hotels to track what is being mentioned about them by guests on various review sites and also enables the hotel management to respond quickly and responsibly. Similarly, the revenue management solution helps hotels to understand guest behaviour patterns and market trends, and develop strong pricing strategy to improve profitability.

Throw some light on PAX. In what ways (in terms of efficiency, economics, etc.) it is suited specifically to the needs of the small budget hotels? Kindly explain in detail

With PAX, IDS Next has entered the sub-three star hotel category. PAX has been designed for the specific needs of small hotels, budget hotels and limited service properties. IDS Next launched PAX and ventured into the sub-three star hotel category simply because we had a chorus of demand for quality software for these hotels' niche needs.

PAX is unique for its ease of use,

compactness and cost-effectiveness. Its four modules, namely Front Office, Point of Sale, Accounts Receivable and Telephone Management are easy to deploy. PAX also has host of interfaces like Tally, Door Lock, EPABX, Document Scanner, Webcam and Plutus Online Credit Card Settlement.

The advantage of PAX is that customers can automatically download product updates through our online patch management. Another feature that makes PAX a unique offering for small hotels is its real-time two-way interface to online room distribution channels like web booking engine, mobile channel, traditional online travel agents, and non-traditional online channels through the Rexplite connect.

The Rexplite dashboard can also be



accessed through a large screen mobility device and can assist hotel owners to check the statistics related to a hotel, real-time. Hoteliers can also allot inventory to connected online channels and manage rates. Real time two-way connectivity to online channels ceases human errors and enables owners to manage their room inventory effectively and avoid turning away the guests. PAX is one of the few software solutions for budget hotels that offer this facility.

PAX has also been designed to address a host of pain points faced by

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the management of budget hotels, such as limited access to trained manpower. With PAX, hotels can go live quickly and the software can be operated by any level of the hotel staff with minimal training. With PAX, hoteliers can also reduce revenue pilferage through housekeeping and inventory management. The Tally interface also provides easy accounting without manual entries. Moreover, PAX has been competitively priced so that it is affordable even to the hotelier in small towns who wishes to systematise and automate operations.

Also explain about IDS Next's some of the software solutions for large hotels/hotel chains

As a market leader, IDS Next understands that managing a large hotel or chain of hotels is a Herculean task and the hotel management needs to have in-depth and collective understanding of inventory, bookings, revenue and other aspects too. They also need to plan loyalty schemes and maintain elaborate guest history that they can use for marketing. Keeping these needs in mind, FortuneNEXT 6i Enterprise can be easily scaled up to the requirements of large hotels and hotel chains.

With as many as 12 modules, the software's centralised data integration feature enables efficient property management to improve the hotel's performance and productivity. Additionally, FortuneNEXT 6i Enterprise is tablet ready and offers a host of drill down reporting features so that hotel management can take better and faster decisions even while on the move. Some of the key business benefits of FortuneNEXT 6i Enterprise are as below:

- Enhanced financial planning and improved operational efficiency
- Safety of guests' payment card details as the software is PA DSS Certified
- Improved transparency and accountability within the property
- Enhanced decision making capabilities
- Reduced operational cost and personalised guest services
- Effective housekeeping and concierge management

Additionally, we have two add-on softwares that large hotels and hotel chains can adopt, namely Fortune CRX and Fortune Central Financial Reporting

System.

Fortune CRX helps hotel chains to access all reservation related data. It can be easily integrated to the FortuneNEXT 6i suite of Hotel ERP and offers a real-time end-to-end reservation system. The hotel reservation solution shows real time availability of accommodation, room rates, instant allocation checking for tour booking, audit trail for critical applications and more.

Reservations made through Web CRS are transferred to the Hotel ERP instantly, making reservations online and real-time with no additional manual steps. This optimises a hotel's use of manpower and minimises errors.

Fortune Central Financial Reporting System effectively automates entry of financial data into respective ledgers, collates vital financial information and allows a hotel's management to create multiple reports and provide insights into the hotel chain's financial details.



Have you the requisite software for checking possible credit card/debit card misuse? If yes, briefly explain on this aspect

The hospitality industry is vulnerable to data theft and hacking. The situation is extremely serious when the information stolen is financial in nature, for example a guest's credit and debit card details. Recognising this situation, IDS Next proactively sought PA DSS Certification for our Hotel ERPs. This means our software encrypts payment details of cards handed over by the guest and disposes of this information after a pre-determined period of time.

Kindly name some of the important clients of IDS Next in

India. How many offices do you have in India? Does your business have a pan-India presence across the Indian hospitality industry?

In India, we have over 2800 clients. This gives us the largest market share in the country. Some of our prominent clients are Sarovar Hotels & Resorts, ITC-Fortune Group of Hotels, Royal Orchid Hotels, Golden Tulip, The Pride Hotels, Keys Hotels and others. We have our headquarters and R&D center in Bangalore and have five regional offices in Mumbai, Delhi, Kolkata, Chennai and Hyderabad. IDS Next has a pan-India presence. Our software can be found in 300 cities and towns across the country.

Besides India, in which other countries does IDS Next provide its software solutions? Do you have office/offices abroad?

Apart from India, we have presence in 40 countries. We have presence in South-East Asia, Oceania, Sri Lanka & Maldives, Middle-East, and Africa. We also have dedicated sales and support offices in Sri Lanka, Middle-East, and Africa.

How do you gauge the future for software solutions in the Indian hospitality industry of today, and what are your reasons behind your opinion?

The hospitality industry of India has been slow to adopt technology, but that phase is now over. Now, with Internet-savvy guests, who look up and book rooms online, browse for last-minute deals, and regularly discuss their travel plans on social networking sites, hotels, whether big or small, have no choice but to follow their guests.

Discerning guests are also becoming demanding when it comes to service and they expect quality. Nowadays in this IT age, few hotels can manage to meet their guests' expectations and keep them happy without information technology to bolster their efforts.

Competition is also growing and now perhaps no hotelier can afford to isolate himself/herself from software technology and still garner high profits by relying exclusively on expensive manpower. With all these aspects in mind, I think the role of software solutions in the Indian hospitality industry is both crucial, and its future being very bright. ■