

## More Than Just Video Is On Demand

Technology shifts guest services from phones to screens.

By Adam Kirby, Associate Editor -- Hotels, 6/1/2008

As perhaps further evidence that the guestroom phone will become a dinosaur sooner or later, hoteliers are excitedly implementing various systems to allow guests to request services at the click of a button in lieu of dialing 0 and speaking to a person.

The systems, which can range from simple Web sites to complex IPTV solutions, appeal to younger travelers used to doing everything from ordering pizza to buying car insurance without having to interact with a human.



Among the innovators is Irving, Texas-based **Omni** Hotels, which is piloting the Orion system from GBCblue, a Micros-integrated program allowing guests to order up a slate of online systems from a dedicated Web site. Once fully live, the site—customized for each individual **Omni** and only accessible on property—will let guests request valet service, baggage retrieval, housekeeping and pretty much any other hotel service that could be requested via phone. Orion is currently being beta tested at **Omni** Mandalay Hotel in Las Colinas, Texas, and is set to be expanded to other **Omni** properties later this year.

When a guest logs on to [OmniRoomService.com](http://OmniRoomService.com) via laptop computer or other mobile device, he or she may peruse a menu of hotel services, including F&B roomservice, and place an order via the site. The site is tied into the hotel property management system, so any request is tracked and automatically placed into the guest's folio.

"It's more fun for our guests, who are accustomed to multitasking online," says Kerry Kennedy, corporate director of e-commerce. "It's click-click-click, and your order is placed. Guests find it to be a very easy interaction." The site also includes standard concierge fare, like local weather and information on the surrounding area.

In the initial Orion deployment at the Texas property, **Omni** has seen increased F&B sales—rather than guests putting down the phone, it seems the online ordering option actually has attracted an entirely new set of roomservice customers, says Lesli Reynolds, **Omni**'s vice president of operations. The increased sales may also be attributable to the ability of hotel F&B staff to update and promote daily specials, along with the presence of photos of every item on the menu—things that simply are not feasible with the traditional printed in-room menu.

Additionally, some guests say they prefer placing an order online because they can review the order to ensure its accuracy, rather than hoping the worker on the other end heard everything correctly, Reynolds says.