

IBS Software: Circus Circus Las Vegas' partner in turning adversity into opportunity

Often times you can't control the business environment you're working in. But in selecting IBS Software for Circus Circus Las Vegas' booking engine, we found a partner who was pivotal in making our quick turnaround a success.

Careme Casanova-Dapra
Director of Resort Services, Treasure Island Las Vegas





Client Overview

Circus Circus Las Vegas is one of the most iconic Las Vegas Strip properties, operating a casino resort with 3773 rooms, an approximately 124,000 square foot casino, and a range of dining and entertainment options, including the massive indoor amusement park, The Adventuredome. Circus Circus Las Vegas also operates a 170 space Recreational Vehicle Park (RV Park) located right on the Las Vegas Strip with accessibility to all the great amenities of the resort. Established in 1968 during the infancy of Las Vegas casinos, Circus Circus Las Vegas as a brand and strip property has maintained its vision to provide quality, value entertainment to its' guests.



The Context

In the fall of 2019, it was announced that MGM Resorts International would be selling Circus Circus Las Vegas to Treasure Island Hotel & Casino owner Phil Ruffin. The transition needed to be completed quickly using as much of TI's infrastructure as possible. As a provider of distribution infrastructure for both Treasure Island and for a significant portion of MGM Resorts International's portfolio of resorts, it was natural that we would be a significant part of the migration, ensuring a seamless transition to the new management of the Circus Circus Las Vegas property.

As discussions of the transition to a new entity proceeded, IBS introduced its newly minted Hospitality Internet Booking Engine (IBE) product to the management at Circus Circus Las Vegas. The value of integrated 3rd party distribution and direct sales was recognized immediately. However, one significant obstacle remained. Circus Circus Las Vegas was on a crash course to migrate the property to all new systems by the first quarter of 2020. Considering

that a new PMS instance was being deployed and all integrations had to be migrated. How could a new, sleeker booking engine also be deployed in such an aggressive timeframe?

Even as we were celebrating the success of the IBE launch at Circus Circus Las Vegas, the ground beneath the travel industry was shifting. In March, news of the COVID-19 pandemic began erupting and the impact to IBS and our partners was immediate. No hospitality company was spared as travelers cancelled their plans and their existing reservations. The booking engine was functioning but the customers using the application had all but disappeared and as the days and weeks passed and the US and the world went into lock-down IBS started looking for ways to help all our customers.

Circus Circus Las Vegas has always represented value to their customers and a sense of fun and excitement. Despite incredible room rates and all the properties' amazing efforts to make the stay experience socially distant and safe when they were able to reopen, there were just fewer people who wanted to and who could travel for a Las Vegas vacation. The property needed to find ways to make the best of a bad situation and IBS was there to help.



The Challenges

Complicated integration requirements

All the great functions and capabilities of IBS products aside, the realities of the transition of Circus Circus Las Vegas to new ownership and management were a significant obstacle to IBS delivering success to the property. The cutover would be on knives edge, with the website currently serving hundreds of thousands of potential customers, and with all the hotels own operational systems changing over a weekend!

Flexibility required to support the property

While the Circus Circus Las Vegas hotel property is fairly straightforward in the way they market and sell traditional hotel rooms, the RV Park at Circus Circus Las Vegas is significantly different. There are spaces with different configurations and sizes and there are limits to how descriptive visual representations can be. The RV Park is a unique entity which has to be thought of differently from their hotel inventory.

Extremely aggressive implementation timeline

Though planning could proceed from January of 2020, the actual implementation could not start until February and the cut over to the Demand Gateway and the new IBE had to be completed by the third week in February or the property would start impacting end customers. In the end, the entire implementation that we would normally take 2-3 months needed to be completed in 15 business days.

A shifting market and industry

During the first part of the cutover in management, the COVID-19 pandemic and its associated impact on demand for the property scrambled requirements and priorities. The company had to react to these huge changes in customer behavior and inventory availability and there was no time to lose. There were still demand for Las Vegas

vacations that needed to be met and the ability to reach those customers who were still able and willing to travel was more important than ever.

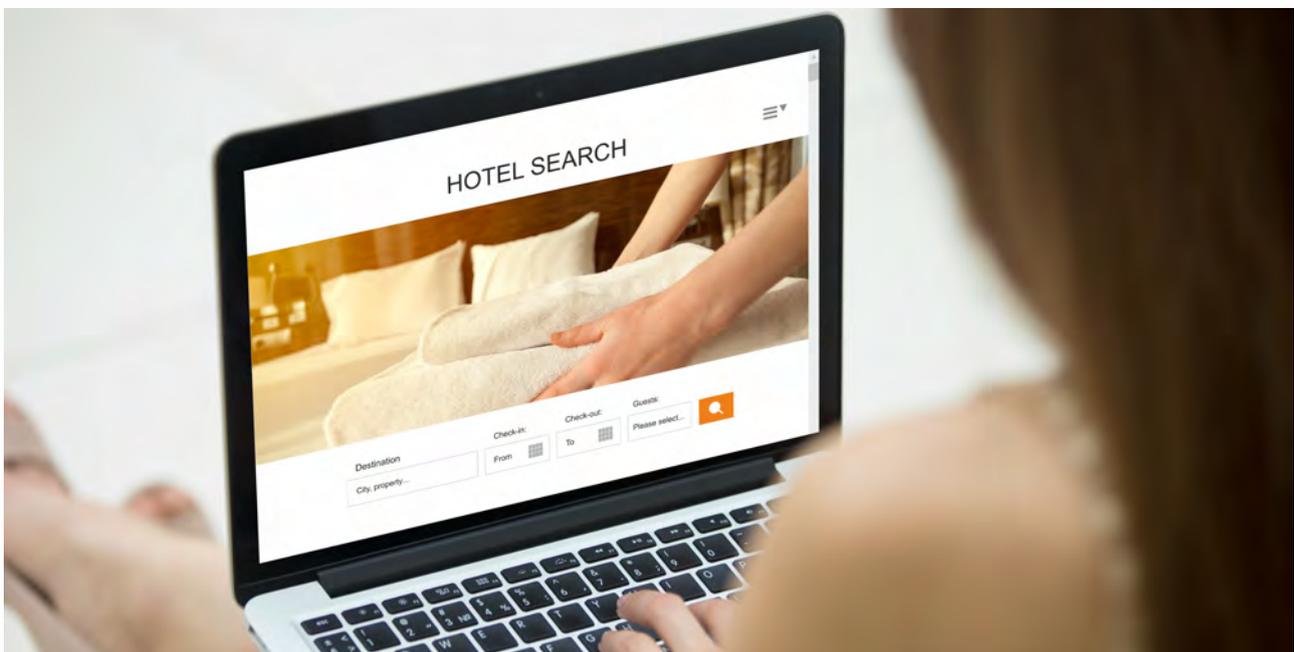


The Solution

In early 2019, IBS concluded an analysis of the market for hotel direct booking solutions and found that the current landscape of technologies was not meeting the needs of integrated resorts worldwide. The current products had limited capabilities to match the content rich hotel websites that our partners were investing millions of dollars in. They did not sell products beyond rooms or provide for complex merchandising for ancillary products. Other solutions on the market were not optimized to allow for complex A/B and multivariate testing capabilities or integration to modern digital marketing tools.

IBS' decade of experience in building IBE solutions for top hospitality companies and many decades of providing direct booking solutions to airline, cruise and tour companies allowed us to define a next generation hotel booking application that was a) mobile first and modular in design, b) built on the same infrastructure as 3rd party distribution to ensure rate parity, c) was fully integrated and seamlessly designed to match hotels branding and styling, and d) highly optimized to maximize direct bookings and conversion from the hotels website.

For a company like Circus Circus Las Vegas, the benefits were clear. Managing the booking engine using the IBS Demand Gateway as the underlying solution is a cost effective solution that requires less cost and time in terms of connecting to the PMS for rates and availability. The flexibility of the front end of the booking engine



allowed for a quick path to a higher converting solution which better matched their new website design post transition. And the integration to their existing analytic and tag management solutions offered a seamless experience for the digital marketing team.

One truly unique characteristic of the Circus Circus Las Vegas property is the on-site 170 space RV Park. This lodging option, right on the Las Vegas Strip and with access to the Circus Circus Las Vegas casino, restaurants and other amenities represented a safe option for customers with access to an RV and who wanted to still be able to travel safely with their families. The importance of this amenity had shifted due to the pandemic and so it had to become a high priority for Circus Circus Las Vegas and therefore for IBS' digital development team. There was a significant need to act quickly and get online bookings enable as soon as possible. Selling hotel rooms and selling RV spaces are essentially not the same so some changes in configuration and application features were absolutely required. IBS quickly defined what was needed and got to work on deploying this new booking capability to meet CC needs.



The Implementation

IBS' project management, development, and implementation teams, sat down with Circus Circus Las Vegas and began planning. This wasn't refueling the plane in midflight, this was REBUILDING the plane in midflight! We planned what needed to be done, trying to respect that the teams at Circus Circus Las Vegas would be heavily burdened with other critical tasks as well as switching booking engines.

Taking all the requirements and timelines that we needed to meet as one combined project team, we took a Most Viable Product (MVP) approach. The most critical requirements were implemented first, while still planning for how important but maybe not mission critical

requirements would be met post go-live. While we needed to compress timelines we had to be aware that the quality and conversion of the booking engine could not be compromised, and we allotted as many resources for testing as possible. Our focus was to meet the needs of Circus Circus Las Vegas and their customers with as little disruption as possible.

IBS Software's relatively new partnership with Amazon Web Services (AWS) was a critical part of making this rapid deployment possible. For decades our applications had been hosted in proprietary data centers and managed exclusively by our internal teams. In 2019, IBS Software embarked on a program to migrate our applications to the cloud in what became an extremely successful partnership with AWS. The ability to quickly build an automated deployment pipeline with AWS's ECS service gave the ease of rapid deployment along with the flexibility to deploy a new instances for a containerized booking engine allowed that environment to auto scale to meet Circus Circus' needs and quickly integrate with all the security and certification requirements of the new booking engine. This simply would not have been possible without this partnership being in place.

Finally, the support and implementation process did not end at the go-live. As noted, just 30 days after the initial deployment, the COVID crisis impacted Circus Circus Las Vegas and the booking engine in ways we could never have foreseen. There was a need to pivot to the RV implementation and ensure this unique accommodation option was available for online booking and that this process would meet the end users expectations just as well as the hotel room booking process did. Again, the AWS partnership was a critical part of meeting this requirement from the standpoint of quickly scaling up the environments to production support. Having the AWS team supporting us in supporting Circus Circus' needs ensured the success of this part of the project as well. Our ability to pivot to implementing the capability helped keep Circus Circus Las Vegas more relevant even as other hotel properties were closed entirely.





The Outcome

The implementation of the IBS Software IBE is the first step for Circus Circus Las Vegas in an evolving digital marketing capability that will be unique both in its ability to reach customers and in the level of automation and integration making that capability accessible for marketing organizations of all sizes.

Improved conversion

Though there is only a small data set of reservations pre COVID to draw conclusions from, it is clear from the evidence that the IBE transition at Circus Circus Las Vegas generated a significant uptick in conversion, particularly from mobile devices. This is just the baseline that we will use to continuously optimize conversion for our partner through both small UI changes and completely new functions and modules.

Greater Flexibility

IBS built the Hospitality IBE to meet the unique needs of our resort customers. The RV Park at Circus Circus Las Vegas is just one of many examples of the unique features our customers need to be able to provide distribution for

their unique properties. The flexibility to match the properties requirements as they evolve this iconic brand and change their operations over time is an asset of the IBS Software stack that all our partners can leverage to great advantage.

True Partnership

Circus Circus Las Vegas experienced both a very challenging transition and a pandemic in a short time. In order to brave these difficult times, they needed partners who could help them take advantage of their capabilities and competitive advantages. IBS' capabilities and partnerships with technology partners like Amazon positioned us well to meet our partner's needs. The flexibility of the IBS solution and the flexibility of the company to meet the properties needs is the ultimate expression of our desire to be a true solution provider to solve the challenges our hotel partners. There are many features and enhancements planned for the Circus Circus Las Vegas IBE that will help them come out of this pandemic as quickly and completely as possible.



About IBS Software

IBS Software is a leading SaaS solutions provider to the travel industry globally, managing mission-critical operations for customers in the aviation, tour & cruise and hospitality industries. IBS Software's solutions for the aviation industry cover fleet & crew operations, aircraft maintenance, passenger services, loyalty programs, staff travel and air-cargo management. IBS Software also runs a real time B2B and B2C distribution platform providing hotel room inventory, rates and availability to a global network of hospitality companies and channels. For the tour and cruise industry, IBS provides a comprehensive, customer-centric, digital platform that covers onshore, online and on-board solutions. IBS Software is a Blackstone portfolio company and operates from 15 offices across the world.

Further information can be found at <https://www.ibsplc.com>



Redefining the Future of Travel through Technology Innovation

© 2020 IBS Software | For Private Circulation only | For more information: sales-support@ibsplc.com