Smugglers' Notch

Top-Rated Ski Resort Improves Safety and Services to Guests and Improves Billing Accuracy with RFgen.

At a glance...

Industry
Ski Resort

Application
Guest Tracking
Billing Accuracy

Smugglers' Notch Resort is a year-round family vacation resort in Vermont's Green Mountains, located 30 miles east of Burlington. The resort scores at the top in SKI magazine's "Top 50 Ski Resorts" rankings and was rated in October 2007 as Number One in North America for Family Programs for the ninth year in a row. Winter means exciting skiing and snowboarding on 78 trails interconnected on three big mountains, which host northern Vermont's highest vertical of 2,610 feet and more than 1,000 acres of all terrain access. Smugglers' Notch also offers a wide variety of family-focused summer and fall programs.

The Challenge

Winter is by far the biggest season for Smugglers' Notch Resort, whose Snow Sport University offers day long ski and snowboard camps for children ages 3 to 17 of all ability levels. With over 1,000 children participating in various camp activities and locations each morning over the sprawling mountain campus, Smugglers' needed an accurate way to track and locate children for safety and notification reasons, as well as improvements in billing accuracy.

Children participating in camp events can choose which programs they want to participate in each day, which are often subject to change depending on the child's interest that morning. For example, if Johnny told Mom he'd be taking a cross-country class, but then changed his mind when he got to camp and decided he was more interested in the moguls class, Mom would be billed or credited appropriately for any cost differential, and would be able to find Johnny if she needed him. Smugglers' existing, manual process of tracking and billing caused inaccurate

or delayed billings and opened the possibility of not being able to locate a child if needed. Smugglers' wanted to automate their pen-and-paper system with an automated system that would improve accuracy. And, they wanted to implement and go live with the project before the current ski season - barely 30 days after system purchase.

The Solution

Inovity provided a turn-key mobile data collection solution for Smugglers' Notch Resort using RFgen. In order to handle the harsh environment of a Vermont winter, Inovity recommended the Motorola MC9090G condensation-resistant mobile computer. Using RFgen's Mobile Development Studio, Inovity designed and developed a mobile application for the MC9090 so lesson coordinators and instructors could follow drop-down prompts for each daily camp session, choose the class or activity in which the child was participating, then scan the child's bar coded badge to associate him or her with the event. Ten Smugglers' staff members were outfitted with devices to scan the children and activities each morning. When the instructors returned to the lodge, their devices would synch automatically when in range of the Motorola 5131 wireless LAN infrastructure, specified, configured and installed by Inovity. The application populated the data into Smugglers' existing database, where immediate and accurate billing could occur. Smugglers' elected to use the devices in store-and-forward mode initially, with plans to migrate to a real-time, point-of-activity tracking system in the future.

RFgen

Smugglers' was already using card printers to provide each child with an identification card during their stay at the resort. However, the cards were not bar coded. Through coaching from Inovity's specialists, Smugglers' added bar codes to the cards to enable accurate, on-location scanning of each child.

Despite Smugglers' tight time constraints for system installation, a member of Inovity's Professional Services team arrived on-site the weekend after Thanksgiving to install the system and train the staff before the season opened. Despite having less than one week to install the RFgen system, the WLAN and all mobile devices, the project was completed in time for Smugglers' season opening day.

The Result

The solution enabled Smugglers' to significantly improve its billing accuracy and timeliness and provide invaluable tracking capabilities for children participating in camps. Despite an impeccable safety record, Smugglers' wanted to assure parents they could locate the class or camp their children were in should the need arise. This safety consciousness gives Smugglers' Notch a competitive edge over other family resorts.

The custom application fueled by RFgen and provided by Inovity can also be expanded and developed for future areas of interest to Smugglers', such as equipment management, inventory management or automated reorder points. Additionally, the power and scalability of the RFgen solution will allow Smugglers' Notch to deploy it on rugged, WAN (Wide Area Network)-enabled devices that communicate over AT&T, Sprint or Verizon cellular networks. This wireless, wide-area system will enable real-time ommunication with field devices, allowing Smugglers' Notch to track children on the mountain or in activity classes, immediately and on-demand.

An RFgen-certified partner and specialty IT systems integrator, Inovity designs and delivers innovative solutions that connect and relay crucial business information between all points of operational activity, in real time. By emphasizing workforce mobility, ERP data mobilization and business process intelligence, Inovity provides automated technology solutions for manufacturing, distribution, healthcare, field service and retail environments.

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