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Classic hotel meets modern business traveller needs with EFI™ Self-Serve technology

Challenge:

With its central downtown location, General Manager Halley Karas says the hotel has a very strong base of business clients during the week. "Business travellers are a growing segment of our client base," says Karas. "There are a lot of corporate headquarters in downtown Columbus and our biggest accounts are consulting firms that do work for those companies."

As a 188-year-old landmark hotel in downtown Columbus, "This is not like any Westin you'll ever see anywhere else," explains Karas. But, in addition to the elegance of soaring ceilings, marble floors, stained glass, and spacious accommodations, the Westin Columbus needs to provide the business services guests need and want.

The Westin Columbus is a franchise property owned by Ultima Hospitality and part of the Westin Franchise agreement requires the hotel to have a printing solution that allows guests to print from their rooms. An older desktop printer in the business center lacked some features and was lagging behind the expectations of today's mobile professionals.

Solution:

The Westin Columbus recently renovated its lobby and meeting spaces, and is in the process of upgrading the business center, too. The technology solutions company that provides printers and copiers to the hotel, recommended a new print system for the business center.

"About 9 months ago, we installed an EFI M500 Self-Serve Copy and Print system, along with a new printer, that people are pretty happy with. It's a big,

"Printing payments are seamless for us with the EFI M500. They just automatically go into our account through our guests' credit cards."

HALLEY KARAS, GENERAL MANAGER, WESTIN COLUMBUS

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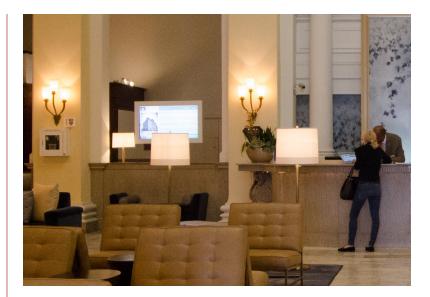
Known as The Great Southern Hotel since its grand beginnings in 1897, The Westin Columbus is the city's most renowned hotel and offers guests gracious service and luxurious surroundings. The hotel can accommodate virtually any meeting or event with over 12,000 square feet of recently renovated meeting space and breakout rooms, as well as an executive boardroom.

Situated in the heart of the downtown Columbus business district, this Ohio hotel is within walking distance of the Greater Columbus Convention Center. It also offers easy access to the Ohio Statehouse, Nationwide Arena and the Arena District, the Brewery District, German Village, Ohio's Center of Science and Industry, and the Short North Arts District.

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multifunction color printer and copier that will do more than the old desktop printer we used to have."

In the business center, the EFI M500 screen displays the Westin logo, welcoming guests to begin their copy and print jobs. The EFI M500 allows users to print from USB drives, or popular cloud services such as Dropbox, Google Drive™, Box, or Microsoft OneDrive.

Guests also have the option of sending print requests directly to the M500 from their rooms or anywhere else by emailing their documents to EFI's PrintMe® Cloud service and then picking them up securely at the M500-equipped printer. The system charges their credit cards and emails receipts.

The EFI AdminCentral cloud-based solution also provides an intuitive and easy-to-use centralized system for configuration, management, and system monitoring of the M500 stations, so the hotel has an easier time supporting guests' printing needs, and Ultima Hospitality's IT staff have an easier time maintaining the system.

Results:

According to Karas, most guests expect major brand hotels to have business services, but the quality of those services can be a differentiator. For example, Starwood – the parent chain to Westin Hotels – drives repeat business with an exceptional loyalty program that gives much-appreciated perks to frequent guests, most of whom are business travellers.

In the 10 years she's been in the hotel business, Karas has seen many other upgrades. For example, the business center printers didn't do any finishing or print in color. Guests who needed these services would have to go outside the hotel or ask the front desk clerk to do it. But the Westin Columbus now offers guests a top-of-the-line printing and copying experience that can handle just about anything they need.

And, by offering a better print experience, the hotel offers more value. When document printing was a more cumbersome experience handled by front-desk staff, the hotel offered it at no charge. Now, for the first time, The Westin Columbus is able to recoup its costs for printing. Karas says long-time, repeat customers are willing to pay for documents because they appreciate the convenience the hotel offers. Compared to the past, when the hotel did not charge for printing, "People don't waste as much paper now by printing things they don't really need," says Karas. "So the M500 is a greener solution, too."

The front desk clerks can still comp printing as a guest service by using a staff login to the M500's print management utility.

Since the new multifunction printer and M500 station have been installed, toner and paper usage has been consistent and within budget. More important, managing a print offering to meet or exceed guest expectations will not become a nuisance for the hotel staff. As the general manager for one of Columbus' leading hotels, every minute Karas has to spend on administrative and accounting tasks for her business center offering is a minute she can't spend improving the overall guest experience. Fortunately, the M500 system makes it simple for Karas to get the management and accounting information she needs. She can pull up print counts and collected revenues on her desktop in a matter of minutes. Not only does the new print system give guests what they require, it makes it easy and fast for her to administer.

"The EFI M500 works well so that printing isn't something I have to address very often."

HALLEY KARAS, GENERAL MANAGER, WESTIN COLUMBUS

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