

White Paper

Blending Cell Phones and Guest Pagers:

The Evolution of Paging Systems in the Hospitality Industry



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In the hospitality industry, a paging system is as common as knives and forks. However, as cell phone technology became widely adopted, the need for a hybrid paging/texting system emerged, but implementing a new system or upgrading an existing one can be difficult and costly. One of the most mission-critical applications for wireless communications is speed of service while streamlining operations, and operational constraints, such as the need for enhanced staff productivity in spite of increasing workloads and staff shortages, can hamper implementing a cost-effective system. Whatever system or strategy is employed, it must enhance the efficiency and the competitive edge of organization while delivering the best possible service to guests and staff alike, and also yield significant returns on investment for the entire organization.

Of course, implementing or upgrading a system in the business environment must always be carefully planned, staged, and deployed to minimize disruption. This white paper presents the concept and implementation of the Freedom system developed by Long Range Systems, Inc. that combines the use of cell phones with standard pagers to improve staff response times, initiate faster table turns and decrease overall system upkeep and warranty costs, providing a powerful incentive for the hospitality industry to move beyond limited communications technologies that don't harness the strengths of both cell phone and paging technologies.

WIRELESS PAGING IMPROVES COMMUNICATION COMPANY-WIDE

The concept of paging, which is sending messages and other notifications to individuals and groups, is ubiquitous, but critical in the every restaurant or hotel because these businesses run more efficiently and deliver superior service when they communicate smoothly and avoid the disruption of overhead public address systems. A wireless premise paging system used in many industries today was designed to deliver notifications and short text messages. They operate on unlicensed frequency bands, and are completely owned and operated by the business.

Cell phone paging, which is the ability to contact someone using their own personal cell phone with a pre-recorded message, is gaining momentum with the advent of unlimited calling and text messaging plans that made cell phones an affordable mode of communication. Cell phone paging gives users the ability to respond to a page, and the system requires a broadband Internet connection to work, but cell phone paging has limitations because not all customers have phones. Also, according to LRS customer feedback, over 40% of customers with cell phones refuse to give out personal phone numbers, which makes investing in a text-only paging system a waste of money.

Cell phones used in conjunction with a paging system balances out the shortcomings inherent in a pager- or text-only system, and the Freedom system bridges both gaps in one sophisticated, simple solution. With cell phone messaging, a monthly fee applies, but the enhanced system features a transmitter and pagers that have been used in the hospitality industry for over 15 years. LRS pagers are compact and durable, have excellent battery life and provide good in-building coverage, but there's other cost saving features.

The system:

- Identifies peak times where staff should be increased.
- Works with all LRS staff and guest pagers and cell phones.
- Features a reminder tone that lets the guests or staff know a pager is out of range to minimize loss or theft.
- Sends out an auto locate page to find any lost pagers on the premises (through the transmitter).

This hybrid "paged your way" approach transforms customer service while lowering implementation costs associated with upgrading or purchasing a paging system.



CURRENT ENVIRONMENT AND TRENDS IN HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY

Restaurants and hotels face steep competition, and customers expect to receive notifications quickly. In this highly competitive environment, not meeting customer expectations causes them to leave or choose a different establishment in the future because they had a negative experience.

A paging system gets rid of obnoxious overhead announcements and is the proven method for notifying staff or guests quickly and easily, but some establishments experienced significant pager loss. A cell phone text option could reduce how many pagers are handed out, which in turn minimizes the number of lost pagers. At the same time, though cell phones are prevalent, not everyone has a phone or wants to give out the number, so a pager is a good alternative notification method. A paging system is an effective overall solution, but combining that technology with the ability to communicate via SMS text messaging and email notifications offers the greatest level of flexibility.

THE RISE OF A HYBRID SYSTEM

Using a hybrid paging/cell phone system can significantly reduce the number of lost pagers, lower the up front cost of a system and reduce maintenance cost. When a hybrid system is employed, fewer pagers can be purchased and used because a portion of users will always choose cell phone paging over a pager. In a hybrid system, less pagers are required to meet demand, so during seasonal spikes requiring temporary staff, cell phone paging can be increased instead of purchasing additional pagers. The Freedom system also has the added advantage of being compatible with all LRS pagers, so organizations can integrate it with any existing LRS system they currently own and use.

CONCLUSIONS

A hybrid paging/cell phone system improves response times and increases table turn times, which directly affects the bottom line.

A hybrid paging/cell phone system meets all business needs by offering cell phone users willing to give out numbers the option of receiving a pager or using their cell phone, which can lower system and maintenance costs and reduce the number of pagers required to serve customers.

Productivity and results in today's hospitality environment largely depends on effective communications. The ability to communicate silently through the customer's preferred mode of communication can reduce system costs without sacrificing customer service.

Business reasons why businesses choose NetPage Unlimited from LRS include:

- Industry-leading recognition: LRS is the leader in providing on-premise paging and messaging systems, with more than 20 patents on technology used in the hospitality industry.
- Support for restaurants and hotels of all sizes: This includes individually owned or franchise operations.
- Extensive product portfolio: LRS designs, manufactures, and markets over 30 products that streamline operations, improve service and increase sales.
- Excellent customer support: 24/7, global access to a team of expert customer support staff—even on holidays.