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**Starwood Hotels cuts costs and improves business with Positive Workforce Solutions**

*Workforce management software delivers broad benefits to hospitality industry*

Four of Starwood's hotels have reduced payroll costs, lowered staffing timesheet error rates and improved administration efficiency following the implementation of workforce management software from Positive Workforce Solutions (Positive).

Since its deployment over three years ago, Positive's flagship product, e-tivity®, has automated many of the previously manual tasks for Starwood, such as how employees are forecasted, scheduled, tracked and calculated. Delivered over the Internet, e-tivity's base product includes elements such as reporting and data exchange, while the modules extend to areas such as rostering, time and attendance and on-cost provisioning.

Starwood encompasses recognised brands such as Four Points, Sheraton, Le Meridien and Westin. In Australia, Starwood has implemented Positive's e-tivity in four of its hotels located in Sydney, Noosa and Melbourne.

Geoff Rossiter, Payroll Manager, Starwood Centralised Services, says the company was looking for a product which could not only instantaneously report on one of the hotel's largest expenses – payroll – but also improve the processes around rostering, and time and attendance.

“With our manual system, we calculated the wages on a fortnightly basis which meant we could only address issues with payroll costs after the fact,” explains Rossiter. “This reactive approach doesn't work where payroll costs form such a large part of an organisation's outgoings.”

Now, instead of completing paper-based timesheets, employees clock in through Positive's EziTime Clock. The EziTime Clock automates the collection of timesheet information by recording what time employees start and finish their rostered tasks, using biometric finger scanners. Once a person clocks in, the system automatically matches the person to the existing roster and 'approves' their shift if it matches the roster or falls within the pre-defined tolerances.

“It's an amazing audit trail,” comments Rossiter. “If an employee doesn't clock in when they are rostered to, it comes up on a report and the department adjusts the timesheet accordingly. There are still occasions where department heads need to check and approve timesheets – for example, if an employee starts work an hour before they are rostered to – but generally speaking, this would be a very low percentage.”

Rossiter believes the time clocks put some of the onus back on employees to correctly log in and out. This also means fewer enquiries to payroll and more accurate real-time costings.

Rossiter says the e-tivity Time and Attendance module integrates perfectly with Starwood's payroll system, making for a more efficient overall system.

Positive Workforce Solutions Pty Ltd  
ABN 51 068 831 818

Sydney  
Level 2, Suite 201  
18-20 Ross Street  
North Parramatta NSW 2151

PO Box 2404  
North Parramatta NSW 1750

☎ (02) 8838-2200  
☎ (02) 8838-2211

Melbourne  
Suite 4, 899 Whitehorse Road  
Box Hill VIC 3128

☎ (03) 9899-4342  
☎ (03) 9890-7348

Email: [info@positive.com.au](mailto:info@positive.com.au)  
Website: [www.positive.com.au](http://www.positive.com.au)

“Since we implemented e-tivity, the centralised services team has taken on an extra two hotels – but we haven’t increased our payroll staff,” Rossiter explains. “That’s another 500 employees across two different states and we’ve managed to keep the payroll team the same size – so we’re definitely seeing savings in terms of man hours. It also means those hotels don’t have to manage payroll processing.”

In fact, the ability for e-tivity’s modules to communicate with each other has encouraged Starwood to implement additional functionality, including Business Alerts, Event Rostering/Scheduling (to help managers cost out events such as banquets or conferences), and On-Cost Provisioning (calculates the on-cost of an employee’s wages).

“e-tivity has increased our efficiency in some areas,” Rossiter says. “For instance, the housekeeping manager used to spend a lot of time each fortnight checking time sheets; now, it is done daily and only takes minutes. From a payroll point of view, we’re finding our workloads less stressful because we only have to check the data in Time and Attendance before uploading it to payroll. Not only is the process much faster, the bulk of our work isn’t crammed into one or two days each pay; it’s much more evenly spread out.”

Rossiter says he was also impressed by e-tivity’s Rule Interpreter module which automatically calculates the necessary rate, penalties and allowances for each employee.

“The strength of the Rule Interpreter is beyond anything I’ve seen,” he says. “Previously a written timesheet was received and we were manually calculating the hours, penalty rates, overtime and departmental costing, then keying those interpreted timesheets into the payroll system. Work Rule Interpretation is now completed automatically and at any time, we can look at what payroll is costing us.”

With the introduction of one system, rostering and reporting across the hotels’ different departments is more consistent, with each department having access to only its own rosters and time sheets while still using the same system. This makes the whole process more transparent and training a lot simpler when people move across departments. Users can now see what is happening in their department almost instantaneously.

“Management could previously see what was happening but only after the event so it was too late to take any action,” Rossiter explains.

Rossiter says the move away from a manual system was smooth and caused no interruptions to the pay process. The smooth transition from a manual time keeping process to the e-tivity’s web-based system was largely attributed to the strength of the implementation team. Their knowledge of the e-tivity product and Starwood’s industry was fundamental in implementing the system.

“The fact that everyone continued to be accurately paid was one of the most important things for me and gave an excellent first impression of the software,” he says.

The e-tivity software is also intuitive and easy to use, Rossiter notes.

“Once you have e-tivity set up, it’s easy to maintain,” he says.



Positive's local roots were also important in terms of customer service delivery.

"Because Positive is an Australian company we actually know the people who own the business," Rossiter says. "It also means we don't need to contact people in different time zones which is more convenient and we get better response times. Our industry has a very strong service culture so we require that same level of service from our suppliers - and Positive delivers.

"We spoke to several companies and felt Positive was the only one which could deliver on its promises," Rossiter continues. "Positive has always been responsive. Our business runs 24x7 so there are times when we need things after hours, and with my account manager, I receive that service. For me, that's satisfaction and peace of mind," Rossiter concludes.

### **About Positive Workforce Solutions**

Positive Workforce Solutions is an Australian developer and supplier of easy to use workforce management software. We specialise in scheduling, time and attendance and work rule interpretation. Our award winning flagship product, e-tivity interfaces to most human resources and payroll software. Positive's workforce management solutions are successfully running in over 15,000 sites worldwide in various vertical markets, including the retail, manufacturing, hospitality and events industries.

For more information, visit <http://www.positive.com.au/>

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