



Customer Profile

KSL Resorts gains accounting efficiency with Infor F9



Facts at a glance

Product: Infor F9

Industry: Hospitality/Hotels and Motels

Country: United States

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**—Henry Schwartz, Director of IT,
KSL Resorts**

About the company

Founded in 1992, KSL Resorts manages six time-honored resorts with outstanding recreational amenities. They are Hotel del Coronado (San Diego, CA), La Costa Resort and Spa (Carlsbad, CA), Rancho Las Palmas Resort & Spa (Rancho Mirage, CA), Barton Creek Resort & Spa (Austin, Texas), The Homestead (Hot Springs, VA), and Montelucia Resort & Spa (Scottsdale, AZ). KSL Resorts have served as hideaways for Hollywood legends, inspirational retreats for U.S. presidents and captains of industry, and have hosted dinners for heads of state. KSL Management provides hands-on leadership and counsel in all facets of resort operations, with a relentless focus on service and bottom line efficiency. It's a successful balance. KSL properties consistently receive high marks from guests, volumes of positive consumer press, and industry-leading margins and returns on owner investments. Learn more at www.kslresorts.com.

Setting the strategy

When you've used a software system almost as long as your company has been operating, it becomes second nature and an intrinsic part of the way you do business. That's how Henry Schwartz, director of IT for KSL Resorts, describes the company's relationship with Infor™ F9.

"We've used Infor F9 for 15 years," said Schwartz about KSL Resorts, a high-end resort management firm founded in 1992. "It's like turning on a light switch every day, a part of our culture. It's so easy to use and we're so used to having it that we don't even think twice about it. It brings great accounting efficiencies to our organization."

Getting business specific

The company initially chose Infor F9 for its reporting and budget writeback capabilities, but quickly learned it was able to handle much more, such as consolidations, balance sheet account reconciliations, and various ad hoc reports.

For Schwartz, Infor F9's key benefit is and always has been the ease with which it performs budget writebacks—automatically sending Excel spreadsheet budget items entered by executives back to the accounting application in Microsoft Dynamics® GP, KSL's ERP system. "We have about 4,000 line items in our budget. Multiply that times 12 months in the year and you can see what an advantage it is to have a system that handles this function automatically."

Infor F9's support for forecasting is also important, and a big advantage for an organization that re-forecasts monthly. "We've been re-forecasting monthly for about a decade," said Schwartz, who joined KSL 12 years ago after working with the company as an accounting consultant. "The system accommodated that need instantly without requiring a changeover."

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The monthly forecasts are especially important for hospitality companies in today's economy, where consumer demand changes as quickly as gas prices and airline rates, and they are essential to setting room rates, marketing special offers, and maintaining margins across the fiscal year.

"The ease of forecasting has allowed us to analyze the business more efficiently," he said. "We would be plowing through spreadsheets and it would be a much more manual process if it weren't for Infor F9."

Seeing results

Schwartz also appreciates the results he gets from the Infor F9 support team, although their help is rarely needed. "We've had a situation here or there where we needed to create functionality to accommodate unusual circumstances. In special cases like that, Development has helped us out."

Schwartz says it has been six to nine months since he had made a call to Infor F9 technical support, and such a call is usually only necessary when there is an upgrade to the ERP system. When the 64-bit version of Microsoft Office was released, Infor F9's team quickly stepped in to ensure the system supported it.

Over the years, Infor F9 has continually outpaced the competition in helping KSL gain new efficiencies. For example, the MS Dynamics GP system came with a reporting tool called FRx. "We tried to implement it at some of our resorts in 2002, got it up and running and had to use an outside consultant to configure it," Schwartz said. "Every time we wanted to make a change, we had to engage an outside consultant. And it was slow. We never abandoned Infor F9 and went back to it at the resorts where we had tried FRx, which Microsoft eventually discontinued."

Currently at KSL, reports are distributed via file sharing, but Schwartz is looking forward to the e-mail distribution feature that was recently released by Infor F9.

The company continues to grow, adding prime resorts to its portfolio such as the Montelucia Resort & Spa, a top-rated property in Scottsdale, AZ. KSL Resorts took over management of Montelucia in May 2011. According to Schwartz, Infor F9 is a partner in KSL's growth, helping KSL fulfill its corporate mission.

Doing business better

As a management firm that prides itself on mentoring property executives and department heads on the skills necessary to run resorts to the exacting KSL standard, the company has a culture of accountability and commitment to financial discipline, including rigorous adherence to strategic planning, zero-based budgeting, forecasting, benchmarking, and cash management. Infor F9 is there every step of the way, supporting corporate staff as well as executives and accounting personnel at each resort.

The solution provides the visibility that enables prudent financial management, and training is “a piece of cake.” That’s a big advantage for Schwartz, who works out of KSL’s corporate office in La Quinta, CA, and provides IT support for the corporate team as well as for the company’s six resorts, which are located from California to Texas and Virginia. With a background in accounting and IT, he said the job is a perfect fit for him, and he can appreciate Infor F9 from both perspectives—its reporting savvy for financial management, and its virtually maintenance-free design and ease of use.

“When we acquire a new property, the biggest training focus is on the models we use for such processes as forecasting and budgeting,” he said. Once the models are taught, Infor F9 neatly falls into place to support them. “The ease of use is key for us. There is almost no learning curve. If you know Excel, you know how to use Infor F9.”



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