

# PASSKEY: FROM REGISTRATION TO RESERVATION, EASILY

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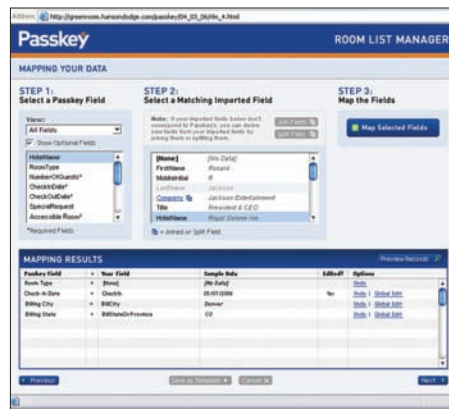
## TECHNO FILES

As every experienced meeting professional has learned in the school of experience, effective hotel reservation management is a crucial factor in successful event planning. Meeting professionals have historically been the ones responsible for managing reservations for hotel room blocks. Until recently, they've had to work through such inefficient and potentially error-prone means as processing faxes, taking phone calls and logging in mailed reservations, just to gather up the information. And that's *before* they've passed it on to the hotels, where it was re-entered, hopefully with accuracy.

Planners had been further hampered by limited access to the up-to-the-minute information they might need at any given time in the process.

Though more recent online registration services improved for planners the process of relaying registrants' hotel reservation needs to the hotels, there was still a critical component missing to achieve the greatest efficiency: direct automated communication between online registration services and the hotels holding the room blocks.

Passkey (passkey.com), a Boston-area company that specializes in reservations management in the travel and meetings industries, recognized this need and developed an online reservation system that streamlines the event-planning process by bridging the gap between registrants and hotels. It is now used by more than 6,500 properties nationwide, with more added weekly.



Additionally, more than 85 percent of the top North American CVBs rely on Passkey. And, some 7,500 planners from corporations, trade associations and meeting management companies have eagerly embraced Passkey's innovative online reservation system, as well.

### HOW IT HELPS PLANNERS

Passkey's appeal to meeting professionals is simple to understand: it takes individual reservation management off the hands of

the planner by making it the sole responsibility of the registrant.

That way, registrants for your meeting, for example, make their own reservations solely within your meeting's contracted hotel room block, at their convenience and within a secure environment. The system can also be set up with specialized sub-blocks to be accessed by different attendee types (such as featured speakers and the C-level crowd).

To keep tabs on things, you can, at any time, access reports displaying real-time information. That way, whenever a registrant makes a change, you can easily stay on top of it. Real-time information reports can help you avoid the high and unnecessary costs associated with the A-word (attrition) and the resulting sleepless nights as the meeting dates loom. Best of all, Passkey integrates with any preferred registration system for ease of use, which saves time, money and potential aggravation spent on calls to you for help from registrants and hotels.

From the first entry into the system until well after the meeting is over, Passkey is designed to enable the user to generate all sorts of reports dealing with revenue, booking pace and history (particularly useful for negotiating better rates next time around).

### GETTING REGISTRANTS COMFORTABLE WITH PASSKEY

Naturally, not all your registrants will be familiar with an innovative system like Passkey, especially if in the past they have

attended events where reservations were made for them or taken over the phone. When using Passkey for an event—especially for an event in which older or technology-phobic registrants might be making reservations—it is important to make the process as easy as possible.

You may want to place the Passkey link in several conspicuous places on your registration web site, such as on the hotel page, the registration confirmation page and in the confirmation e-mail a registrant receives after registering.

It would also benefit you to keep an eye on reports and send follow-up e-mails to those who have registered for the meeting but who have not yet made their hotel reservations through Passkey. A registrant could be waiting for more information, but it is very likely that they are confused about the next step. Placing the Passkey link on the web site in various places lessens the chance that it will be overlooked. Then, sending the link in a confirmation e-mail gives the registrant a copy they can save in their inbox.

When registrants move past any initial difficulties in using Passkey, they will most likely find that it makes their overall registration experience a little easier. Further, when they discover that besides securing their hotel reservation, they can also make air and car arrangements, they'll appreciate how Passkey has added value to their experience.

Additionally, since Passkey is web-based, registrants won't have to download any software or applications in order to use the system. They simply click the link provided on the online registration site or in their

confirmation e-mail and directly connect with the appropriate room block established by the planner of the meeting they are to attend. This automation practically eliminates the human error that results from manually entering and uploading reservations, either on your or your registrant's part or that of the hotel, which likewise considerably reduces frustration for all parties.

### WHY HOTELS LIKE IT

Hotels benefit from Passkey because time is saved as well as money, which allows valuable resources to be allocated elsewhere and used more efficiently.

Because fewer questions arise when the registrant enters his or her own information—which is then directly relayed to the hotel—calls from registrants to the hotel and from the hotel to the event planner are reduced.

Since Passkey allows event planners to access registrant information at any time, it is no longer necessary for the hotel to field calls from the planners about reports and other information.

They also like that Passkey can be individualized for each meeting and hotel, which allows hotels to market their services directly to the people who are most likely to use them—the event attendees who will be staying at their hotel. Well done, this type of direct marketing can lead to a high return on the investment of licensing Passkey for use by hotels.


### GOING FORWARD

Greg Pesik, Passkey's CEO and president, says that Passkey will only get better, as the company is committed to investing in

technology that will make it even easier to manage events.

This month [referring to the issue date of August], Passkey is introducing its enhanced Room List Manager, which promises users a 50-percent faster, yet easier, event set-up process and simplified inventory management. Those of you already familiar with the earlier version will find Passkey's screens have been simplified, are better organized and are, therefore, easier to use. The system's hotel profiles have been expanded, as well. The new technological muscle behind these advances is the state-of-the-art Oracle 10g database platform.

In the works are further upgrades to Passkey that include automated event status e-mails and enhanced features that allow for seamless flow of meeting data through sales and catering systems, registration systems and, of course, hotel reservation and property management systems.

At Passkey, they see a future where meeting professionals are able to move freely from venue to venue with any meeting type or size and be able to utilize a single platform to manage group reservations. What a beautiful vision. 

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