

Chester Racecourse

Case Study



The Client

Chester Race Company Limited (CRCL) is a dynamic, rapidly-expanding organisation. Established in 1892, its pedigree matches those of the thoroughbreds that race on its track. Today a multifaceted business, Chester Racecourse has set itself the challenge of becoming a 'first choice' venue for leisure and corporate visitors, broadening its appeal whilst keeping the atmosphere for which it is famed. In addition to race festivals, its events calendar now includes polo, horse shows and concerts.

A number of corporate and public catering options make Chester Racecourse a significant hospitality business. Seven facilities can accommodate from 20 – 700 guests. The 1539 Restaurant is open to smaller groups, as well as being a full-service public restaurant, open 7 days a week. Private hospitality and dining takes place in Festival Chalets, Private Boxes and Paddock Rooms. For the general public, the venue offers imaginative food & beverage outlets in the Concourse.



"We can now build the business we want because we have the right technology in place. We can introduce efficiencies, reduce costs and lift our sales."

Jonathan Davis, Head of Business Services.

The Challenge

Whilst demonstrably successful, Chester Racecourse had by early 2011 become aware that its growth potential was being constrained by manual processes. Whilst the 1539 Restaurant had EPoS, elsewhere cash registers were used – on the racecourse, in the bars and in the corporate hospitality areas. Procurement and stock control were based on manual product counts and the completion of stock sheets to be reconciled against invoices. The end-of-month close-down was particularly laborious, necessitating a stock-count to get information to the Accounts team for management reports. On event days, cash reconciliation was lengthy and sometimes inaccurate.

The business was being held back and its profitability eroded. The management team resolved to find a mechanism to increase the speed and accuracy of operational processes. They also felt sure they could make cost savings but were unable to easily identify the areas where this could be achieved.

The Process

CRCL's first step was to invest in a consultancy project from hospitality solutions company Agilysys (Europe) Limited. They went through the business with a fine tooth comb, looking at procedures and opening the management team's eyes to the gains and efficiencies that new software and hardware could introduce.

Agilysys demonstrated how its Eatec® and InfoGenesis™ POS solutions would improve sales and speed up processes, and described the transformation PC-based touchscreen EPoS would bring. Importantly, too, Agilysys identified areas of cost reduction. CRCL saw the value of investment in new technology and a software and hardware solution tender was issued.

The Benefits

- The rugged, spill-proof and mobile J2 615 touchscreens stand up to rough treatment and being moved around

- With no moving parts, these fanless, Solid State Storage computers are exceptionally reliable
- Thanks to the Cash Manager software, reporting accuracy and speed of cash reconciliation on race days have greatly improved
- Inventory and stock management have been transformed by Eatec, enabling the Racecourse to control stock and structure pricing levels
- InfoGenesis on touchscreen EPoS has made service faster and is contributing to increased spend
- System reporting is providing business visibility, helping the Racecourse prepare for its next season
- The new systems are making the business more efficient and profitable, as processes are tightened up and staff costs reduced

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The Solution

Jonathan (Jon) Davis, Head of Business Services at CRCL, explains: *"CRCL was looking for a partner with a track record of working in the venues market, who knew about speed of service and how to manage volume operations. Agilysys has a great deal of experience and its solutions provide just what we need."*

Once appointed, Agilysys put forward J2 as its preferred point-of-sale supplier. *"J2 are very reliable, both as a company and as units,"* observes Jon. *"Working with them is a pleasure. Their equipment is well maintained and, if there's a problem, it's fixed and the till's back in place before you know it."*

He continues: *"When it came to selecting EPoS, CRCL needed something durable, that could be easily transported outside and could survive being dropped or having drinks spilled on it. The J2 615s seemed right for our needs and they've performed perfectly since installation."*

Today, the Racecourse has some 120 electronic points-of-sale, each a J2 615. The J2 615 is the first EPoS computer to include a Solid State Drive as standard. As this model also features convection cooling that requires no fan, all moving parts have been eliminated, resulting in exceptional performance and reliability.

InfoGenesis™ POS manages front-of-house and back-office operations. Procurement, inventory and stock control are automated by Eatec® by Agilysys, and the Cash Manager product has transformed cash reconciliation and management.

InfoGenesis is used in the hospitality boxes and suites, the four public bars and the 1539 Restaurant. It also manages point-of-sale at the public food concession stands and within the two onsite gastropubs.

The Benefits

Cash Manager – *"We now use Agilysys' Cash Manager to track our revenue and its location in the process. It manages the flow into the Cash Office, meaning we reconcile money a lot quicker and much more accurately. By getting any differences resolved before staff go home, we match cash-to-till and cash-to-stock and can be confident that everything balances."*

Eatec – *"Eatec has been fantastic in managing our suppliers and stock. When our season finished, it was vital to control what stock came in so we weren't left with a huge surplus. Thanks to Eatec, we managed to do this really well."*

Jon Davis is now looking to bring every department onto Eatec, including hardware and supplies, stationery and cleaning products. *"Everything coming on site will have an Eatec PO. We've seen how Eatec can work across the business, to benefit every department not just food & beverage."*

CPCL is currently putting its food & beverage purchasing out to tender. Using Eatec, the team now has accurate information to work from. Says Jon: *"We know exactly what we've paid and what we want to pay, and how to structure pricing levels to get the required gross profit. Without Eatec, we couldn't have done this."*

InfoGenesis – At point-of-sale, there are benefits too. The new touchscreens are a lot quicker to operate. This is particularly noticeable at the bars where customer service is much improved. This is resulting in a slight increase in customer spend, which Jon is confident will grow as the business uses more InfoGenesis functions. *"Staff love the system. Because it gives them full and accurate figures, they can check out quicker at the end of their shift. That means they're getting home earlier and we're saving on staff costs."*

Although Jon feels that they are still *"feeling their way"* on reporting – *"we're finding out what's needed and what's available"* – business visibility has already improved. *"We didn't have any real business metrics pre-Agilysys but now we know where our 'pinch points' are and we're using InfoGenesis to plan next season's staffing. We can stagger staff coming in; getting them in later and away earlier will save us thousands of pounds. Technology is bringing that to our business – we didn't have this knowledge and control before. We can now confidently plan our next season's operations based on hard facts."*

Looking forward

CRCL plan to integrate their new systems with others such as ticketing and accounting. The business has already acquired mPOS (mobile point-of-sale) from Agilysys and will roll this out on ten handheld units to be used across the Racecourse, taking service to the customer.

Other options under consideration are cashless payments integrated with InfoGenesis, and value-added tickets to be redeemed at terminals around the venue. The team is keen to integrate Eatec with Accounts. *"If we can populate our invoices with stock and product information from Eatec, that will save the Accounts team 5 days a month on invoice processing alone."*

Integrating Eatec with the Events Management System is another appealing prospect. *"Getting information out of and back into Eatec would save the Events Management team a massive amount of time."*

Concludes Jon Davis: *"We're seeing huge benefits all around. It's still early days but now we have the core technologies in place we definitely expect to have brighter figures next season. Things will only get better and better."*

<http://hospitality.chester-races.co.uk>

About us

J2 Retail Systems

J2 Retail Systems is a specialist manufacturer of PC-based touchscreens, LCD touchscreen monitors and point-of-sale hardware. Now with over 100,000 units installed worldwide, its clients include thousands of leading-brand retailers, hospitality businesses and leisure operators including cinema chains, stadia, sporting venues, and countless pubs, hotels and restaurants.

J2 products represent innovation, exceptional reliability and one of the lowest costs of EPoS ownership available today. The company controls its design and manufacture, and constantly seeks way to improve the quality of its user experience. J2's history has been one of pioneering and market 'firsts'. It recently launched the first EPoS to contain Solid State Storage drives as standard.

Agilysys (Europe) Limited – Hospitality Solutions Group

Agilysys is a leading provider of innovative IT solutions to retail and hospitality. It offers software, services, hardware and consulting for hotels, restaurants, casinos, resorts, condominiums, cruise lines, stadiums and arenas, and conference centres, designed to streamline operations and enhance guest satisfaction while maximising profitability.

Agilysys' hospitality solutions provide unparalleled reliability, functionality, efficiency and control over multiple aspects of operations – from reservations, check-in, point-of-sale and business intelligence, inventory and procurement management, to document management.

The company operates throughout Europe, Middle East and Africa (EMEA), with a main office in the UK and sales and support offices through partners across Europe, UAE and South Africa. Agilysys (Europe) Limited is part of Agilysys, Inc. (Nasdaq: AGYS) whose corporate headquarters are in Atlanta.

Contact

J2 Retail Systems Limited

J2 House, Clayton Road, Birchwood, Warrington WA3 6RP. United Kingdom

T +44 (0)1925 854 841 F +44 (0)1925 811 989

www.j2retailsystems.com

Agilysys (Europe) Limited – Hospitality Solutions Group

Cygnat Court, Lakeside Drive, Centrepark, Warrington WA1 1PP. United Kingdom

T +44 (0)1925 401 310

www.agilysys.com/hospitality

