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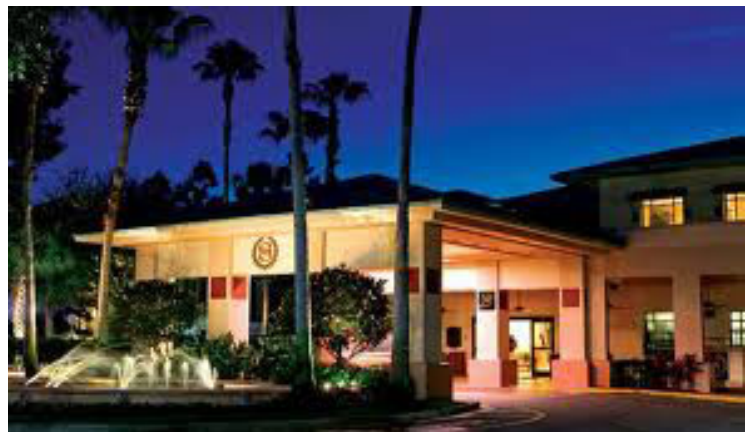
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

## **VOC Systems Helps Orlando’s Sheraton Vistana Resort Achieve Record Performance Through Mid-Stay Knowledge of Guest Experiences**

*“VOC Systems allows us to stay on top of the guest experience and drive loyalty.”*  
-- Glen Vlasic, GM, Sheraton Vistana Resort

**ORLANDO, FL — March 11, 2013 —** [Sheraton Vistana Resort](#) is a sprawling vacation destination located right in heart of Lake Buena Vista, Florida, just outside the gates of Walt Disney World. The villa resort spans a tropical setting of 135 acres - boasting 1,682 villas - and features 7 heated outdoor swimming pools, 5 kids' pools, 13 tennis courts, 3 fitness centers, spa services, basketball and volleyball courts, its own Market Place, a miniature golf course, and much more. Given the resort’s endless amenities and offerings, guest service and feedback is paramount.



Glen Vlasic, General Manager of Sheraton Vistana Resort, has been in the hospitality industry for more than 40 years. The feedback he and his team receive from guests—good or bad—not only helps them provide the best possible service, but allows for guests to feel that their needs are being met, translating into what every property hopes will be guest loyalty and retention.

### **The challenge...**

The challenge that the team faced, like many hotels and resorts, was that guest feedback (i.e., surveys) traditionally took place days or weeks *after* checkout, making effective service recoveries for guests with

problems difficult, if not impossible.

Compounding this challenge was the rise in social media like Facebook and TripAdvisor®, which provided an increasingly popular channel for both positive *and negative* feedback—also reported post-stay. When combined with the fact that as *many as 30-50%* of guests who experience problems during a stay at a hotel or resort leave without telling anyone, it became clear that the management team needed a better approach. They wanted a method that allowed guests a quick, convenient means of sharing feedback with the property's GM *during* their stay. Such a solution would give associates opportunities for important connections and actions *prior to* guests checking out.

### **The solution...VOC Systems**

A member of Sheraton Vistana Resort's executive staff learned about [VOC Systems](#), or "Voice of the Customer" Systems, a pioneer in the area of mid-experience spoken comment reporting. After quickly realizing there were no other solutions like it in the market, the property implemented the technology and hasn't looked back.

"Our proprietary technology collects unique, detailed knowledge about individual guest experiences, converts it to easily understood information and distributes it to the team—all during the guest stay," says Brad Kesel, CEO, VOC Systems. "This allows cutting-edge hospitality organizations like Sheraton Vistana Resort to quickly respond and adapt to fast changing, increasingly demanding customer and market conditions."

### **How it works:**

- Within each villa, placards are placed near room and house phones that invite guests to share their feedback by phone.
- Using a local extension, guests leave a free-form voice mail for the GM and his or her executive team any time of the day or night. Comments are guided by two simple questions, "What's going right?" and "What can be improved?"
- The message is immediately converted to text and sent by email with audio links to the senior level staff—minutes after the guest hangs up.
- The staff members are then able to forward the email to relevant departments to prioritize and address problems, or immediately recognize employees delivering outstanding service.

Department heads at the resort carry smart phones, so they have access to the messages 24/7.

This process also helps with the transition of employees coming on and off duty, and management is kept apprised of any/all incoming guest feedback.

Vlasic says that VOC Systems has allowed his staff to perform immediate recoveries and make valuable

connections with guests and owners through their comments. “I am confident that guests are now checking out knowing that someone at the property has reached out and acknowledged their needs during their stay with us, and that we’ve done everything possible to create the very best guest experience we could provide...that’s huge!”

According to Kesel, Vlastic and his resort team “get it.” “Sheraton Vistana Resort has experienced a powerful culture change with a clear focus on service excellence. This can be seen and heard not only through guest comments themselves, but also by the rate of guest return and advocacy that the property is experiencing. We continue to see dramatic results for clients using VOC’s feedback loop because of its unprecedented speed and actionable detail,” said Kesel.

### **A motivating force and training module to boot**

Given the expanse of the resort, more than 600 team members are employed at the property. Employee recognition is very important to Vlastic and his senior leadership team.

Oscar Montoya, Director of Front Office Operations (with more than 18 years of front office experience), says that the user-friendly features of VOC Systems make guests more inclined to share their feedback with the team. “It’s convenient because guests don’t feel pressured or anxious about speaking with someone live, and they can call at anytime. The ability to address a situation and the opportunity to recover with a guest who is on-site, live in real time, is critical. It can sometimes mean the difference between ‘making or breaking’ a guest’s stay.”

The system also allows for the senior-level staff to have a more personal connection with front line staff members. Associates are inspired by the positive feedback they receive from guests, and the company offers incentive programs based on the positive responses they get.

“We’ve been able to take the feedback from VOC Systems and share it with our employees by playing the actual audio recording for them during our meetings,” Vlastic says. “To see the pure pride in the employees who hear their name associated with a positive comment, and to hear a guest talk about them in such a positive way is huge. It’s a great way to reflect on what we’ve been able to achieve as a team.” And, while compliments are more frequent than complaints, associates whose behavior falls short of a guest’s expectations can be objectively coached to prevent recurrence of similar situations. This is due to the speed of the feedback loop; speed that gives supervisors the ability to praise or “course correct” an employee *minutes* after a guest comments about them.

The team also finds high strategic value in VOC’s reporting portal, one that produces interactive graphs and search tools that deliver timely, relevant and actionable insights. Because comments are coded, the team can use the online portal to clearly see high-level trends by business process and drill into the

detail. This helps management identify areas of strengths and weaknesses — and to effectively prioritize training, resources and actions.

### **“VOC Systems...helps make a difference**

Just recently, Vlastic received a note from TripAdvisor® congratulating the property on a standard it has just met. “I’m very proud of that,” he says. “These are the tangibles we’re able to see because of VOC Systems. When we look at our scores and the movement that we’ve seen from being able to address our guests’ needs while they’re on-site with us, it is both impressive and energizing.”

Vlastic notes that VOC Systems is firmly embedded in his budget now year over year.

“We’re no longer chasing feedback; we’re ahead of it,” he says. “We’re very proud to be in the top twenty percent of all of Starwood hotels and resorts. And when we talk about employee satisfaction and supervisor effectiveness, and to be able to give that information and that feedback to that team member immediately when it occurs is a big number for us—it helps us tremendously.”

For more information, please visit [www.vocsys.com](http://www.vocsys.com).

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#### **About VOC Systems**

Founded in 2007, VOC Systems (aka Voice of the Customer Systems) is a pioneer in the area of mid-experience spoken comment reporting, an innovative method of capturing unique knowledge about individual guest needs, advice, ideas, compliments and trends – in real time, allowing hospitality organizations to respond and adapt quickly to fast changing, increasingly demanding customer and market conditions. VOC Systems' award-winning ExpressWay™ solution provides hotel managers with efficient and effective tools to improve guest satisfaction, make successful recoveries, motivate, coach and recognize employees and reap measurable financial returns. Based in Atlanta, VOC Systems has been implemented by some of the world's most recognized hotel properties and brands. For more information, please visit [www.vocsys.com](http://www.vocsys.com).

#### **About Starwood Hotels & Resorts Worldwide, Inc.**

Starwood Hotels & Resorts Worldwide, Inc. is one of the leading hotel and leisure companies in the world with 1,134 properties in nearly 100 countries and 154,000 employees at its owned and managed properties. Starwood is a fully integrated owner, operator and franchisor of hotels, resorts and residences with the following internationally renowned brands: St. Regis®, The Luxury Collection®, W®, Westin®, Le Méridien®, Sheraton®, Four Points® by Sheraton, Aloft®, and Element<sup>SM</sup>. The Company boasts one of the industry's leading loyalty programs, Starwood Preferred Guest (SPG), allowing members to earn and redeem points for room stays, room upgrades and flights, with no blackout dates. Starwood also owns Starwood Vacation Ownership, Inc., a premier provider of world-class vacation experiences through villa-style resorts and privileged access to Starwood brands. For more information, please visit [www.starwoodhotels.com](http://www.starwoodhotels.com).

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