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Everyone Loves a Cloud

Guest post by Bill Euler, President, PAS, an Infor Strategic Partner

Gaithersburg, Maryland (February 10, 2010) – Chances are you've heard the words Cloud Computing bantered about. Nice buzzwords, but what do they really mean for you as a hospitality professional? Well, first of all, let's make sure we're all on the same page in defining cloud computing. In its broadest sense, cloud computing refers to data and applications that are hosted outside of the organization and provided over the Internet. But cloud computing is evolving. In a recent post on The View from Inside, Bruce Richardson, Infor's chief strategy officer, discusses the future of cloud. He talks about cloud ultimately becoming the dominant deployment method for companies, and defines Cloud 2.0, the next phase of cloud computing, as the act of companies seeking out suites of multiple applications from a single vendor source.

Why Cloud Computing?

In the hospitality arena, what cloud computing offers is a robust solution that can reduce costs, streamline operations, and improve your business by taking your applications above the property. Let's take a closer look at each of these areas:

- **Lower costs:** Cloud eliminates or greatly reduces the need to buy and manage hardware and software, and can mean reduced software licensing costs as well. Your applications are hosted off-site in a secure data facility—which means you don't have to fork out the money for servers, worry about keeping them up-to-date, or deal with hardware/software maintenance issues. You'll have greater capacity, more flexibility, and just pay as you go. This translates to a smaller IT infrastructure and lowers up-front costs, saving you money in the short and long term.
- **Operational efficiency:** If you've ever gone through a hardware upgrade, you know how painful, costly, and disruptive to your operations it can be. Not only is that eliminated when you move your applications above property, but now it's the vendor's responsibility to continually provide best-in-class hardware, software, support, and service. In effect, the burdens of your IT department are shifted to the outsourcer, thus freeing up valuable IT resources to focus on strategies and tasks important to your business.
- **Business process improvement:** Now more than ever, business success relies on your ability to immediately access and leverage data. Because cloud applications are available 24x7 from any computer with Internet access, you can be more efficient and responsive. It also means you can have fewer resources covering multiple properties with standardized solutions. This improves connectivity above property, and also enables many more opportunities for collaboration and communication between corporate and the property.

What to Look for in a Vendor

If you think cloud computing is right for your company (and I'm betting you will, sooner or later), keep these things in mind when selecting the company you plan to work with:

- **Industry expertise:** Partner with a company that has experience within the hospitality industry and understands your business going in. They are much more likely to offer full-scope solutions

and add value to the relationship. They will also be able to work with your staff more effectively and get you up and running quickly.

- **Integration:** Even if you're currently using multiple vendor applications, an effective cloud technology solution will seamlessly integrate all those applications, whether on property, above property, or SaaS, to eliminate duplication and error-prone tasks.
- **Security:** Get detailed information about the data center where your applications will be housed. Be sure you feel confident that you're receiving best-in-class technology, security, and service. Find out what certifications the vendor has and insist on a tailored service agreement that meets your specific needs.

As a final note, look to the future. Cloud 2.0 is right around the corner. Figure out not only what short-term needs can be met, but what the long term might look like, and find a company that can get you where you want to be.

About PAS:

PAS has over 20 years of experience providing customers in the hospitality industry with best-in-class back-office financial solutions and services that simplify operations and reduce costs, including hospitality cores for Infor SunSystems FMS and PM 10, pasUnity financial integration tools, hosting, and more. www.pashospitality.com