customer service leading to improved profitability and a competitive advantage. Let's take a look at how the technological revolution is transforming the tourism industry.

Improving Operating Efficiency and Effectiveness

In the face of rising wages, increasing input costs, and intensifying competition, tourism service suppliers have been forced to make cuts in staff size, increase productivity, and rethink marketing efforts. Doing things the same old traditional ways no longer seems to be working. For example, food-service operators who traditionally planned for and staffed stand-alone kitchens have now adopted the use of central kitchens, allowing a single large operation to provide a variety of menu items to several satellite dining locations with fewer preparation and production employees, less equipment, and centralized purchasing and production planning.

Staffing software allows supervisors to schedule employees in key time slots to meet peak customer demands while limiting coverage during slack times. Advances in communication technologies and decreasing costs for mobile devices make internal ordering and inventory stocking more efficient by allowing employees to communicate through remote devices. Dining room and housekeeping employees can transmit orders, rooms' status, and inventory needs through wireless headsets and handheld order-entry equipment. These and many other technological innovations have evolved as tourism service suppliers search for solutions to enhance customer service, respond to operational demands, and improve profitability.

Recognizing the fact that knowledge is as important, if not a more important asset; than land, capital, and labor in creating a competitive advantage for hospitality organizations highlights the importance of information technology in organizational success. By harnessing the value of this asset with the help of technology, hospitality companies could establish an efficient and effective system to create, accumulate, transfer, and use knowledge.[1]

Management Information Systems

Management information systems (MIS) or information systems provide the backbone for operational decisions. They are computer-based systems designed to collect and store data and then provide information for planning, decision making, and problem solving. Deciding what information systems to use, whether to develop applications in-house or buy them, and then whether they should be centralized or dispersed to the property or store level are only a few of the decisions facing chief information officers and information technology professionals.

Think back to the chapter opener on Wyndham Jade, and you can see how one tourism services provider is dealing with these questions. To see where other participants in the tourism industry might be heading as they grapple with these questions, we can once again turn to the pioneering work of the airlines. By necessity, most of the information management functions for the airlines and other transportation service providers were centralized for operational efficiencies and profit improvement.

FYI RFIDs

Radio frequency identification devices (RFIDs) are being used to control hotel guest room locks, to track inventory, and for a variety of other uses for which low-cost tracking and security are needed. RFIDs use radio waves to identify people or objects automatically. These tags are different from the bar-coded tags currently being used by airlines to track the location of baggage. RFIDs do not require a direct line of sight to be read, and multiple tags can be read at one time, creating opportunities for ticketing, identification verification, and something as complex as tour group coordination.