

# Urban Hotel Group gets connected with MICROS and SiteMinder



**Urban Hotel Group**  
Sydney, Melbourne & Brisbane  
[hotelurban.com.au](http://hotelurban.com.au)

**No. of Rooms**  
359 rooms across 3 properties



The **Urban Hotel Group**, owned by Erdigroup, became an independent hotel chain in July 2009. Based in Melbourne, the group includes three hotels – St Kilda (80 rooms), Brisbane (179 rooms) and St Leonards in Sydney (100 rooms).

The formation of the Urban Hotel Group provided an opportunity to review the hotels' systems and processes. For the Brisbane and St Leonards hotels, that meant adopting the OPERA PMS system the St Kilda hotel had been using for around a year.

Revenue and Distribution Manager for the Urban Hotel Group, Iva Saskova, says there were immediate advantages from having the same system running at all three locations.

"Having one system meant we could centralise our administration out of Melbourne, which reduced our labour costs significantly," Ms Saskova says. "The new system also made it much easier to manage our inventory, and opened up new revenue opportunities for us."

### Expanding their internet presence

Another system the Urban Hotel Group adopted is SiteMinder's Channel Manager, which they chose because of its ability to increase their presence on hotel booking websites.

"On weekends and in peak holiday periods, as many as 50% of our bookings can come from the internet, so it's an extremely important channel for us," Ms Saskova says.

Ms Saskova has worked under a manual website booking system before, and believes there's no way you could achieve the breadth of coverage the hotel now enjoys without a system like SiteMinder.

"Before SiteMinder, you were limited to the number of sites you could use. Every time you wanted to update your prices across multiple sites it was a completely manual process – you would end up using less sites just to keep it manageable."

Ms Saskova says that the old process made maintaining rate parity extremely difficult, which could easily damage the reputation of a hotel.

"I don't know how anyone can maintain rate parity under a manual system – particularly using the number of sites we use today. And if you don't manage it properly it can easily destroy your relationships with the websites you rely on for business."

SiteMinder's ability to interface with OPERA PMS means that any changes the hotels makes to rates in the OPERA PMS are reflected almost instantly on booking websites. Ms Saskova says this is a significant time saving for revenue managers.

"People used to spend up to four or five hours doing that kind of thing – making sure rates were in parity" she says. "But with SiteMinder, it's almost impossible for the system not to be in parity, unless you choose it to be that way on purpose."

"It's a huge time-saver for us, and it's allowed us to reduce our labour costs by about two to two and a half people."

## "the new technology has contributed to a 19% increase in occupancy"

Iva Saskova, Revenue Manager, Urban Hotel Group



### Keeping track of promotions

One of the situations Ms Saskova says the Urban Hotel Group may not want rate parity is where they are running short-term promotions with certain booking sites.

She believes such promotions have the dual benefits of drumming up new business during quiet periods, and improving their presence on hotel booking sites – helping them attract future customers.

“SiteMinder works with the most popular third party websites so you don’t need to create new rate codes for these promotions – the system automatically knows what rate to apply to each booking as it comes in.”

“We’ve also noticed an improvement in our web presence over last year, and we believe that running regular promotions has helped our hotels improve their rankings.”

### Taking on new markets

The Urban Hotel Group currently advertises on 26 websites via SiteMinder, with more secondary placements through sites like Expedia.

Ms Saskova believes that when you have a fully-integrated system, there’s no reason why you can’t take advantage of as many sites as possible. She adds that this expansion can in fact open up valuable new business opportunities.

“We’ve recently started focussing on a particular booking site that’s widely-used in China. As a result of that, we’ve started to see some bookings come through in recent months,” she says.

“The numbers might not be huge to start off with, but bookings from China were almost non-existent last year. And the more bookings we get, the better our rankings become.”

Ms Saskova says the new technology has contributed to a 19% increase in occupancy at the St.Leonards site from last year, as well as helping the hotel increase its revenue per available room by over \$30.

“There are a number of factors behind those increases, but Siteminder has certainly created new opportunities for business, and the integration with OPERA PMS allows us to capture them more efficiently.”

### Using OPERA PMS to share and manage data

With three separate sites under her management, Ms Saskova says that one of the biggest benefits of OPERA PMS is that it allows staff from each location to view and share data, including customer information.

“The system gives us the ability to recognise valued customers, even if they arrive at one of our interstate hotels. For example, it can tell us if the person who’s checking in is a return guest, a CEO, or an Urban Hotel Group staff member.”

“The receptionist can also look at notes provided by the other locations to see if this guest has any particular needs or requirements – so we can use that knowledge to improve their stay.”

This depth of customer information is also used by The Urban Hotel Group to conduct marketing campaigns, and reward valued customers for their loyalty.

“We like to offer surprise rewards to customers who have returned to our hotels a number of times,” Ms Saskova says. “We might offer them a small gift if they’re returning for a third time, or give them a bigger gift if they’re back for a fifth time.”

Ms Saskova says staff members have been quick to embrace the new technology, and they find it extremely easy to use. The fact the three hotels share one system also helps with resourcing.

“Our staff will occasionally work across our different sites – like if someone gets sick or goes on leave. The systems are the same everywhere, so they can pick it up instantly.”



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