

Mainstay *Messenger* 2016-Q3



mainstay
Professional

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Why it is so important

Welcome

This is the first of our new style Newsletters , Mainstay Messenger. We hope that you will find it both interesting and useful.

We will endeavour to keep you informed of product developments, recurring support issues and industry developments.

Many of you are already familiar with the Mainstay product but less so with Powersoft. We have recently celebrated our 30th Birthday so in this issue we will tell you a little of what we have been doing over the last 30 years.

Since acquiring the rights to Mainstay 18 months ago we have invested heavily in both product functionality and support. We will highlight the changes we have made and also the product roadmap for the short term and the longer term .

Remember though that this is your newsletter and if there are any issues or topics you would like us to cover please get in touch.

Hopefully you have all had a busy and successful summer and this will continue through the Autumn season.

Best Regards

Colin Eley

Managing Director

Contact Details

Powersoft HQ

Powersoft Computer Services Ltd
16, Newhouse Business Centre
Old Crawley Road, Faygate,
Horsham , West Sussex.
RH12 4RU

☎ 01293 562730

www.powersoft-services.co.uk

www.mainstay-professional.co.uk

Sales

Robyn Lambourne

☎ 01293 649686

✉ rlambourne@powersoft-services.co.uk

✉ sales@powersoft-services.co.uk

Support

☎ 01293 649680

✉ support@powersoft-services.co.uk

Accounts

☎ 01293 562730

✉ sales@powersoft-services.co.uk

Technical

☎ 01293 562730

✉ support@powersoft-services.co.uk

Directors Viewpoint

Autumn is upon us, the leaves are all turning from shades of green to golden brown and russet, however Summer hung on in there for a few extra weeks which was an unexpected bonus. Hopefully this extended summer season worked well for you, and you are now gearing up for Christmas.



The Brexit vote has been and gone and despite the prophets of doom the world kept spinning on its axis. The FTSE initially faltered although it has subsequently rebounded to levels near to its all time high. The price of Sterling dropped to a 30 year low which makes our exports more attractive and more importantly makes the UK a bargain for overseas visitors. The cost for UK citizens travelling abroad has increased significantly so staycations have never looked more attractive. The BBC reports that the weak pound has helped to boost the Scottish tourist industry, to read the article click [Here](#)..

They keep telling us the Brexit means Brexit although they have yet to clarify exactly what that means. Naturally we wouldn't expect them to reveal all of their plans and objectives, after all who announces their objective prior to going to the negotiating table, but it would be good if they could set the process in motion and bring an end this period of uncertainty.

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Without a doubt the internet is key to the success of the hospitality and leisure industry and everyone is looking for a slice of the action. The most cost effective route to market is through your own website as David Peace recently reported following the TTI & ETOA conference in the spring. We are however looking at integration with the OTA's to ensure that all of our customers have the widest choice of sales channels available.

Wishing you all every success over the Autumn quarter, best regards.

Colin Eley

Managing Director

Birthday News

Powersoft is 30....

On the 1st of August 1986 Colin Eley and David Peace founded Powersoft Computer Services which started trading as a partnership and incorporated on 1st Jan 1990.



Over the last 30 years the hardware and software technology has changed enormously but Colin and David have hardly changed at all.

Traditionally Powersoft have provided a wide range of bespoke systems across a number of industries including Aviation, Finance, Insurance, Futures & Options, Marketing and Brewing.

Our first foray into the leisure industry was with Page and Moy, a leading Tour Operator and Travel Agent based in Leicester. We developed the Barclaycard Holiday Club system back in 1986 and through that enduring relationship which lasted over 20 years, we were involved in the development of their travel systems as well as numerous Event Management and staff motivation schemes through their sister company Page and Moy Marketing.

In 1997 we developed our first package solution **TSTravel**, a leading Travel Agency and Tour Operating reservations system which is still in use today. Since then we had had numerous clients running on the system with between 10 and 500 users.

In 2014 Powersoft was drafted in by Pinnacle to provide support for the **Mainstay** system. Despite the initial challenges posed by having no system documentation or source code for the system we managed to keep the system ticking over until we managed to obtain a relatively complete copy of the source code later that year following a number of court cases between Pinnacle and Maclellan to establish the ownership of the system.

In 2015 we acquired the rights to the software from Pinnacle and have been supporting and developing the system ever since. Powersoft are committed to continuing development and support for the Mainstay system and see it as key to our future success.

We look forward to celebrating another 30 years although Colin and David are hoping to have retired by the time the 60th comes along.

New Releases

Mainstay v3.5 is ready to roll...

Over the last year we have rolled out a number of releases which have been aimed at improving the stability of the system as well as ensuring that it runs correctly on the latest versions of the Microsoft operating systems and databases.

Version 3.5 has a number of enhancements:

Tariffs

Multiple Tariffs, the user can now create a reservation with multiple tariffs eg B&B Night 1, Dinner B&B Night 2 and Room Only Night 3.

We have added an option on multi-night tariffs to charge all of the terms on the first night so that you get no rounding errors.

Tariff	Season	Type	Group	Price	Period	Qty	Nts	Gross	22 Th	23 Fr	24 Sa	25 Su
B&B	Summer 2016	FR4	Room	75.00 per night		1	1	75.00	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
B&B	Summer 2016	FR4	Person	10.00 per night		4	1	40.00	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
DBB	Summer 2016	FR4	Room	45.00 per night		1	2	90.00	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
DBB	Summer 2016	FR4	Person	70.00 per night		4	2	560.00	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
RO	Summer 2015	FR4	Room	45.00 per night		1	1	45.00	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

£810.00

Web Synchronisation

We have enhanced web synchronisation so that if it detects temporary network connection problems when connecting to the web booking engine, it will retry a number of times before recording an error.

We have enhanced the way in which the web booking engine synchronisation software handles communication errors part way through a synchronisation process. Changes to data tables (rooms / tariffs etc) are re-tried on the next synchronisation, while changes to room availability will cause a full system synchronisation to be automatically initiated.

Reservations

Minor enhancements to speed up the process such as defaulting the number of people in a room.

Room Chart

Minor usability enhancement so that a double click on a room in the Room Chart while the guest is "In House" opens up the "In House" details screen (rather than the Reservations Screen), to allow easier access to the Billing and Tariff details.

V3.5 is a fully supported release and is available for all of Powersoft's supported Mainstay customers free of charge.

Mainstay Support

Why should I have support?

Support is basically an insurance against impending problems. Support gives you access to Powersoft's helpdesk to resolve queries and minor issues. In the event of more complex issues our support engineers will connect remotely to your P.C's or servers to remotely resolve issues for you. Lastly and more importantly Mainstay support will entitle you free of charge to the latest versions of the Mainstay software to ensure that your business continues to operate in a stable and efficient environment. These new releases have been modified and tested to run properly with the latest versions of Windows and the SQL Server database.

What versions of Mainstay are supported by Powersoft?

We know that there are many more users of Mainstay than we are currently supporting and that these users are running on many different versions of the software. For clarity, only versions from V3.0 and above are supported by Powersoft.

What if I don't have support?

If you don't have support currently you can buy support from Powersoft and upgrade to the latest version of the software by signing a standard support contract for £89 per month which includes support and upgrades to the system. For users who have not taken support by the end of 2016 we will charge a one-off upgrade charge of £ 500 in addition to the ongoing support charge.

What benefits will I get by upgrading to the latest versions?

- The new versions are compatible with Windows XP, Windows 7, Windows 8 and Windows 10.
- The new version is compatible with SQL Server 2012 and 2014.
- The web synchronisation software has been completely re-written to make it resilient and reliable.
- A new EPOS provider Samtouch is now supported by the system.
- The system now supports Sharp POS Version 4.1.2084 and CES Touch Version 8.8.115.
- System Backups have been improved to ensure that backup copies are held for a minimum number of copies and a minimum period.
- There is an additional facility to have backups automatically stored on our cloud server.
- The system now supports multiple tariffs on a booking.
- A remote support option has been added to the help about screen.
- Reservations process modified to speed up the entry process.
- Room chart modified so when clicking on an in-house booking it opens the In House screen rather than the reservation screen.

In the Pipeline

Product roadmap

It is our intention to continue to enhance Mainstay to improve its capabilities, and we have created a development roadmap. Naturally our customers will have some pretty good ideas what they'd like to see and we would like to have their views, so if you have any feedback regarding Mainstay please let us know by emailing support@powersoft-services.co.uk.

In the meantime there are a number of areas that we want to address over the coming months to enhance Mainstay and improve its functionality.

HTML Emails

Currently the system generates plain text emails which are pretty old fashioned by today's standards. We are currently modifying the system to support HTML emails which means that you'll be able to produce smarter looking emails with variable fonts, colours and embedded images such as logos and pictures. This system will have its own editor which mean that there will be no need to have any other word processing software on the P.C. This means that HTML emails will be available in the next release V3.6.

Channel Manager

We are aware that a number of customers are already using/or would like to use channel managers for their online sales so they can easily sell through major websites like Hotels.com or Booking.com etc. We are therefore in discussions with a number of channel manager providers to find the solution that offers the best options in term of functionality and price. The objective is provide the same synchronisation facilities with the channel manager that we already have with Mainstay Online so that your inventory is always up-to-date regardless of the sales channel.

Naturally the most cost effective online sales will always come from your own web site so if you're not currently using Mainstay Online then we urge you to consider it as the fees are only 4% of revenue compared with anything between 10% and 20% for many of the channel managers.

Conferences and Events

Our Mainstay Product Specialist Robyn has a background in Conferencing and Event Management within the Hotel Industry and with her feedback we are looking at improving this area of the system with the possibility of adding a diary facility for managing enquires through to the actual event and perhaps adding enhanced billing facilities for Catering etc.

Reporting

We are looking at some of the reporting in Mainstay to see if we can improve the layout and content to make the reports more effective and meaningful so if there are any areas that you feel could be improved please let us know.

New Partners

We recently integrated the Samtouch EPOS system into Mainstay and have been pretty impressed with the way that YCR were able to help us with this process. YCR have given us a little write up about their products which we thought you might find interesting. Samtouch is supported in Mainstay V3.4 and above.

SAMTOUCH

Samtouch is the latest innovation in Point Of Sale Software which encompasses the features required by all major Hospitality sectors. Developed on the latest Microsoft .Net Technologies, Samtouch is the leading edge Point Of Sale Platform which is "Easy To Use", reliable & a cost effective solution providing you with the management tools & information to allow you to operate & expand your business on your terms.

Samtouch utilises the latest technologies of your SAM4S Point Of Sale terminal to display eye catching & easy to operate touchscreen graphics at lightning speed.

Integrated Bar & Table management features help your venue become a more streamlined more efficient operation that has proven to increase customer satisfaction and guest experience.

Samtouch now integrate with PMS software Mainstay independently designed for hotel reservations and front desk billing. Samtouch integration validates customers before passing bar & restaurant charges back to the front desk

For further information on Samtouch software please contact Nicholasmiles@ycr.co.uk call 01924 438238 or visit <http://samtouch.co.uk/>.



YCR
DISTRIBUTION
TECHNOLOGY SOLUTIONS

Support Issues

Backups

Anyone who works in the computer industry in operations will tell you that Backups are the most essential part of running any computer system, however it appears that there are a number of people who are unaware of how Mainstay performs its backups and how secure these backups actually are.

Mainstay has two methods of backups 1) The system is backed up as part of the end-of-day process, 2) The user can perform a manual backup.

However in many cases the backup files are stored on the same disk drive as the database. This means that if the hard disk fails then you will potentially lose your live database and your backups too. It is imperative therefore that you copy the backup files to another computer on the network or better still to an external disk drive or tape which can then be taken off site. This means that in the event of a total loss caused by a catastrophic event like flood or fire you will still have an up to date copy of your data.

We have made two major changes to the Backup routines on Mainstay V3.4 and above. Firstly when the Backup is run as part of the end-of-day process, the backup will run before the end-of-day processes will run.

(On the older versions of Mainstay the end-of-day would continue at the same time as the backup and in many cases on larger databases the backup ends up being run after the end-of-day process has completed. This is a problem if you want to restore to a point prior to end-of-day to perhaps add a missed posting.)

Secondly we have added a Cloud backup facility to Mainstay. In this case the backup is run automatically prior to end of day as normal, but we have a process that automatically copies the backup files to our cloud server overnight when there isn't a lot going on with the system.

(in the event this option has not been purchased then you should ensure that the backup is copied to a different disk drive from the database or better still to an external drive which is stored off-site).

Supported customers should give us a call on 01293 649680 if they have any concerns about their backups.

Techie Tips

Here's a few things to watch for in the new release Mainstay v3.5 that we are shipping now. These are given in more detail in the New Features document that's shipped with the release.

Enhancement Ref. 17434, First Night Billing

A new tick box option on the tariff setup allows multi night tariffs to be charged to the bill on the first day of stay. Formerly, a multi night tariff (e.g. a two-night weekend special rate or a weekly cottage hire) would be actually processed by Mainstay on a pro-rata, per night basis. In some cases, this would lead to rounding issues which have caused confusion with the bills and generated low value adjustment postings to the Tab Suspense account.

Admin ·

Tariff Details: COTWK

Tariff Seasons

Tariff Details

Tariff Code: COTWK Display Tariff

Tariff Name: Cottage Weekly Rental

Tariff Type: Room Only

Price period: 7 night(s) Bill 1st night

Min stay: 7 night(s)

Extra part prds to:

Chain to:

Bill Desc'n: Rental

Enhancement Ref. 17434, Multiple Tariffs during the Stay.

The system has been modified to allow the selection of different tariffs for different dates during a stay, and choose which days of the stay that they apply.

When creating a new reservation, the system functions as before but has an additional "Advanced" button on the Quote Tariff screen.

Reservation Details - Tariff

Quote Tariff

Calculated Tariff

Tariff: Bed & Breakfast

Tariff	Season	Type	Group	Price	Period	Qty	Nts	Gross	21	22	23
									W	Th	Fr
BB	Autumn 2016	DBLSUP	Person	£88.00	per night	2	3	£528.00	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

To enter multiple tariffs, first choose a tariff and select the dates that apply by clicking on the check boxes. Next pick a different tariff type from the drop down and click the add button. You can now pick the date to which that tariff applies. You can continue to add additional tariffs until you have selected a tariff for all dates of the stay.

Tariff Dates

Select Tariff Dates

Tariff: Dinner, Bed & Breakfast

Tariff	21	22	23
	We	Th	Fr
BB	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
DBB	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Minor Changes to make life easier...

- Double clicking on the room in the Room Chart where the guest is in-house will open the "In House" details screen rather than the Reservations screen to make it quicker to access billing details.
- When creating a new reservation, the quantity of adults in the room selected is automatically set to the default number for the Room Type. This saves the need for the clerk to open the room screen to set the default occupancy level.
- Quote Tariff screen – choosing a tariff from the drop down immediately causes a recalculation of the quoted tariff, rather than requiring the user to click on the "Calculate" button.

New Customers Welcome...

Powersoft are delighted to welcome the following customers who are now benefitting from Powersoft's support and the latest versions of Mainstay.

The Bridge Hotel

Buttermere, Lake District

Set in heart of the Lake District the Bridge Hotel is located between Buttermere and Crummock Water. With sumptuous rooms and self catering apartments the Bridge Hotel should be able to accommodate any one. They're even Dog friendly so the whole family can come along.



Crowwood Hotel

Cumbernauld Road, Glasgow

The Crowwood Hotel is an Award winning 3 star leisure and business hotel in Glasgow that will allow you to relax and unwind. Their ethos of providing a 5 star service in a 4 star environment with 3 star prices should ensure your visit to Glasgow will be a pleasant experience. Whether you are travelling on business, or for leisure, the Crowwood should offer a comfortable stay.



Killiecrankie Hotel

Killiecrankie, Pitlochry

Set in 4 acres of woodlands and gardens, this luxury hotel is approximately 3 miles from Blair Castle and 5 miles from the Pitlochry Festival Theatre. The 10 individually decorated, country-style rooms feature en suite bathrooms, TVs, and tea and coffee making facilities, plus views over the garden and surrounding countryside. With afternoon tea on arrival you are sure of a warm welcome at the Killiecrankie.



Internet Focus

Why is the internet so important?

We are all well aware that the internet touches every part of our day to day lives. Whether its sending and receiving emails, downloading TV programs, searching for a business or online shopping., the internet is so firmly entrenched in our psyche that don't search for something we Google it.

Online holiday and travel bookings are taking an ever greater share of the market and this means it's essential to ensure that you have a strong web presence.

Whilst there are many different online booking options maintaining your online inventory can be quite time consuming if you are doing it by hand. Every time you get an email confirming a booking you have to update your in-house system and ensure that the online inventory is kept up to date.

Not everyone is aware that Mainstay has its own online booking engine called Mainstay Online which enables bookings to be made against your inventory and automatically updated into your in-house system.

When we acquired the rights to Mainstay in May 2015 we identified a number of problems with the Mainstay Online system and for this reason we have completely re-written the way in which Mainstay Online synchronises with your in-house system. Whenever a booking is made online ,your back office system is updated and vice versa. The synchronisation is self checking and will try and re-synchronise the data if there is a problem but in the event this is not possible, we have a monitoring service that checks the status of the website so if there are any problems with synchronisation such as an failed internet connection we can notify you and sort them out.

The most cost effective way of leveraging internet bookings is through your own website. Our Technical Director attended the Travel Technology Initiative conference entitled 'The Hotel Distribution Revolution' held in London earlier this year where it was concluded that the Online Travel Agent channels are great at filling empty rooms but paying up 18% of your revenue for all of your online bookings doesn't make sense when you can do it through your own website at a fraction of that cost.

There are no monthly charges for Mainstay Online and the booking fees are only 4% of the revenue value of bookings made using the Mainstay Online booking engine. Apart from that there is a one off fee of £500 for the initial set-up.

So if you'd like more details on how Mainstay Online would benefit your business please give us a call on 01293 562730.

www-mainstay-professional.co.uk



Powersoft Computer Services Limited

16 Newhouse Business Centre • Horsham • West Sussex • RH12 4RU Telephone 01293 562730 Email sales@powersoft-services.co.uk

REGISTERED OFFICE 16 NEWHOUSE BUSINESS CENTRE, OLD CRAWLEY RD, FAYGATE, HORSHAM, WEST SUSSEX RH12 4RU, ENGLAND

DIRECTORS C J ELEY D V PEACE REGISTERED NO 2630916 VAT NO 602 3240 02