CASE STUDY:
InterContinental Hotels Group Relies on Ghostery Marketing Cloud Management to Increase Digital ROI and Performance
THE PROBLEM:

As the Director of Web Delivery at InterContinental Hotels Group — the world’s largest hotel company, with 4,732 hotels globally across 11 different brands — Chad Westfall is focused on maximizing key functionalities like search, inquiries and bookings. Every millisecond of page latency costs thousands of dollars in lost sales. In 2013, Chad began experiencing slow website response time across a number of IHG’s domains. He suspected it was coming from unauthorized digital vendors collecting data and slowing down several of IHG’s domains. But he had been unable to identify their source. Westfall needed to regain control of these vendors that comprise IHG’s “Marketing Cloud” to understand how they were impacting his company’s digital ROI and take action.

THE SOLUTION:

In September 2013, Westfall implemented Ghostery’s Marketing Cloud Management (MCM) platform, a turnkey, tagless and cloud-based SaaS solution. “IHG views marketing cloud management as an important function within the technology group to assess the vendors across our properties, monitor their performance and ensure that we are delivering the best customer experience to our clients,” he said.
THE RESULTS:

With MCM in place, Westfall found an alarming number of unknown vendors across IHG’s domains. While IHG had direct relationships with some, many were accessing the site through complex redirect chains. Armed with a complete view of how each vendor gained access to an IHG web property and its impact on the website’s performance, Westfall began the process of taking back control of IHG’s marketing cloud.

It began with an audit of all digital vendors seen across their sites. Then Westfall determined which department was responsible, and went to work to solve three big issues that impact IHG’s digital ROI:

- **Slow Vendors** - Latency is a perpetual issue. With MCM, Westfall was able to finally determine why a vendor’s tags slowed down his pages, leading to shopping cart abandonment and lower conversions. Some tags were implemented incorrectly on the IHG sites, relative to the rest of the web, while others were consistently below best practice benchmarks. Sorting this out lowered cart abandonment and increased conversions, driving ROI forward.

- **Redundant Vendors** - Westfall found that IHG was using different vendors to solve the same problems. Removing these duplicative vendors from IHG’s marketing cloud lowered customer acquisition costs and improved operational efficiency.

- **Blacklisted Vendors** - Relying on the same vendors as your competitors poses a threat of customer data leaking out to them. Westfall was able to see where this competitive overlap occurred, and removed vendors who risked utilizing IHG’s data to service competitors.

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**CHAD WESTFALL**  
DIRECTOR OF WEB DELIVERY
AT A GLANCE:

- IHG’s diverse portfolio of hotels is comprised of 11 different brands — including Crowne Plaza, Holiday Inn, and InterContinental — spanning across 4,732 hotels globally
- The IHG site averages 1.8 million visitors monthly
- IHG implemented Marketing Cloud Management in 2013
- IHG works with approximately 80 digital marketing vendors

Filling vacant hotel rooms each night is no small task, making IHG’s marketing technology vendors critical to driving ROI. As digital marketing strategies continue to grow in scope and complexity, having a full cost-benefit analysis of each vendor has become essential.

With the MCM platform, Westfall has a common set of metrics that articulate across the company where digital vendors are causing problems. Creating best practices for marketing cloud management took time, commitment and coordination from each department, but according to Westfall, “It was well worth it in the end. With the many websites we manage, Ghostery’s MCM is a great benefit, especially since it did not require us to add more technology to our sites to figure out what was going on. MCM also helped bridge the divide between IT, marketing, legal and security by enforcing cross-department communication and alignment of our website strategies.”

NEXT STEPS:

While progress has been made, Westfall acknowledges that the work does not end here. “MCM is not a one-time incident that then requires little upkeep,” he said. “If we want to see results, we know we’ve got to have a process in place for continuous monitoring of our vendors.” To start, he plans to create a vendor questionnaire to make sure that both parties understand and agree to IHG’s data collection and sharing policies.