

Eyeing the future, DHISCO pays homage to its roots

“We are the glue that connects the world,” Toni Portmann, chief executive officer of DHISCO, said.

Six months after taking the helm of what used to be part of Pegasus Solutions, Portmann is resolved that hospitality distribution will be the company’s focus for the foreseeable future.

She said too many companies fall prey to what is known in technology circles as “bright shiny object syndrome” — new ideas that

In Focus

capture the imagination and, in the end, simply create a distraction.

“We will stick to our knitting,” Portmann said.

“Our mission is to passionately provide intelligence and solutions that drive our partners’ success,” she said.

“Our focus is on what hotels need to drive occupancy.”

There’s a lot of things you can do with distribution, Portmann said.

“There’s a huge benefit in supporting not only the Pegasus CRS but all CRSs,” she said.

“They are important partners, and we are not competing with them; we are complementing them.”

Business intelligence is one area where Portmann believes DHISCO can make a meaningful contribution.

The company performs a huge number of transactions, and “we want to see the patterns underneath,” she said.

Portmann is intrigued by the concept of personalization made possible by big data analytics, both for DHISCO’s clients and their own customers.

She is excited about the latest addition to DHISCO’s client list: Nustay.com, a start-up based in Barcelona and Dubai that will offer personally tailored hotel discounts based on registered member profiles.

Nustay, which bills itself as a combination online travel agency and digital marketing channel, is planning to launch later this month.

DHISCO’s name — Distribution Hospitality Intelligent Systems Co. — is both a reflection of the company’s focus and homage to its roots, Portmann said.

In 1989, a group of large hotel chains, along with a company that belonged to Rupert Murdoch, joined forces to create “The Hotel Industry Switch Co.,” or THISCO. The goal



was to develop a way for disparate hotel systems to connect with GDSs.

Over the years, THISCO morphed into Pegasus Solutions and aspired to become an “end-to-end” hotel technology provider, and then some.

It worked with InterContinental Hotels Group to create a property management system but abandoned the project after four years in 2005.

It sold its commission processing service in 2013.



Toni Portmann

Last fall, it spun off its central reservations system to Regent Equity Partners.

Once a leader in the CRS field, it had fallen behind competitors such as Sabre Hospitality Solutions’ SynXis and Oracle’s Micros Opera systems.

The remainder of the company, sporting the name Pegasus Electronic Distribution Services, was itself acquired by HIG Capital in November, which brought in Portmann.

Portmann did not have a hotel industry background — her last job before making the move was chief executive officer of LIT Online/LockIn, an e-learning company — but she did have experience working with HIG on a number of projects.

She was brought in as full-time executive chairwoman and interim CEO — there was initial concern about her lack of hotel experience — but that concern has dissipated, and she doesn’t seem anxious to go anywhere else for the foreseeable future.