

## Individual Restaurant Company: Streamlining reservations across multiple restaurant sites



*"Every booking now goes straight into the restaurant's electronic reservations book making it impossible to miss. The system automatically collects information about the customer through mandatory fields on the interface, the booker receives a personalised confirmation and we look a whole lot more professional."*

**Adam Purslow, Head of Operational IT, IRC**

### Location

IRC headquarters are based in Manchester with 34 restaurant sites located across the UK under brands Piccolino, The Restaurant Bar and Grill, Zinc Bar Grill and Bank.

### Livebookings Services Used

- Online reservations from their own website
- Premium electronic reservations book
- Livebookings Academies

### Objectives

IRC's principal objectives were to enhance its online presence and find a way to manage their reservations process more accurately and efficiently.

### Challenges

The biggest problem IRC found consistently with their restaurants was communication. *"When you have one reservation diary in the restaurant if people ring up first thing in the morning to book and staff haven't opened the diary yet they will write it down on a piece of paper and it may get lost or misinterpreted - could be table of 10, could be a table of 15. Or, there may only be admin staff working early morning and they don't really know whether we can take a table of 10 or 15. If 4 tables of 10 are already booked for 8pm this could potentially cause problems in the kitchen and front of house. Also, you were never sure they would actually turn up."*

**Adam Purslow, IRC.**

Prior to taking on Livebookings IRC had been using a booking interface on their restaurant websites however this had many restrictions such as the inability to check availability which often led to diners emailing instead to ensure a confirmation response. In some cases emails would go unchecked and bookings would be missed. Customers didn't have a set means to make reservations. Consolidation on these was needed and Livebookings covered all they required to prevent booking confusion.



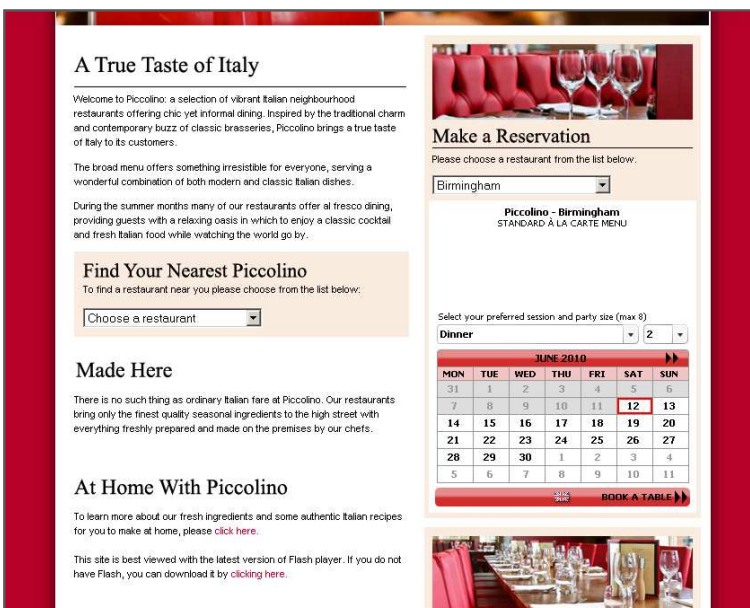
### Why Livebookings?

IRC tested Open Table in two of their sites to compare benefits amongst electronic reservation books. *"We found Open Table a lot harder to manage; the system itself is very clunky. The beauty of Livebookings is you can make it do as little or as much as you want. You can put promotions on there – but you don't have to either. The most important thing is it doesn't take potential diners to another website. If you try and do that with Open Table you will be taken to their website where there is a whole lot of other restaurant websites for diners to choose from. The Livebookings interface is in built to our website so diners are never led elsewhere."*

**Adam Purslow, IRC.**

### Approach

IRC worked closely with their web designers to incorporate the Livebookings interface onto the majority of their restaurant sites over a two and half year period. Bank and Zinc (originally two separate companies) had been using Livebookings already for some time. The group's first implementation of Livebookings was in its Wandsworth Piccolino restaurant giving them the insight as to how to streamline their reservations system across the group. IRC then incorporated Livebookings throughout the Piccolino and The Restaurant Bar and Grill restaurant chains.



The screenshot shows a website for Piccolino, an Italian restaurant. The page is titled "A True Taste of Italy" and includes a "Make a Reservation" section. The reservation form includes a dropdown menu for "Choose a restaurant" (set to Birmingham), a "Select your preferred session and party size (max 8)" dropdown (set to Dinner and 2), and a calendar for June 2010. The calendar shows the date 12th highlighted. Below the calendar is a "BOOK A TABLE" button. The page also features sections for "Find Your Nearest Piccolino", "Made Here", and "At Home With Piccolino".

### Results

In 2008, when only the Bank and Zinc sites used Livebookings 53.9% of people visiting the IRC websites were there for 0-30 seconds. Two years later this figure has dropped significantly to 22.8%. They now average 44,000 hits to all sites across the IRC portfolio and 8500 online bookings per month. This equates to a 20% conversion rate between website hits and online bookings. In 2009 IRC restaurants collectively received 45972 online bookings either directly from their websites or through network partner websites. In the first five months of 2010 they had already received 36206.

*"We found from our own statistics that the majority of bookings come after 5pm, with many taken after 10pm. So people are not booking in work time, they're doing it when they go home. Without the Livebookings online real-time reservation system we wouldn't be able to pick those bookings up."* **Adam Purslow, IRC.**

### Benefits of Working with Livebookings

*"The highlight is working with the team. You deal with the same people regularly plus the speed and efficiency with which everything gets done makes things so much easier. As a company we're still growing and are still introducing Livebookings with 31 of our 34 sites so far live. One goes live in two weeks and this time we've only given the Livebookings a week's notice but they've been fantastic at getting it up and running super quick. Whenever the interface does go live on one of our websites we're always surprised at volumes through our own and partner websites with bookings beginning to filter through literally hours after it has been turned on. Larger sites take between 1000 and 3000 covers per month through our own website."* **Adam Purslow, IRC.**