PCH Hotels and Resorts Delivers State-of-the-Art Guest Experience

Renaissance Montgomery Hotel and Spa Relies on Cisco Network to Return to Grand Tradition of Southern Hospitality

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

PCH HOTELS AND RESORTS MARRIOTT RENAISSANCE
- Montgomery, Alabama, United States

BUSINESS CHALLENGE
- Create a memorable guest experience
- Attract business guests
- Gain operational efficiencies

NETWORK SOLUTION
- Connected Real Estate solutions for delivering converged voice, data, video to guest rooms. Connected Real Estate solutions can also be used for converging security, building automation, and management over the same intelligent infrastructure.
- Connected Hospitality solution for personalizing and adding value to the guest experience
- Unified Wireless Network for streamlining operations and improving convenience to guests

BUSINESS RESULTS
- Help ensure rapid response to guest requests
- Personalize guest welcomes and deliver a memorable experience
- Eliminate costs associated with printing property directories and room service door hangers

Business Challenge

Montgomery, Alabama has just become a hospitality destination, thanks to the new Renaissance Montgomery Hotel & Spa at the Convention Center. Perfectly positioned in historic downtown, this magnificent hotel has over 140,000 square feet of exhibit and meeting space, an 1800-seat state-of-the-art performing arts center, European spa, and 100,000 square feet of kitchen space under one roof. The hotel is also situated along the Robert Trent Jones Golf Trail, which consists of 26 top-ranked golf courses. However, the most impressive part of the Renaissance Montgomery Hotel is not the architecture or golf courses. It is the guest experience that sets this property apart.

During the hotel's early development, the owner, Retirement System of Alabama, was seeking ways to differentiate it from other properties, so that it could effectively compete for business that otherwise would go to more well-known destinations, such as Las Vegas and Orlando. The executive team already had established seven successful hotels in the southern United States. For this project, they wanted to use technology to deliver outstanding guest services while increasing operational efficiency and savings.

"Guest satisfaction is a critical piece of our success," says Scott Watts, Corporate Director of Information Technology, of PCH Hotels and Resorts. The integrated in-room technology package is a major contributor to an amazing guest experience at the Renaissance Montgomery Hotel and Spa.

PCH Hotels and Resorts had long been a Cisco® customer, and Watts knew that a Cisco network was the right choice for the Renaissance. However, with the company's plans for converged data, voice, IP-based television, movies on demand, wireless, and other technologies, it needed a partner with the IP expertise and experience to integrate numerous applications and bring everything together.

Network Solution

After an extensive search, Watts was introduced to Guest-Tek, the largest provider of hospitality broadband services and the only company that offered a converged, IP data network solution that delivers high-speed Internet access, voice, and video to the guest room from a single platform. Guest-Tek is also a Cisco partner.

Guest-Tek designed the hotel's Cisco network to provide the scalable platform that would be needed for its integrated solutions. The network's highly reliable bandwidth and Quality of Service supports multiple, high-definition (HD) TV and IPTV channels that operate simultaneously on the same network to deliver voice, data, and video traffic to all 346 guest rooms, 28 meeting rooms, and operations areas.

Each guest room features a large, flat-panel HDTV that offers regular television channels as well as movies on demand, archived television shows on demand, and other customized content. The network also supports all hotel telephony, which provides regular telephone calling as well as customized guest applications. Guest-Tek integrated applications between the television and telephone, delivering a navigational menu and user interface to each HDTV screen. Guests can use the telephone or the HDTV remote control to easily place a room service order, schedule a wake-up call, or request housekeeping items.

Guest rooms and suites also feature interactive workstations with innovative connectivity panels that allow guests to plug laptops, MP3 players, or digital cameras into the system. The system automatically senses which device is used and enables them to instantly listen to MP3-player audio over the room speakers, access high-speed Internet, or view their digital photos on the large, flat-panel screen.

> "Until recently, guests had better technology at home than most hotels could offer. With these types of solutions, we are able to return to the days when people stayed at hotels, and the experience was significantly better than what they had at home. It is wonderful to be bringing back the grand tradition of exceptional hospitality."
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> **—Scott Watts, Corporate Director of Information Technology, PCH Hotels and Resorts**

A Cisco Unified Wireless Network provides comprehensive wireless mesh coverage for the entire property. Guests can access the Internet anywhere on the property using a Wi-Fi connection, or they can take the small, portable Wi-Fi telephones that are placed in each room and visit the pool, restaurant, or spa and stay in touch. Operations staff, including housekeepers, banquet servers, engineers, and maintenance teams all use the wireless phones to communicate with anyone across the property. With the Guest-Tek integration, all data and voice are carried over the Cisco network, and all management can be performed from a single, centralized location. The Guest-Tek solution also includes integration with service providers' external billing systems, simplifying

accounting and bookkeeping for hotel staff. All told, the network spans 2900 ports, 168 wireless access points, and more than 900 IP telephony endpoints.

"One of my early concerns was supporting a network of this size and helping ensure that all of the various elements could deliver high performance to each room, no matter what else was running on the network," said Watts. "I can easily say that none of this would be possible without the Cisco network as our foundation."

PRODUCT LIST
Routing and Switching
• Cisco Catalyst 3750 Series Switches
Unified Wireless
• Cisco 3845 Router
• Cisco Aironet 1242 Wireless Access points
• Cisco Wireless Control Server

Business Results

The hotel delivers an impressive welcome to its guests. When guests first enter their rooms, the HDTV displays a screen-saver gallery of elegant, high-resolution images of the golf courses and hotel properties with background music and short descriptions. As soon as guests pick up the remote control and press any button, the screen displays a personalized welcome, which is also played on the bedside IP telephone. The televisions also function as high-definition entertainment systems, delivering movies, television shows, and other content on demand.

The integrated technology solution also enables operations staff to be responsive to guests' needs. For example, if guests wish to request additional towels, they can place the request by telephone through the hotel concierge system. The request is transformed into an e-mail and delivered over the wireless network to the housekeeper closest to the guest's room. The housekeeper acknowledges the request, delivers the towels, and closes out the "case" using the mobile IP phone. The system enables staff to deliver unmatched service—often in less than two minutes— while allowing the hotel to track response times and measure improvement.

Wake-up calls can also be placed by telephone or on the TV screen. Guests can place wake-up calls for any time, for each morning that they stay. If they place a call over the phone, they can also confirm it on the TV screen, using the remote. Calls can be easily changed or cancelled if plans change. The Renaissance breakfast ordering system is also on the screen. The hotel estimates that it saves US$18,000 per year by not having to print door tags and eliminates unhappy guests when door tags are lost or removed from doors by pranksters. The system also allows the Renaissance to eliminate the large binders of hotel information that are traditionally placed in each room. Managers no longer have to print, re-print, and continuously make sure that items like tee times and restaurant menus are still up to date. This eliminates approximately US$53,000 per year in binding and printing costs.

Watts often finds himself leading sales tours of the hotel's technology capabilities for meeting planners and corporate IT executives who are considering booking the facilities for conferences and meetings. With a multi-gigabit, redundant network backbone, fiber to every meeting room, the wireless mesh network, and the ability to set up secure virtual networks, selling meeting space has changed dramatically.

"We can provide whatever any company wants," says Watts. "Instead of telling them what the network can do, we ask them what they want to do. Tell me what type of network you want, and I can give it to you. They are always completely amazed, and then they go and tell other meeting planners."

The Renaissance has also been able to easily customize content to serve corporate customers in their own language. Hyundai has a large facility near Montgomery, so the Renaissance frequently hosts executives and guests from Korea. Welcome content and other information can be directed to the guest rooms in Korean, making Korean guests' visits more welcoming.

Next Steps

The PCH Hotels and Resorts team continues to seek new ways to serve its guests. They plan to enable ticket sales for events in the hotel's performing arts center, as well as other local events around Montgomery—through the HDTVs in guest rooms. A new reservations system for golf tee times at any of the 26 Robert Trent Jones golf courses, as well as hotel spa reservations will soon come online.

The hotel will have the opportunity to identify new revenue-generating services that complement traditional services. For example, the Renaissance could record event keynote presentations and make them available as a pay-per-view offering for convention guests to view in their rooms or go back and view a second time after the session has ended. Trade show vendors could purchase advertising on guest room screens or sponsor the user home page, so that when the guest logs in, a message could appear that says "Welcome Mr. Smith. Enjoy a complementary beverage, with compliments from Cisco."

PCH Hotels and Resorts is also evaluating applications for integrating room key locks with proactive security monitoring. For example, if an exit door is opened and supposed to be closed, the camera will automatically capture the frames and send to the manager on duty.

There are also opportunities to take advantage of unsold appointment times at the spa, available tables at the restaurant or available tee times to run promotions for "spur-of-the-moment" discounts. For example, if there are several open appointment times at the spa, the spa director could discount the price for those times and recover revenue that would otherwise be lost.

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For more information

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