Hospitality in Focus

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Swisscom offers Smartphone WiFi service and mobile communication solutions in hotels

Travellers are increasingly dependent on their Smart phones to connect into their own environments in favour of using their laptops. During meetings or waiting times in hotel lobbies, guests constantly stream their news or communicate over applications such as Skype® using their handhelds.

A new service is being introduced by Swisscom that since 2003, has established a high-speed broadband network in more than 2,000 partner hotels in 18 European countries and the United States, encompassing some 223,000 hotel rooms. Moreover, the company provides customized network solutions at more than 10,000 meetings and events every year.

As a network operator, Swisscom has seen bandwidth consumed through such WiFi mobile phones rise constantly. Although download volumes are traditionally lower than those for laptops, the gap is closing very quickly. The average volume per handheld session recorded at Swisscom partner hotels is currently at 86MB, with many users going over 1GB. The average length of session is 14 hours.

Get online in three clicks only

The new Swisscom service allows users to connect to the Internet in only three clicks. Once logged on, the guest can stay connected for 24 hours at a time. If they leave the building, they are automatically re-connected when they comes back into the hotel. Wireless PMS integration enables a personalized user interface, seamless data processing and invoicing through the guest's room bill. The Swisscom service also provides unlimited uploads and downloads at WiFi broadband speed.

The new service has been optimized for iPhones, Symbian phones such as the ones from Nokia, Google Androids and Windows Mobile devices. It is presently available in more than 1100 partner locations across Europe and is ready for further rollout.

Smart phones keep you in touch with home

"More and more guests want to use their smart phones to access the Internet in our hotel," says Gordon Barker, Sales and Marketing Manager at Danesfield House Hotel and Spa, a Swisscom partner hotel close to Heathrow airport. "The mobile phone is more than just a device to make calls with, it also allows you to listen to your favourite music, chat to friends, and send a quick photo of the breakfast buffet to relatives back home, so ultimately you

never feel far away from your friends and family. Thanks to Swisscom, we will now be able to fully meet these requirements."

"The rise of the Smartphone reconfirms the long-term value of our wireless hotel technology", comments Leo Brand, CEO of Swisscom Hospitality Services. "In addition to providing connectivity to the guest, we can assist hotels in promoting their own services through customized applications. We are actively working with hotel chains on specific applications as well as on new, competitive functionalities for both hoteliers and guests to leverage the numerous possibilities of employing Smart phones in the hotel space."

Addition marks HBSi's first corporate-focused channel partner

 HBSi, an IBS Group company, has expanded its reach in Europe with the addition of hotel.de to its network of distribution partners. With 3.5 million registered users, hotel.de is a leading online hotel reservation service for private and corporate clients. Initially catering largely to the German market, the company is now expanding globally via its international brand, hotel.info.

Hotel.de will be available through HBSi's iDemand Gateway, an integrated channel management and connectivity solution for hotel companies. The Gateway entirely automates the connections between hotel inventory systems and distribution outlets, giving hotel companies an easy and cost-effective way to have connections to travel web sites and other distribution partners.

"With HBSi's growth, it makes absolute sense for hotel.de to join its Demand Partner Network", said Reinhard Wick, CSO of the company. "Our goal is to become the leading hotel reservation service for business and corporate customers, and with HBSi's service we have the flexibility and configurability options to give our customers even more compelling choices," Reinhard Wick added.

"Hotel.de is a significant addition to HBSi's Demand Partner Network," said HBSi COO Greg Berman. "Through its expansive reach and popularity in Europe, hotel.de exposes our hotel customers' real-time inventory to an even broader audience, including corporate customers in Germany and throughout Europe."

The Connaught's Additional Investment

Agilysys, Inc. a leading provider of innovative IT solutions, including specifically-designed hospitality software solutions, has announced that the Connaught, one of London's most prestigious hotels, has implemented ResPAK, the specialist dining reservations and table management module. ResPAK is fully integrated with InfoGenesis™ POS by Agilysys, which the property has used for the past two years.

"Integrating InfoGenesis POS and ResPAK means we can personalize our service around guest preferences and requirements, while streamlining reservations and maximizing table usage and guest spend," said Chris Thompson, IT manager at the Connaught.

InfoGenesis POS is an enterprise-ready point-of-sale solution that combines powerful reporting and configuration capabilities with an easy-to-use touch-screen terminal application. The system, which is designed for multi-unit operations common in hospitality environments, can manage any combination of dining and bar operations and equips hotels to capitalize on guest revenue.

At the Connaught, ResPAK is now used both within the multi-award-winning Hélène Darroze at the Connaught restaurant, with its luxurious surroundings and Michelin-starred cuisine, as well as in the hotel's relaxed bistro-style restaurant, Espelette.

ResPAK's functions include:

- A real-time, self-service portal that optimizes online reservations without the need for staff;
- Tools, such as restaurant layout charts and waitlists automated bookings, which make best use of table availability;
- SMS messaging and paging that ensures timely guest communication;
- Built-in e-mail functionality and storage of guest details and preferences, which allows for targeted marketing, resulting in repeat visits and increased business; and
- Reporting and analysis tools that reveal trends in bookings and spend, enabling properties to plan for staffing during peak and quiet periods.

"The best restaurants achieve a perfect balance between operational efficiency and guest service," said Tina Stehle, senior vice president and general manager of Agilysys Hospitality Solutions Group. "They avoid the pitfalls of under-utilization of tables, lack of guest information and inadequate preparation for busy periods, all of which can harm profitability. With ResPAK, the Connaught is finding that table planning can be managed smoothly and more profitably, and convenient online in-house booking facilities can be extended to new and returning guests."

The Connaught, owned and managed by Maybourne Hotel Group, recently made a multi-million dollar investment in a restoration and renovation programme, which includes a redesign of the guest rooms, suites and interiors using some of the world's finest designers and craftsmen. The legendary hotel is located in the heart of exclusive Mayfair Village and its fashionable boutiques, restaurants, art galleries and museums. The Connaught was recently named 'Hotel of the Year London,' the ultimate accolade for hotels in the United Kingdom, at the AA Hospitality Awards 2009-2010 event.

Agilysys, meanwhile, is a leading provider of innovative IT solutions to

corporate and public-sector customers, with special expertise in select markets, including retail and hospitality. The company uses technology — including hardware, software and services — to help customers resolve their most complicated IT needs.

Links:

Agilsys Technology: www.agilsys.com

HBSi: www.hotelbookingsolutions.com

Swisscom: www.swisscom.com/hospitality

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