Swissotel Sydney

5-Star guests services driven telephony

swissôtel
Hotels & Resorts

The Customer

The five-star Swissotel Sydney, in the heart of the CBD, has 369 luxury rooms and suites that offer a fresh, modern setting for business and private stays. With the recent renovation of the hotel's guestrooms, lobby bar, restaurant, conferencing facilities and exclusive Executive Club lounge, Swissotel secured its position as Sydney's conference and leisure hotel of choice.

The Challenges

The motivation for Swissotel Sydney's continuing telephony platform investment is primarily twofold: its luxury environment - with standards set by the group and brand - places a distinct focus on consistently high quality guest services; and, as a member of the Accor Group, it must comply with a strict expenditure regime.

Preparation for the 2000 Sydney Olympics drove refurbishment across the hospitality sector. But 15 years on, many business and infrastructure technologies were struggling at end of life. At Swissotel Sydney, the main server of the property's PABX's dual CPU had failed and the system was in the untenable position of being reliant on its backup machine.

Swissotel Sydney could not consider using hosted VoiP due to the balance of cost and functionality. Richard Yu, IT Officer, Swissotel Sydney, said: "Where hotels once generated revenues from its guest telephony services, today, with everyone carrying their own devices, in-room phones now represent a cost to the business. So we are very conscious of our spending in this area."

Overview

Industry
• Hospitality / Tourism

Challenges
• Unified communications services to luxury expectations
• Technology end of life issues
• Flexibility and capacity for expanding guest services

Solution
• NEC Smart Hospitality Services
• TALKWARE relationship and implementation partner
• Telephony and communications infrastructure

Results
• Staged migration path over decades maximises all value from legacy components and constrains costs
• A guest services telephony platform matching its 5-Star luxury accommodation rating
• Peace of mind from fully supported and maintained environment

The Solution

Swissotel's stepping stone migration keeps pace with its evolving business

In 2014 NEC and partner TALKWARE proposed a new telephony front end to phase Swissotel from its 20 year old IMX PABX to a resilient, full featured platform in an affordable migration. The options for the solution were either analogue or digital.

As part of the upgrade, an assessment was made of the property's operations and how guests interface with the hotel. The core of the system was the small Swiss Service contact centre whose agents take all internal calls for administration, housekeeping, engineering, room service etc.

The migration of the total environment to the new NEC Univerge SV9300 VoiP server was completed in 2018 - using as much of SV8300 hardware as possible. The existing analogue handsets in the guest rooms were retained and configured for the new environment in a handset refresh saving of $100,000. All administration extensions were migrated to digital terminals.

The staged upgrade path has maximised all value from legacy components of Swissotel's system and constrained the outlay. "NEC and TALKWARE works hard to help us pull the last value from our legacy equipment. They went so far as to source a second hand CPU to keep our dual system going," Yu said.

While the new components are robust and largely 'set and forget' with automatic updates, the platform still relies on legacy cabling. The hotel's monthly support covers all issues such as cabling or handset faults or impacts from power spikes.

"We take the relationship we have with TALKWARE and NEC very seriously. Being able to call for assistance, 24/7 and speak to a person, rather than logging a ticket with a machine, is essential to us," Yu said.

The hotel's telephony platform, which underpins its 5-Star customer service, is now secure on a single system. "We have a technologically advanced system, designed specifically for the hospitality sector and which will be maintained and supported into the future. That gives us a huge feeling of confidence," Yu said.

The Results

"Our evolving business continues to benefit from this 20 year, migration through three generations of technology," Yu said. This latest project "allowed us to take another transforming step and immediately smarten up our front desk services - without the $180,000 upfront we would have needed to totally replace our phone system."

The Smart Evolution of Swissotel Sydney's Telephony Infrastructure

1998
• NEC IMX PABX installed

2012
• IMX End of Life

2014
• installed NEC Univerge SV8300 communications server to move all services, except guest rooms from the IMX with advanced integration to Opera via FCS port replications.
• The project also saw the smart integration of UM8000 unified messaging and voicemail solution to the hotel's PMS system via FCS middleware.
• Two Integrated IP Console (IIC) Operator consoles (as a bolt-on to the IMX) added new extensions and services to front desk, concierge and front office.

2016
• transitioned 80 back office phones from IMX to the SV8300, capacity was expanded, carrier services were migrated from the IMX, and Swiss Service team IIC consoles added.

2018
• Migrated remaining IMX and SV8300 to latest UNIVERGE SV9300 to simplify system design and ensure longevity and business continuity on a fully supported platform.

NEC

The Results

One of the most significant impacts has been from the improved functionality of Integrated IP Consoles (IICs): "Before when the phone rang, our service people could see only a guest name and room number. Now, the PC-based hospitality consoles display so much more information, from a guest's status within Accor, down to how they like to be addressed. Because we have amazing visibility into guest details and preferences, we can customise our 5 Star service," Yu said.

We see unlimited 5-Star potential from our guest experience-driven telephony infrastructure.

Richard Yu, IT Officer, Swissotel Sydney

The new system has also streamlined administration of Swissotel Sydney. From analysis of IIC statistics – such as time of day and volumes of calls to Swiss Service through the IIC – staffing levels across the business, throughout each 24 hours, can be more accurately set. This results in both efficient operations and a better service offering.

The platform meets all current security structures of the hotel while having the capacity to enable a migration to iP if that path is chosen in the future. And Swissotel Sydney's relationship with NEC and TALKWARE has opened it to the potential of advances such as mobility and voice across WiFi.

About TALKWARE

TALKWARE delivers business telephony solutions in the 30-1,000 extension market, from simple standalone systems through to complex Voice over IP networks incorporating distributed Contact Centre functionality and hosted solutions. TALKWARE has grown from three people when formed in 1998 to currently employing 15 staff – in sales, service, installation and maintenance teams - advising and consulting to a vast corporate client base. Talkware has a strong presence in the hospitality industy.

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