

EXPERT ARTICLE

Structured Cabling: Driving service excellence and new possibilities for hospitality

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In the hospitality industry, customer satisfaction and service excellence are, perhaps, more important than in any other sector. In today's hospitality industry, in which customer loyalty is hard to come by, becoming a traveller's hotel of choice might be the result of just one good review on a travel website. Providing high-speed broadband services is an essential pre-requisite to achieving this kind of customer satisfaction.

Access to social media and online resources and applications are as much a part of the holiday experience as a sightseeing tour or authentic local meal. Holidaymakers are eager to share real-time updates with family and friends. In fact, the SpringHill Suites Annual Travel Survey shows an astonishing 57% of guests would not be prepared to exchange social media on vacation for a 25% hotel discount.



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New and 'smart' ways of working mean that a growing number of (self-employed) professionals require to access documents and applications anywhere, anytime - also when travelling. Today's travellers also want immediate access to tourist information, weather reports, travel guides and more. Guests have come to expect fast, unfailing WiFi, TV, telephony and other advanced services. What's more, even if the hotel is fully booked, service quality should be maintained. With this in mind, it would appear reasonable to claim technology which supports high speed internet connectivity is now as much a part of the service equation as good accommodation and housekeeping staff.

Opening up new service possibilities

To stay competitive and future-proof your service offering, you need to build a backbone that doesn't only support current demands, but which will also generate new opportunities for delivering differentiating services. The benefits of introducing structured cabling into the hospitality sector are evident. A quality cabling infrastructure is the technological foundation of excellent service. However, the advantages extend well beyond providing fast and reliable internet access.



The Millennium Hotel in Amman, for which R&M provided and implemented cabling

Property owners can create entirely new ways to engage with customers through social media channels. Meeting rooms can be revamped with state-of-the-art global conferencing facilities and digital signage. This technology opens up the possibility to incorporate new bandwidth-hungry technologies such as VOIP, IPTV, digital entertainment and on-demand services and even backend facility management and building management systems. These applications require the availability of large amounts

of bandwidth throughout the hotel, over a very reliable connection. With confidence in the system's ability to scale and accommodate rapid changes and requirements, the hotel can quickly differentiate itself.

Structured cabling can allow property owners to install always-available self-service kiosks which will not only appeal to guests but also reduce the strain on staff during peak operating periods. The latest security and surveillance technologies, incumbent on high speed networks, can also be easily integrated to reduce the risk of both theft and loss.

Why invest?

Before high-speed internet services became so widely demanded, cabling in hotels was installed to meet the needs of individual facilities. These cabling components were often selected solely on price with little consideration for the long term utility of the network. The result: criss-crossing cabling, retrofit technology and layouts which give network planners sleepless nights.

Fortunately, this mentality is changing and structured cabling is now considered as vital to a building as any other utility system, such as electrical systems or water supply. The convergence of different building systems and networks is an important trend, and can offer hotel owners and staff a wide range of benefits, both practical and cost-related.

Structured cabling acts as the information transport backbone for all low voltage systems and can address the current and future requirements from numerous end devices. These include communications, entertainment appliances, monitoring and surveillance systems, access control, signage, electronic central clock systems, environmental monitoring and even building management systems.

Familiar connectivity

Unlike office buildings and commercial properties, changes to layout and design in hotels can seldom be performed without a significant impact on aesthetics and the comfort of guests. This makes the

process of structured cabling, planning and design a formidable challenge. However, smart planning makes it possible to upgrade and adapt services and hardware without guests even noticing work is being carried out.

In a typical hotel, there are multiple facilities such as restaurants, spas, sports facilities, meeting rooms and suites, all of which require different systems to serve the requirements of guests and staff. Each of these need to be taken into account during the building and pre-opening phases. The cabling infrastructure for a hotel, if properly installed, can stand as a valued investment for 15 to 20 years. However, integration must be carefully planned. Identifying cabling vendors and implementation partners who have specialist experience in hospitality projects is vital to ensuring network longevity. Not only this, a well implemented cabling infrastructure will eliminate the hassles of maintenance and upgrade in the future.

Once the infrastructure is in place, hotels can use structured cabling as a key differentiator, introduce a wide range of new services, connect with guests and ensure top levels of surveillance, safety and other factors which contribute to the holiday experience - at an attractive cost and with easy handling. Holidaymakers and professional travellers alike will be delighted with enhanced services as well as the kind of connectivity they are accustomed to at home or in the office at every spot of the hotel or resort.

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