

How THUS Is Helping Leading Hotel Group Boost Efficiency And Customer Satisfaction

As the travelling public in general has become more and more discerning, hoteliers have come under greater and greater pressure to differentiate themselves in the marketplace, and to improve the overall experience and the service packages they offer. At the same time, in common with the rest of the travel industry, the hotel sector is being forced to look at ways to reduce operating expenses, not least because of the turndown in travelling numbers that has followed the events of September 11 in New York.

Can these apparently conflicting goals be met? Milton Hotels, the long established Scottish luxury hotel group, believes they can.

First established in the 1950s with the purchase of the West End Hotel in Fort William, the family-owned concern now has two hotels in Fort William, and others in Oban, Stirling, Inverness and Glasgow. The latest to open was the Four-Star Milton Hotel and Leisure Club in Glasgow which offers 129 bedrooms, 12 luxury apartments and extensive health and leisure facilities.

Telecoms Upgraded

Milton Hotels is a relatively heavy user of telecommunications and related services, both internally between its different hotels, and externally in its dealings with the public and in its support of the needs of its resident guests. As part of an on-going drive to make its day-to-day operations more efficient and to further increase the level of customer satisfaction it provides, the group decided to overhaul its telecommunications capabilities. The supplier it chose for the upgrade was THUS, one of the UK's foremost suppliers of voice, data, Internet and contact centre services.

What's New?

Using its ultra-modern fibre optic network THUS is now providing Milton Hotels with a range of advanced, high quality telecommunication services, both for internal and external use. THUS has connected all the hotels together and is providing them with indirect voice services over another operator's lines and switched voice services over its own fibre. In addition it is delivering high-speed frame relay data connectivity and low-cost voice connections between the Milton sites.

Several new services are included in the THUS package. One is direct Internet access to Quadriga, the pan-European provider of in-room entertainment and information services. This enables guests to choose from a library of films, select CD tracks from a digital jukebox or surf the web at any time from their rooms.

Another innovation in the new Glasgow hotel is a rotating telephone number system. Here THUS has provided Milton with a range of numbers purely for the hotel. These numbers rotate such that when a guest checks out, the telephone number in the particular room changes and the incoming guest has a different number. This arrangement prevents the guest being presented with the wrong telephone bill.

Why THUS?

Why did THUS win the Milton business? Lower cost was obviously an important factor, but equally significant was the ability to provide improved service. The latter manifested itself in a number of ways. Attention to detail was part of this. For example, early on in the relationship the THUS network management and monitoring

system was able to detect a fault condition in a Milton frame relay router before the customer was even aware that there was a problem. "They hadn't received this sort of support from their previous supplier," says Andrew Bisset, the Milton account manager at THUS. The ability to respond rapidly was another part of this. When the Glasgow Milton Hotel and Leisure Club first opened it was required to transfer all the frame relay, leased line and new telephone capability from its temporary accommodation into the new hotel in the shortest possible time. The transfer took just two days.

What Next?

THUS is currently adding external dial-up services for Milton staff. It's also looking at porting over more of the former service provider's telephone numbers, and is in discussion about providing Milton with Internet hosting services. In fact THUS is the UK's largest web hosting Internet service provider.

Milton itself, meantime, is looking at further developing the Glasgow property in the next 18 months and continually looking for new city centre developments which can provide a good mix of business and tourism customers.