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Redefine hospitality with WiFi

Transform guest-facing services with a reliable and engaging WiFi solution.

Written for UC-Wireless by Tamsin Oxford
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Quentin Daffarn, MD, UC-Wireless.

When it comes to the hospitality industry, customers expect WiFi. The sun has long since set on the days of it being a service that only a few places offer and, even then, as a patchy and frustrating affair. "Today a fast and reliable WiFi solution is a tool that can redefine guest-facing services and engagement," says Quentin Daffarn, MD of UC-Wireless. "It can be used to enhance experiences by providing more than just connectivity to the outside world, it can interact with the guests, control their experience and build brand loyalty."

Hotels are being judged by their WiFi, and those that are found wanting are likely to lose bookings and a measure of their reputation. Unless the hotel is a spa dedicated to silence and solitude, a lack of WiFi is going to lead to a lack of customers. Poor coverage, no WiFi at all, inconsistent access – these factors influence a guest's experience and purchasing choices, according to Daffarn. "This is particularly true for the business market. The business traveller cannot afford to be without an Internet connection and will be more likely to opt for a hotel with WiFi than one without."

According to a survey undertaken by Research+Data Insights, guests rate in-room WiFi as more important than location, parking and a free breakfast. In fact, the survey found that 80% of travellers believe that a complimentary WiFi service makes a hotel brand more appealing, and this service comes

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second only to cost when deciding where to book. These are just a few of the statistics that point to the importance and relevance of a wireless network added as standard to any hospitality offering.

Daffarn says: "The right system can introduce more than just a customer-facing experience, it can also be used by the industry to push special offers, deliver marketing data to tailor these offers, introduce extras to enhance the VIP experience, and even provide feedback to the smaller businesses that run within the hotel walls. It can also be used to create an internal ecosystem that connects every service and solution into one central space, making it easier for the customer to engage with these services and for the hotel to promote them. On the other side is the ability to use the data gleaned from the whole hotel footprint, across continents and countries, to determine which products and services are the most popular, which need to be more closely monitored, and which aren't engaging with customers at all."

This level of insight not only allows for the industry to become more aware of guest requirements and trends, but to cut costs by removing services that are not delivering on their investment. In essence, WiFi is the key to unlocking profit, people and potential. Solutions designed to deliver wireless capability to the hospitality industry should come with all the features needed to ensure a seamless guest experience while providing the industry with the relevant levels of control.

However, he cautions: "Control is important. If guests are stampeding onto the wireless network, causing delays and congestion, this will reflect badly on the hotel, not the guests. There are solutions that are designed to manage this influx, and which can provide real-time monitoring, analytics and reporting to give the network administrator visibility into the system and any issues that may be causing delays. Investing in a solution that can provide insight into traffic and resolve end-user problems swiftly will not only keep guests happy, but keep them coming back for more. This high-level control can also filter down into the guest-facing system that can be tailored to determine what kind of information is displayed and even help guests navigate within the hotel complex or on a larger scale within a resort property."

Providing a superlative WiFi experience across hotel and chain may come with a price tag, but the features and benefits quickly deliver on the investment. The right tools and technology can provide the hospitality industry with a guest network, a captive portal, tiered pricing, walled-garden support, intelligent NAT, optimised Internet bandwidth with service priority, BYOD Internet and so much more. Each aspect designed to fit within the brand, the location and the services on offer. If done right and if done with a nod to efficiency and reliability, guest WiFi can transform a mundane customer experience into an exceptional one. The businessman with no coverage and an urgent deadline can rely on the hotel for support. The family that wants to share their experiences on social media is able to, and they'll help boost the brand in the right places in the process.

In a crowded market that's spoilt for choice, providing outstanding customer service and a rewarding guest experience is vital so why not tick the WiFi box? It's a simple, but wise step in the right direction, likely to deliver more than just happy guests.