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Leo Brand
CEO

Swisscom Hospitality Services

Leo Brand is the CEO of Swisscom Hospitality Services. He started at Swisscom with the takeover of Megabeam in 2002. He has held various positions at Swisscom Eurospot, first as Managing Director for the Benelux countries, then as Head of the European Business Units. Leo has been the Head of Sales responsible for the EMEA area (Europe, Middle East, Africa) since the beginning of 2007. He was formerly an adviser to Adcore Strategy Ltd and to A. T. Kearney Management Consultants and has worked for KLM Royal Dutch Airlines in different commercial positions.

Reducing TCO

“Hotel chains will want to run their enterprise applications off-site in a central data centre”

Cleverdis recently paid a visit to the Headquarters of Swisscom Hospitality Services in Geneva, and met with CEO Leo Brand. We asked Mr Brand what he sees as being the main trends in the industry today and how Swisscom is leveraging these trends to provide cutting-edge solutions to hoteliers...

Hoteliers are becoming more keenly interested in how they can leverage technology to reduce the complexity and the total cost of ownership (TOC) for their IT. Especially now, cost reductions are a big driver. We are focussing on helping hoteliers save costs, by digitising services for guests, but also their own processes. The Internet, TV and entertainment, voice, the mini-bar, room controls... these and

other services no longer form mutually exclusive “silos” but part of a larger, network-based solution that Swisscom designs and manages on behalf of the hotel. This way, hoteliers can drastically reduce the number of their vendors, and plan their technology needs in an integrated fashion.

Do you have an example where such a converged LAN environment is becoming reality?

In fact, we have just done this for a European hotel chain that has a disruptive view on how to operate and deliver services. For that chain, we have collapsed a number of IP-based services – third-party applications as well as our own ones – into one Swisscom-managed hotel network. The beauty of our IP networking technology is its scalability. For a large hotel chain, we can manage hundreds of IP applications and many thousand IP devices which are used by either the guests or the hotel, through one single platform that offers the client’s requested service levels.

Why should hotel chains entrust an external party with the management of their network?

Hotel staff is normally not trained for this task and hotels do not have the specialised tools. Swisscom offers them the most qualified IP experienced staff and the best professional toolset. With IBM Tivoli, in which we have invested millions to adapt to hotel-specific needs, we are able to offer an enterprise-grade solution to manage hotel networks.

What is the benefit of a Swisscom-monitored network?

We can spot technical failures immediately, pro-actively take action and resolve an issue before it even comes to the guest’s attention. On request by the hotel we even manage applications from competitors that are not able to manage their applications according to enterprise-required specifics.

Some application vendors have started to offer their applications virtually through the Internet – a phenomenon known as “Cloud computing”... can you tell us more about this?

We see a trend in hotel chains towards moving business critical applications, such as the PMS and the PABX, outside the physical hotel space and running them above-property. The individual hotel then connects to these shared resources through the Wide Area Network (WAN). The virtualisation of enterprise applications has transformed many industry sectors such as Finance and Retail already; it is just a matter of time that hotel operators will want to fully leverage its benefits, as well.

What are these benefits exactly for hotels?

Today, almost every hotel property runs a large number of individual applications. Traditional PMS applications are characterised by limited scalability (the maximum being 200 venues) and no virtualisation capabilities. Such local setups are costly to maintain and difficult to manage. By “pooling” applications in a

24/7 Network Management: Equipped with enterprise-grade tools specifically adapted for hospitality, the Swisscom Network Operations Center can monitor hundreds of applications, both at property and above-property level.



central off-site location, hotel groups can drastically reduce IT complexity and the TCO for certain central applications. Hotel properties can not be seen anymore as independent service delivery entities as hotel guest expect recognition of their needs throughout the hotel brand. An expression of this trend, virtual property management solutions are now rapidly becoming available on the market.

What is your response to the virtualisation of the PMS?

A prerequisite for all application virtualisation is a secure and reliable Wide Area Network (WAN) connection for the parties connecting to the central service. Another implication is that the physical infrastructure of the hotel needs to be compatible with the providers’ web-based services.

Swisscom has been working on these points with high priority. We are now able to provide the required “virtualisation layer” in the hotel’s infrastructure to enable seamless connectivity with the chain’s central technology platform. Moreover, through new partnerships to be announced, Swisscom can increase the bandwidth and the reliability of the WAN for hotels, with the end goal of managing their enterprise applications all the way

from the data centre to the guest. This is an exciting development for us as a network service provider, and we look forward to applying our broad IT and telecommunications experience to the international hotel industry.

About Swisscom Hospitality Services

A network and a hotel technology specialist, Swisscom Hospitality Services focusses on the design, implementation and management of integrated hotel IP networks. Swisscom Hospitality Services boasts exceptional customer proximity with Account Executives in 19 European countries and across the US. They manage clients’ IT needs on-site; train staff on Swisscom solutions; and work with the hotel’s sales team to handle its client technology needs.

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