

theWit Hotel



Customer

- theWit Hotel

Industry

- Hospitality

Challenges

- New entrant in established hotel market
- Differentiation for competitive advantage
- Multi-vendor technology strategy
- Fully integrated, IP-based environment

Solution

- Communications framework: UNIVERGE®360
- Communication server: UNIVERGE SV8500 w/hospitality suite
- Digital terminals: UNIVERGE DT730 & DT750
- NEC Remote Managed Services

Results

- Competitive advantage in mature market
- Coveted, four-diamond service rating in record timing
- Highly unique guest experience
- Efficient operations

Differentiation in the hospitality market is the key to sustaining long-term business growth and success, especially for new properties. Leveraging new technologies to create distinct products, service offerings and customer relationships can help new companies gain a competitive advantage.

TheWit is a luxury, boutique hotel in downtown Chicago. When the hotel opened in Spring 2009, it leveraged NEC's UNIVERGE360 technology vision to create customized applications to support the hotel's distinctive brand, enable faster service delivery and create a unique, memorable guest experience.

Challenges

When developer Scott Greenberg decided to build theWit Hotel, he knew differentiation would be critical to its success. "Chicago has a world-class hotel market that is conducive to the most demanding and forward-thinking consumers on the planet," says Greenberg. "In order to provide a unique, highly engaging guest experience, we needed to take every aspect of the hotel—the architecture, the interior design and the technology—to a completely different level."

With theWit's motto being 'More Experience than Hotel,' technology is the cornerstone of its branding. "We use technology to integrate all the unique pieces that create a dramatic, sensory experience for our guests," says Lou Carrier, chief brand officer, theWit Hotel. "While it is not always front and center, technology is a huge supporting piece of what the brand is all about."

With technology playing such a critical role in the hotel's success, theWit wanted an IP-based technology infrastructure to support its current and future business needs. "What goes to the heart of keeping a hotel experience fresh is staying culturally relevant," says Greenberg. "The newest and best technologies are IP and an IP backbone gives us the flexibility to create novel, new and exciting experiences for our guests now and as the market evolves."

TheWit also wanted to leverage technology to deliver unmatched service quality to its guests. "The hospitality industry is typically behind the eight-ball in terms of cutting-edge technology, so we

needed to create our own,” says Darrin Pinkham, chief information officer, theWit Hotel.

The hotel also sought a fully integrated, multivendor environment. “Our challenge was to adopt a collection of best-of-breed, IP-based applications that met our deliverability and service excellence standards,” says Pinkham. “We not only needed applications that could be easily integrated, we also needed to partner with vendors who were willing to work in a multivendor environment.”

Solution

TheWit chose NEC’s UNIVERGE solutions to build its IP communications network. “We knew we wanted a converged network to begin with,” says Pinkham. “We chose the UNIVERGE solution because of NEC’s strength in the industry and their wherewithal to provide the robust functionality we needed.”

TheWit also considered NEC’s technology expertise in the hospitality industry. “We wanted to partner with technology vendors who could move us ahead within our industry, not just keep us where we are today,” says Pinkham. “NEC also has a strong R&D arm that showed us they were really thinking ahead, with hospitality technology on the very forefront of their future initiatives.”

TheWit has two NEC IP phones in each of the guest’s rooms. The NEC DT750 is at the bedside to give guests quick, touch-screen access to all hotel services, staff and amenities. The NEC DT730 is on the desk to accommodate guest requests and serve as a fully functioning business-grade phone.

Using the DT750, a multifunctional terminal with a 10-inch color LCD touch-screen display, guests of theWit initiate services like housekeeping, wake-up calls, valet service, in-room dining and flight information by selecting the appropriate icon displayed on the phone’s LCD touch-screen display. Guests simply use the touch screen to navigate theWit’s array of amenities and service offerings.

Behind the scenes, theWit’s NEC solution fully integrates with NTT DOCOMO interTouch’s Percipia software and MTech’s Hotel Service Optimization System (HotSOS) to deliver superior service at the guest-room level. “Guest-room communications is the key element of the guest experience at theWit, the phone is the hub of the room,” says Pinkham. “The Percipia application allows guest requests to be made directly through the NEC phone, seamlessly tracked through HotSOS and then executed through the NEC converged IP backbone.”

TheWit’s NEC solution includes a UNIVERGE SV8500 IP communications server, which plays a critical role in getting guest requests to the appropriate staff. Guest requests from the DT750 are routed from the UNIVERGE SV8500 to HotSOS, which relays messages to the appropriate hotel staff mobile devices.

Because HotSOS operates on a rapid-ticket response system, requests that are not handled within a specific timeframe are re-routed for escalation, via the UNIVERGE SV8500. “Because we never want to operate in a reactionary mode, the system is designed to catch issues before they become an issue to the guests,” says Pinkham. “The PBX is the central operator facilitating guest requests, so the UNIVERGE SV8500 provides a level of integration that is very critical to our proactive service approach. NEC worked with MTech so that HotSOS had a lot of integration built directly into the UNIVERGE SV8500 beforehand, we didn’t have to create it here,” says Pinkham. “What we did do here was take things a step further by incorporating the Percipia application with the DT750s to create a better tie-in to the guest experience.”

TheWit also uses NEC’s Remote Managed Services (RMS) to help manage and maintain the network. RMS provides theWit with 24x7 monitoring and incident notification for network and wireless devices, servers, applications, and IP telephony platforms.

Results

TheWit Hotel received AAA’s four-diamond service rating within a record 67 days of operation. “It’s the quickest a hotel in the US has ever received the award,” says Pinkham. “So we must be doing something right from a guest expectations standpoint.”

TheWit includes the NEC solution as an integral part of its success. “From the beginning, the technology vision for theWit has been to provide guests with an experience that is second to none with features that are both convenient and easy to use,” says Carrier. “NEC has been essential in helping us create an impeccable guest experience, driving technology that gets us that ‘more experience than hotel.’”

TheWit expects NEC technology to help fulfill its vision to expand into other markets in the future. “The goal is to have many properties, and make theWit a lifestyle-type brand that people could recognize,” says Greenberg. “NEC is the strongest foot that theWit brand stands on in terms of technology—what they help us create speaks directly to the brand and provides avenues for enhanced capabilities for future expansion.”