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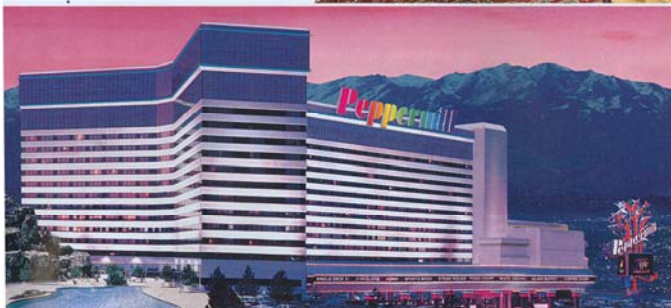
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HOTEL BUSINESS® High-Tech Hotels

Following an expansion project at the Peppermill Hotel Casino in Reno, NV, the property's new 600 suites will feature Internet Protocol-based technology.



The Peppermill Hotel Casino in Reno, NV, is becoming a high-tech hotel through the deployment of a wireless network backbone.



Hotel casino leveraging wireless backbone

Peppermill finds Reno market forefront via technology expansion

By CHRISTOPHER OSTROWSKI

RENO, NV— The Peppermill Hotel Casino here is now in the midst of a \$300-million expansion project that will soon yield, among other things, a new 560,000-sq.-ft., 17-story tower with 600 suites that is expected to open in the fall of 2007. Simultaneously, Peppermill Casinos, Inc., the owner and operator of the property, has also been carrying out a comprehensive technological upgrade built around the deployment of a wireless network that is rather unique within the hotel industry and could eventually turn the property into the most advanced in the market.

"We try to be innovative and a leader in quality of product, and so we felt we needed to improve our technology and communications systems to be competitive in the marketplace here," explained Bill Hughes, the director of casino marketing operations at the Peppermill. "With the expansion, it seemed like the right time to do this."

The centerpiece of this technological revolution at the Peppermill is the MobileAccess Universal Wireless Network, which is already up and running and improving life at the hotel for both guests and staff members, according to Peppermill's director of corporate culture, Doug Ferrari. Specifically, the network enhances wireless communication and col-

laboration throughout the property's three existing primary buildings and provides guests and staff reliable uninterrupted coverage for the staff's SpectraLink wireless telephony, the public wireless local area network and even cellular phone services from Cingular, Sprint and Verizon Wireless.

The network also allows the Peppermill to deliver all of its wireless services and applications over a single, flexible wireless infrastructure, which promises to be more cost effective than deploying multiple parallel systems for each individual wireless service. Furthermore, all of the related mechanical equipment, including Cisco WLAN Access Points, is located in secure telecommunications closets.

"On the employee side, it's a competitive advantage because it allows us to move away from the old beeper and radios method of internal communication, which is not very guest friendly," Ferrari said. "We're also attaching to the system a product called GuestWare which allows us to focus on service and productivity through an instant task dispatching ability. Through this product, we can track, for example, the delivery of towels to a guestroom. So it will increase productivity and also allows us to see how long things take to get done. It's a great combination of services."

Ferrari added that the wireless network

acts as the backbone for the entire hotel and casino with wireless high-speed Internet access capabilities. He also mentioned that in terms of internal communications, the property now has full coverage all the way down to the basement. Consequently, engineers can be easily and immediately contacted through SpectraLink devices.

All of these capabilities will also be in place within the new hotel tower that's being built. Plus, there are other associated opportunities involving radio frequency identification that the system could eventually provide. "We're barely beginning to use its potential," Ferrari said.

Clear signal

Meanwhile, the system has also helped the reception level of guests' cell phones at the property. "The difference is incredible," Hughes said. "It used to be a waste of time for me to have my cell phone on at work. But now we have great reception even in the parking garage. It's a very convenient thing for guests that gives us a competitive advantage."

Ferrari further noted that the Peppermill is "now the best place in the city to make a cell phone call."

When asked what the system cost the Peppermill, Ferrari could not reveal the exact figure. According to MobileAc-

cess, though, the pricing can range between 50 cents per square foot of coverage to \$2 per square foot. Currently, 860,000 square feet are covered at the Peppermill.

Aside from the advanced wireless network, Ferrari pointed out that the entire Peppermill complex, including both the current and future hotel towers, will eventually be completely Internet Protocol-based with new CAT5 wiring. As a result, all guestrooms will feature (voice-over Internet protocol) VoIP telephones featuring voice recognition technology. That will allow guests to call, for example, housekeeping by simply stating the word. Also running off the IP system will be high-definition plasma televisions, the energy management system and in-room safes.

"There will be a pretty much full-blown use of the system," Ferrari said. "The goal is the convergence of technology."

When both the technology and expansion projects are complete, the Peppermill will feature 1,631 rooms; an expanded casino; an infinity-edge pool; a Tuscan-themed spa and salon; an arcade offering the latest video games; a new convention and entertainment center with a state-of-the-art audio-visual system; and a new sports book with two theater-size HD TVs, dozens of 50-inch plasma TVs and individual 17-inch plasma TVs. **HB**