

## Not Just for Meeting Rooms Anymore

By Digby Davies

# Event Technologies Move Beyond Four Walls to Make Guestrooms, Public Spaces

# ROCK

### Hotels that Rock 'n Roll

The Palms Casino Resort, heralded as one of Las Vegas' hippest destination venues, is using its event technology partner to provide technology services in multiple areas. The company will provide high-speed client-network services throughout the property's more than 60,000 square feet of meeting and convention space, and audiovisual/event technology services for corporate, social and association events. The company also is in the process of transitioning the Palms' business center to an event-technology center—a new concept that blends private meeting rooms, high-tech workstations and a technology concierge with soft seating in a more public setting, such as an Internet café.

Likewise, to help keep conventioners and meeting attendees onsite for food and beverage, the Hyatt Regency O'Hare in Rosemont, Ill., consulted with its event-technology partner to identify ways in which multimedia technologies could be used to attract new patrons to its Red Bar lobby lounge and O'H American Grill restaurant. A state-of-the-art sound system, 22 high-definition plasma TVs, eight two-sided translucent screens with projectors, and a \$15,000 high-tech remote system controller were installed. Red Bar can designate any one of its TVs or screens to showcase a multitude of multimedia promotions, from food and beverage promotions to renovation progress presentations via DVD, and meetings' coverage to televised sports events.

**W**hen Def Leppard released its hit song: "When the Walls Come Tumbling Down" in the early '80s, I'm certain the rock band never thought that its lyrical title could be used to paint a picture of the hotel network or meetings environment in 2008. Nonetheless, it's the perfect depiction of what is metaphorically happening at hotels thanks to property-wide integration of network services.

Meeting planners today require many more services than just basic audiovisual equipment. Running a successful event now takes an array of technologies that are orchestrated before the show, impact the audience during the show, and help the planners' message last long after the show. Requests for screens and overhead projectors are a thing of the past. Instead experience-enhancement technologies are in demand.

### The Changing Face of Show Business

For standard events, meeting planners expect that digital reader boards and digital signage networks (such as lobby displays, meeting room signs and guestroom TV information channels) be visible to help attendees find their way to the venue. Likewise client-network services, such as cyber cafes or Internet kiosks, are expected in the meeting area and throughout the hotel to facilitate Web surfing and the checking of e-mails. Many

meeting planners have even come to expect that customized desktop screen savers with sponsor logos will be featured on the monitors.

Larger events at resorts or conference facilities oftentimes call for sophisticated lighting, sound and projection/digital image displays to enhance the mood, keep the audience energized and add drama to meeting. Staging tools, rigging equipment, concert sound, digital broadcasts and intelligent lighting also can be used to aide in design and theme setting for large concerts and sporting events.

Small event or large, digital capture and Web-casting services also can be provided to ensure that the event experience doesn't fade a way. It's important to partner with a presentation-services company that can provide highly efficient, cost effective solutions that help a hotel's customers repurpose their key meeting content for future review. A top-of-mind event with attendees will keep the hotel or conference center top-of-mind with meeting planners.

Any event experience, good or bad, is tied to the overall guest-stay experience, and today's tech-savvy travelers also expect receiving seamless guest-service throughout the hotel. Therefore, a robust property-wide network featuring increased bandwidth intensity is growing in demand. A presentation-services group that can

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provide wide area network (WAN) and local area network (LAN) support throughout the hotel—and actually becoming an extension of a hotel's IT staff—is critical to convention-services success.

In fact, advances in digital meeting technology are enabling guests to attend multiple meetings simultaneously, or view a recorded session they missed on their guestroom television. New communications technologies, such as voice over Internet protocol (VoIP) and IP-based video conferencing also are growing in demand.

Orchestrating these events and supporting on-demand services could be a nightmare if the hotel did not have the proper event technology partner in place. To eliminate guest frustration, there are benefits to a single source to manage

and install everything from the hotel's wired or wireless HSPA backbone to business center solutions to property-wide digital signage in lobbies and public areas to high-definition TVs in the hotel's restaurants and lounges to a variety of services in meeting rooms and large convention halls.

### One for All

Hotels, like the ones in the sidebar on page 160, are just a few which have come to appreciate the benefits of a single-source event-technology partner. Not only can the service provider help a meeting planner choose the best services for a meeting or event, but it also can consult with hotel management on ways to bring networking technologies to other touch-points throughout the property.

The ability to control the

hotel's network beyond the meeting space goes a long way in supporting a hotel's guest-service initiative. It would be awkward for an on-site AV person to tell a meeting guest or the meeting planner having trouble with the network in his or her guestroom to refer the guest elsewhere for servicing. Having a dedicated partner goes a long way to making the most of guests' technology experiences.

As presentation and network technologies continue to converge, and as more presentations require real-time network connectivity for online training, teleconferencing and other event services, using one company to manage and deliver digital content will directly impact customer satisfaction. In addition, it makes the ability to offer bundled services that much easier.

Just as Hotel Technology Next Generation (HTNG) works toward building next-generation, customer-centric technologies to better meet the needs of the global hotel community, a true presentation-services partner will work with a hotel toward building and identifying next-generation event technologies to better meet the needs of guests, whether they are at the hotel to attend an event or not.

"When the walls come tumbling down," figuratively speaking, those hotels that have worked to better network their event technologies, from meeting rooms to guestrooms, will be that much further ahead than their competition, and will own a bigger share of the market. Is your hotel structured to host a meeting of the future, today?

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## Domain Names Are Feeling the Pinch

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users by registering domain names similar to your domain names. These misleading sites may be costing your business a substantial amount of income annually, all because your customers cannot find the Web site they were searching for in the first place.

As important as a good due diligence strategy is now, it will be essential in the near future, as domain name protection is likely to become more difficult. The International Corporation for Names and Numbers (ICANN) is the non-profit entity responsible for managing the assignment of domain names and IP

addresses. ICANN recently proposed a series of resolutions that would widely expand the commercial reach of the Internet. One of these resolutions addresses generic top-level domains (gTLDs), which are domain names that use either the .com, .info, .net or .org domain designation. These gTLDs are generally well known and widely considered the most popular types of domains.

ICANN's proposed expansion of these traditional gTLDs will allow the public to propose and register new gTLDs with ICANN. The proposed ICANN resolution, which could take effect as

early as 2009, permits seemingly limitless expansion of gTLDs and would have a profound effect on Internet marketing. For instance, a premium hotel in New York City that currently owns and maintains a .com domain name for its hotel name may soon be faced with the decision of registering .hotel, .nyc, .newyork, .travel or even .spa, if the hotel has such a service.

While the future of domain name registration and maintenance remains uncertain, one thing is for sure, simply owning domain names and maintaining Web sites associated with those domain names is not enough

to protect your business on the Internet. Having a due diligence plan is a vital step to ensure that your customers are not being diverted improperly to competitors' Web sites.

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