Choice Hotels International establishes high-speed internet access (HSIA) brand standards to drive guest satisfaction.

Comcast Business supports Choice Hotels with solutions to help meet increasing hotel guest expectations.

Challenge

- High-Speed Internet Access (HSIA) is no longer an amenity in hotels. It's a basic expectation for travelers, both leisure and business. They expect the same content-streaming experience they have at home.
- Guests increasingly travel with multiple, high-powered smart devices and want to access an array of bandwidth-consuming apps, placing increasing demands on hotel networks.
- Hotel networks need to evolve to support IP traffic growth and satisfy guest expectations. Inadequate HSIA impacts guest satisfaction and could decrease revenue per available room.

Solution

- Establishment of a Companywide mandate with specific network requirements and enforcement of HSIA brand standards.
- Strict qualification process for hotels to attain and maintain a company defined certified HSIA network — developed as part of broader customer experience initiatives.
- Strategic partnerships with a select group of HSIA and ISP approved vendors, including Comcast Business for internet/ethernet services.
- Implementation of Comcast Business Ethernet solutions by franchisees to leverage fiber-based, symmetrical connectivity that meets or exceeds the certification criteria.

Results

- Comcast Business delivers a reliable and symmetrical internet solution to Choice Hotels franchises to help meet – and exceed – guest expectations.
- HSIA standards create consistency across the Choice Hotels brand portfolio and serve as the foundation for broader customer experience initiatives.
- Comcast Business Ethernet solutions can deliver an online experience like what guests expect at home.
- Hotels in compliance with HSIA standards establish a foundation for further technology adoption.

With more than 7,000 hotels in over 40 countries, Choice Hotels International is one of the largest and most successful lodging franchisors in the world. The company operates several brands, including Comfort Inn, Comfort Suites, Quality Inn, Sleep Inn, Clarion, Cambria Hotels & Suites, MainStay Suites, Suburban Extended Stay Hotel, Econo Lodge, Rodeway Inn, and Ascend Hotels. The diversity of brands provides business and leisure travelers with a range of high-quality lodging options in the upscale, midscale, extended-stay, and economy segments.

Today's travelers no longer look just for comfort. Broadband connectivity has become the premiere amenity that can make or break the guest experience. Plus, fast, reliable internet service not only drives guest behavior on-premise but also serves as the most direct form of interaction between the guest and the hotel brand, influencing guest's perception of value, likelihood for repeat stays and willingness to recommend.

Challenge

With consumers accustomed to instant access to communication, services and information wherever they go, every consumer-facing location, from restaurants to retail, is grappling with guest internet capabilities. The demands on bandwidth are only accelerating.

Franchisees like Choice Hotels and consumer brands with multiple locations need to have robust and effective connectivity. They may realize the consequences of haphazard implementation very quickly, including compromised customer satisfaction and operational challenges.

The only thing worse than no guest broadband service is bad guest internet service.

Choice Hotels began evaluating its high-speed internet service based on guest satisfaction scores and responses on their guest amenity surveys. The feedback provided more evidence that guests, millennial or senior, can't live without broadband internet service. It's even more important than complimentary breakfast and free parking. And travelers want high-speed internet service just like they have at home.

That's because their internet habits don't change just because they are traveling. They still stream high-definition videos, listen to their favorite music, play games and scroll through their social feeds. Business travelers do that and more. They connect with their offices, run cloud-based applications and download large files – often on more than one device. The network must handle each guest and all their devices without impacting back-office connectivity that powers the business.

Choice Hotels also was thinking beyond simple internet connectivity. Technology has reshaped guest experiences and expectations, from remote check-in to mobile room keys. Future technologies may bring new performance demands on the network.

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"We wanted to ensure that we have the speed to not only satisfy our guests today, but to also look forward to tomorrow," said Jay Sigona, senior director of enterprise program development and implementation at Choice Hotels International. "Knowing that we needed to upgrade our game when it came to high-speed, we worked with our vendors to determine what the best path forward would be."

Solution

Given the importance technology has to the guest experience, corporate brands with multiple locations or franchises are now creating enterprise-wide standards for their underlying HSIA infrastructure.

Deploying broadband in a distributed environment is a technically complex initiative. Without a formal policy, franchisees or individual managers may take matters into their own hands creating inconsistent or unsatisfactory customer experiences across locations.

After substantial research, and input from franchisees among other stakeholders, Choice Hotels rolled out an official HSIA policy. Within this policy, franchisees are required to attain, and maintain, a corporate defined certified HSIA network that includes a symmetrical fiber-optic broadband circuit.

The standards also would:

- Provide clear guidance for new construction and hotels in need of upgrades
- Provide consistent proactive monitoring, reporting and evaluation of a hotel's HSIA system
- Establish a platform to help hotels prepare for potential future guest expectations and emerging technologies dependent on HSIA
- Set consistency among the Choice brands so guests have uniformity across the brand and their expectation for high-speed internet access is fulfilled

Choice Hotels opted to partner with Comcast Business and other HSIA providers to implement its network standards for their franchisees, nationwide, so their guests received a consistent, quality experience.

With the Ethernet service from Comcast Business, Choice Hotels is building a platform for growth and innovation across the brand to satisfy guest expectations and the demand for increased bandwidth, network capacity, reliability and performance. Comcast Business Ethernet solutions also provide properties with network monitoring, and 24/7 support, all backed by Service Level Assurances.

"We view Comcast Business as a strategic, consultative partner with their finger on the pulse of the industry," said Rick Summa, vice president of partner services at Choice Hotels International. "Their insights and expertise helped shape and enhance our new standards, allowing us to ensure we have the necessary speeds to satisfy our guests connectivity needs now and well into the future."

Results

By using Comcast Business Ethernet service to meet the HSIA standards, Choice franchisees have improved the guest experience and created consistency across brands. Comcast Business provides the five-star experience that helps create memorable stays for guests.

"We have seen tremendous improvements from our franchisees that have already satisfied our high-speed certification requirements," Sigona said.

As hotels continue to embrace new technologies that enhance operations and the guest experience, an advanced data network is critical. By building a foundation of performance, flexibility and affordability, Choice Hotels can pursue innovative new ways to harness technology, engage with new customers and inspire brand loyalty.

"Comcast Business has been there to partner with our franchisees." Sigona said. "They've been an excellent resource in helping us get to meet our goals and to get to where we need to be."

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