CASE STUDY

BLENDING TIMELESS WITH TECHNOLOGY TO CREATE PEERLESS GUEST EXPERIENCES

The Dolder Grand is one of the finest hotels in Europe. Occupying an elevated location above the city of Zurich, the hotel has 175 luxurious rooms and suites, exquisite cuisine, a spa encompassing 4,000 square metres and a remarkable art collection. It aims to deliver a peerless guest experience.

“Everything about The Dolder Grand is unique,” says Managing Director Mark Jacob, “the architecture, the location, the service.”

It is a place, continues Jacob, where guests come to escape their daily lives: “Our job is to give them the time to be themselves once more. We want to empower our staff to deliver a truly personalised service.”

A BLEND OF TIMELESS AND MODERN

The Dolder Grand is a blend of timeless and modern. The original building is more than 120 years old, it is flanked by buildings designed by Sir Norman Foster. Jacob says this tension between old and new exists throughout. He adopts the same attitude towards technology.

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“Some hoteliers see technology as a threat to personalised service,” says Jacob. “Not us. I see digital as an opportunity to enhance our service. Technology alone cannot do this, but both can live side by side.”

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MARK JACOB
MANAGING DIRECTOR, DOLDER HOTEL AG

REQUIREMENTS
- Deliver high-performance Wi-Fi to every room
- Enable new and modern ways of engaging visitors of all ages
- New visitor experiences with the launch of an interactive mobile app
- Complete installation with no disruption to guests, or impact on buildings’ aesthetics
- Simplify secure network access for guests, staff and ‘things’
- Establish the means to gather and protect visitor data

SOLUTION
- 802.11ac Aruba wireless indoor APs
- Aruba Mobility Controllers
- Aruba Campus core and access switches
- ClearPass Policy Management
- AirWave Network Management
- ArubaOS 8

OUTCOMES
- Allows complete BYOD for guests
- Ensure 1Gb bandwidth in every room, enabling seamless streaming of guest media
- Rapid provisioning of temporary private networks for guests and businesses
- Insight into guest behaviour, improving marketing and the creation of new services
- Platform for IoT and location-based services
- Flexibility and scale to accommodate continued growth in network usage

Policy-based access for a dynamic environment

Central to the Aruba solution is ArubaOS 8 and Aruba ClearPass Network Access Control, as well as the Aruba solution. An AirGroup registration portal under ClearPass Policy Manager enables guests and IT administrators to self-register printers, Apple TVs, Wi-Fi projectors, Wi-Fi televisions and other consumer devices. These devices can then be grouped into personal, shared and location-based service groups. The solution is linked to the hotel’s guest booking system. A dedicated AirGroup or private LAN/WLAN is therefore created for guests as they register. This massively simplifies operations for the hotel’s IT team and means that they no longer need to
create hundreds of VLANs or to manage and enable thousands of devices manually.

ArubaOS mobility software coordinates with ClearPass in order to enable policy-based access to mobile devices based on user roles and location.

The solution was designed and implemented by acherrmann ICT-services, a long-time Aruba partner in Switzerland. So as not to disrupt guests, the installation took six months, with access points hidden under desks or integrated into walls. acherrmann also provides ongoing support.

Secure, high-performance Wi-Fi in every guest room
For guests, the most immediate impact of the Aruba solution is 1Gb bandwidth in every room. Guests, many of which connect up to 10 mobile devices to the network during a stay, are logged in at check-in, and can then stream content to the Bang & Olufsen TV in the room. Returning guests (and their devices) are recognised automatically by the network.

This approach delivers the right blend of personalisation (the guest’s own Netflix account) and simplicity.

“Aruba AirGroup means each room has its own, secure network,” says Jens Gross, IT Manager, Dolder Hotel AG. “There is no risk of one guest’s content casting to another room. Previously, creating SSIDs for each room would have been impossible to manage. There’s no fuss, and no cables now.”

For those (rare) guests that haven’t brought a mobile device, each room includes an iPad®. The iPad allows guests to control lighting, curtains, temperature, TV and make VoIP calls. It is connected to a separate VLAN, also controlled through ClearPass.

STABILITY AND CONSISTENCY
Gross says the ease of management is the biggest behind-the-scenes gain. Troubleshooting is faster, security is tighter, and the network can scale as required. ArubaOS 8 simplifies the task of adding new access points – the plan is to extend coverage to the hotel grounds.

“We have carried out two live updates with no perceived disruption. The solution is stable, which is what the guests want and what we want,” says Gross. “And we have acherrmann on hand if there is a support issue.”

Creating a detailed picture of the guest experience
Perhaps the biggest long-term impact will be the amount of data the solution will help generate. The more the hotel understands the behaviours of its guests, the better it will be in tailoring personalised experiences.

Jacob admits that there is an opportunity for the hotel to do a better job of communicating what’s on, and that even regular guests are unfamiliar with all of the hotel’s services: “You can have stayed here 10 times and still not tried all our restaurants. We want to let guests know what is available, but we don’t want to inundate them with information.”

The Aruba solution will help map busy periods of the day, or spot correlation between the weather and room service orders. “Our concierges bring with them a lifetime of expertise, and we don’t want to undermine that. But we believe technology can help supplement that expertise and make it more widely available.”

Removing resistance to future innovation
The Aruba solution provides a platform on which to build new services. Location-based services are likely. Gross says the future may involve IoT and Bluetooth® beacons. A dedicated Dolder Grand app would enable way-finding, personalised communications for guests, or deliver a guided tour of the hotel's extensive artwork.

Jacob says The Dolder Grand will continue to explore what is appropriate. For instance, his vision includes to simplifying check-in, digitising many of the manual processes and freeing up staff to be more personalised in the way they greet guests.

“Not all guests want a fully-tech experience, and not all want human interaction every time. We need to be in both worlds. There will be a blend," he says. "I don’t believe anyone in the hospitality sector has perfected this. Our job is to eliminate fears and remove resistance.”