

CASE STUDY

UNITED
KINGDOM

HOSPITALITY

FIVE-STAR HOTEL BRAND ELEVATES GUEST EXPERIENCE WITH DIGITAL TOUCHPOINTS

THE WESTIN
LONDON CITY

The Westin London City marks the debut of the brand in the UK, owned by 4C Hotel Group and operated by RBH Management Group. Their aim is to support a range of guest and operational digital applications as part of the five-star hotel brand's London opening.



Global travel restrictions have made this a tough couple of years for the hotels business. But it has not been a wasted period.

The industry has used the moment as an opportunity to reset service expectations and re-evaluate operational efficiency. For consumers, there is a greater focus on sustainability, purpose and health and wellbeing.

“These have been challenging years,” says Alex Dallochio, General Manager, The Westin London City, “but there are many reasons to be positive.”

CREATING A FLEXIBLE HOSPITALITY SPACE

The Westin London City is the latest addition to London’s five-star hotel sector; it is the first Westin in the UK and Marriott’s 1,000th hotel in the EMEA region. It is significantly more than a place for travellers to rest their head. The 222-room hotel includes a spa, pool, therapy rooms, ballroom, wine bar and restaurant.

“We also have a fitness studio that features a world-class indoor cycling experience with Peloton bikes,” says Dallochio. “The first of its kind in Europe.”

The Westin is recognition that the hotel industry needs to draw revenue from multiple sources. It is as much a hotel as an events space and wellness destination. This requires a new approach to design.

“In technology terms, what we need most is flexibility,” says Vibhu Gaiind, Chief Information Officer at RBH Management, the company that operates The Westin



REQUIREMENTS

- Ensure reliable Wi-Fi throughout the newly-built hotel
- Support a range of applications, current and planned
- Provide real-time visibility into network performance

SOLUTION

- Aruba High Density Wi-Fi Access Points
- Aruba in-room Hospitality Access Points
- Aruba 7210 series Mobility Controllers
- Aruba 2930 series Access Switches
- Managed Network Services delivered by Hoist Group

OUTCOMES

- Enables an entirely digital experience for guests, from check-in to door locks to room service
- Allows secure segmentation of network for guests, operations and visitors
- Drives operational and sustainability improvements with building management sensors connected to the network
- Generates the heatmaps and user data to inform service improvements

London City. “The requirement to digitalise processes within hospitality is now immense. Our challenge was to establish a network platform that would enable us to address different use-cases and to integrate different applications – whatever applications we choose.”

BRINGING GLOBAL INSIGHT TO THE TABLE

The Westin London City network is powered by a unified Aruba wired and wireless architecture based on Controller-Managed APs and a robust core and access. The hotel is covered by over 300 Aruba Wireless Access Points, including 222 wall-mounted Aruba Hospitality APs which provide in-room Wi-Fi and wired connectivity for devices such as IP-TVs or IP-phones. The network is managed by



“Aruba gives us a platform that is fit for multiple uses. I know if we have an event I can provide a secure network for 20 delegates, or 300 guests at a conference. We have that immediate scale and control.”

VIBHU GAIND

Chief Information Officer at RBH Management, Operator, The Westin London City

Hoist Group, a leading IT service provider to the hospitality sector.

Gaind says the selection of Aruba was very much an RBH Management decision. “Aruba has been a great partner of ours for years. It allows us to bring technology to the forefront,” he says. “The Aruba architecture delivers an integrated network approach and more succinct network operations.”

Additionally, Gaind continues, Aruba brings a wealth of experience in the hospitality sector: “As a partner, Aruba brings that global experience to the table.”

ACCOMMODATING MULTIPLE USE-CASES

International hotel brands tend to follow an extremely templated route. Operationally, there is efficiency to be found in standardisation. For guests, familiarity is a comfort.

Gaind says the network design of the Westin deployment is almost entirely original. The unique demands

on the hotel – premium guests, event space, indoor and outdoor spaces – meant extra care was needed to plan the network details. Covid only served as a reminder of how changeable the market can be.

“The key is flexibility,” says Gaind. “Aruba gives us a platform that is fit for multiple uses. I know if we have an event I can provide a secure network for 20 delegates, or 300 guests at a conference. We have that immediate scale and control without prohibitive capital expense.”

The unified architecture enables the hotel to manage network access for a range of users, with tiered privileges and distinct security settings over the entire infrastructure. It means there can be an easily defined and secured segment for overnight guests, for in-house operations or external suppliers on site, as required. The Westin London City can simply and reliably provide the best network-as-a-service for event organisers.

“With our state-of-the-art platform, we have the ability to see exactly what is happening on the network in real-time at the click of a button,” says Gaind.

This granular detail also supports personalisation and enhanced guest experiences. Many Westin guests will already be members of Marriott’s Bonvoy rewards programme, and will be used to accessing hotel features through the Marriott Bonvoy app.

ADDING A DIGITAL LAYER TO THE FIVE-STAR EXPERIENCE

The Aruba architecture provides a scalable and secure platform on which RBH Management can integrate current applications and test new solutions. Gaind says it would never be ideal to implement a host of new digital applications in one ‘Big Bang’ approach. The aim is to be responsive yet measured.

“We don’t want to overwhelm guests, we want them to engage with a new service,” says Gaind. “Our network gives us an open and flexible foundation on which to build. We can move at an appropriate pace.”

Today, that includes digital doors and room keys, self-check-in and room service via the app. It also includes





video conferencing facilities throughout the event rooms. In the future it could mean virtual reality tours, a digital concierge or services unlocked using facial recognition software.

“For now, guests can manage their entire visit from their phone,” says Dallocchio.

In the unlikely event guests don’t have a phone, each room in The Westin London City includes a tablet enabling guests to order room service, book a session at the spa or a run with the hotel’s ‘running concierge’. Dallocchio says this is a reflection of guests’ comfort in engaging through digital channels.

“Some people could stay for a week and never speak to another human, if they wish,” he says. “But our focus is always on the human experience.”

MANAGED SERVICE ENABLES HOTEL TO FOCUS ON GUEST EXPERIENCE

The network-as-a-service from Hoist Group, says Gaind, allows the Westin team to focus on its core competency: the guest experience.

“In this industry, technology is now at the forefront of service delivery. But we are not a technology business, we are a people-first business. The managed service provides the scale we need to accommodate any eventuality but without the headache of us managing the network. We have the comfort of knowing the network is there is the background, ready when we need it.”

TECHNOLOGY TO HELP CREATE A UNIQUE SERVICE

The digital touchpoints also support Westin’s sustainability agenda. There is less need for paper print outs,



paper menus or brochures in the rooms, or for plastic key cards. Service rotas are better planned. Maintenance teams can report issues and record fixes with video evidence.

“There has been significant investment in the smarter management of energy at this hotel,” says Dallocchio. “The building management system and all sensors that monitor our lighting and heating are connected to the network. Sustainability and technology are topics that are closely tied to our brand.”

The Westin experience, he continues, should never be “cookie cutter”. There may be common themes but the emphasis should always be on individuality.

“You could stay in ten different Westin hotels and have ten different experiences,” he says. “We want to create a unique experience, whether that is the food, the furniture design or the guided running tour of the city. Technology is there to serve.”