

Wi-Fi, the most coveted hotel amenity

The [mobile revolution is accelerating](#) and hotels have to remain on the front lines of the uprising. Hoteliers have had to get smarter when it comes to their Wi-Fi since the introduction of smartphones and tablets and today they find themselves trying to cope with streaming video and voice as well as wearables and Internet of Things (IoT) devices. In fact, customer demands only continue to grow.



Riaan Graham

Says Riaan Graham, sales director at Ruckus Wireless sub-Saharan Africa: “Guests are displaying a clear need to be constantly connected. Whether it is beach-front resorts, casinos or metropolitan conference hotels, they are demanding the ability to connect 24/7. Being ‘online’ has become second nature and more often than not, it means using Wi-Fi because it offers economically friendly access to email, voice, text, mobile applications and social media.”

Now taking reservations for Wi-Fi

According to the [Atmosphere Research Group](#), travellers carry with them an average of three devices that access Wi-Fi, some of which do not even have a data plan and must access Wi-Fi to function. As such, it’s easy to see why Wi-Fi was the [number one factor influencing hotel choice](#) for business travellers – above proximity to destination, free food and enrollment in loyalty programmes. What’s more, a recent [Hyatt Place survey](#) also found that the same held true for the general consumer: their most coveted amenity was free Wi-Fi.

“Just installing Wi-Fi is no longer enough. Guest expectations are being driven by their home experience and as such, hotels have to provide professional Wi-Fi that not only provides high performance but can handle the density of multiple devices and offer ease of operation that guests have come to anticipate,” says Graham. “Those that have adopted best practices and have seen customer satisfaction improve.”

Best practices for hotel Wi-Fi have changed over the years to cope with all of these changes. Hotels have had to redesign access point (AP) placement, add APs and bring them closer to clients to adjust for the lower propagation of the 5GHz signal. The good news is once a hotel designs to 5GHz it becomes easier to upgrade the endpoints versus a total redesign.



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“Wi-Fi in any hotel should provide high-speed internet service (HISA) in addition to services critical to hotel operations. Just think, hotel staff can access Wi-Fi via mobile devices to use reservation and administration mobile apps from anywhere on the hotel's property. Wireless point of sale (PoS) systems can allow staff to take orders for food and other amenities at the pool or other facilities. Wireless voice communications between hotel employees can help keep everything running smoothly and handheld devices can be used to check-in vehicles at valet,” adds Graham.

Some hotels are even experimenting with virtual reality, equipping rooms with Google Cardboard to let guests take virtual tours of the facilities. A top performing network and Wi-Fi system is only becoming more important and can be an asset to any hotel property.

When a mint isn't enough

It's clear that hotels are becoming more an extension of the home, especially for those guests who travel on a weekly or monthly basis. A clean bed and mint on the pillow are no longer enough. To compete, hoteliers are finding new ways of going above and beyond, whether it is shorter check-in times, additional in-room amenities or personalised promotions.

“Not all hotels can afford to offer an unlimited amount of amenities, so it is key that they provide what all travellers are looking for. And this is food, shelter, electricity and reliable Wi-Fi. Hotels who provide wireless connectivity that delivers reliable service will ultimately be the place guests choose to say goodnight at,” concludes Graham.

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