

CASE STUDY: WHITE LODGING'S CLARK & GRAND HOTELS

Samsung Smart TVs with H-Browser Provide Landmark Hotel a Streamlined & Cost Effective In-Room Entertainment Solution



OVERVIEW

Customer Need

White Lodging's Clark & Grand hotel development in downtown Chicago brought together three distinct hotel brands—Aloft, Hyatt Place and Fairfield Inn & Suites—under one roof with shared infrastructure and services. The unique property needed an in-room guest entertainment system that met the high quality and aesthetic demands of the three world-class hotel brands, while also helping to reduce overall costs.

Samsung Solution

White Lodging opted for Samsung's Smart Hospitality TVs featuring H-Browser, an Internet Protocol-based solution developed in partnership with leading hospitality technology provider Guest-tek. H-Browser provides a true Smart TV experience for hotel guests with both free and video-on-demand (VOD) content accessible through an interactive program guide. Most importantly, the solution eliminates the need for set-top boxes as the TVs interface directly with the head-end.

Results

The Samsung Smart Hospitality TVs provided immediate savings by removing the need for set-top boxes, while the hotels have experienced not a single technology issue with the streamlined IP-based system. The system also provides future-proofing, since the technology allows new TV features to be added to accommodate the guests' changing needs.



THE CUSTOMER

White Lodging's
Clark & Grand Development

The Clark & Grand hotel development, which opened in June 2013 in downtown Chicago, is a first-of-its-kind in the hospitality industry. The project brings three distinct hotel brands—Aloft, Hyatt Place and Fairfield Inn & Suites—together under one roof.

“The project was several years in the making,” explains Ken Barnes, vice president of IT at White Lodging Services, which developed, manages and is part-owner of the hotel complex. “In a city like Chicago, urban real estate is at a premium, so you have to maximize the value you get from every square inch of land.”

Rising 19 stories, the 664-room hotel complex is located in Chicago's trendy River North District, bounded by the streets that contribute to its name—Clark, Grand, Dearborn and Illinois. The three individual hotel brands each put their own stamp on their section of the property. Each brand has its own entrance with a distinctive look on the block-long property.

At the same time, the property is gaining important efficiencies and cost savings from shared infrastructure and services, such as high-speed Internet, telephone and television services. “It was very important that the brand equity of three hotels remain independent, while they were able to benefit from the efficiencies of coming together under one roof,” Barnes explains.



THE CUSTOMER NEED

Smart, Reliable & Cost-Effective In-Room TV Solution

A prominent project that received an enormous amount of publicity from its conception, Clark & Grand needed an in-room entertainment system that met the exacting demands of guests who were accustomed to the advanced functionality and interactivity of their TVs at home.

At the same time, the in-room entertainment system needed to accommodate the varying needs of the three different brands, each of whom has strict criteria for the TVs used at their properties. “Each of the three hotel brands has a distinct channel lineup that they offer to their guests,” Barnes says. “They also have strict and distinct requirements for the size, design and performance specifications of the television sets in their properties.”

The developers also wanted to lower upfront costs, reduce maintenance, and future-proof the property to keep pace with rapidly evolving technology and

customer demands. Traditionally, TV sets in hotel rooms are connected by coaxial cable to set-top boxes which in turn interface with the “head end,” a hub that delivers programming and VOD content to all the rooms.

White Lodging, however, made the decision early on to forego installation of coaxial cable and instead opt for an Internet Protocol-based in-room entertainment system. “It's expensive to run new coaxial in an urban area, and we would already have CAT6 cables delivering Internet to the rooms, so this wasn't a difficult choice,” Barnes says.

But adopting a comparatively new approach presents inherent risks, and several other early IP-based TV deployments in the hospitality industry had reported mixed results. White Lodging needed a partner it could trust to help it to unlock the many benefits of IP-based in-room entertainment technology.

THE SAMSUNG SOLUTION

Samsung 590 Series Smart Hospitality TVs with H-Browser

White Lodging chose to deploy Samsung 590 Series Smart Hospitality TVs featuring H-Browser for all guest rooms at the three Clark & Grand hotels. The H-Browser solution, developed as part of an ongoing partnership with leading hospitality technology provider Guest-tek, offered the hotels a streamlined, robust and full-featured system, all delivered over IP.

Built into Samsung's slim and sleek Smart Hospitality TVs, the H-Browser is a unique platform enabling hospitality integrators to create customized user interfaces utilizing the HTML5 standard with Flash support. It provides dynamic content management capabilities in presenting both free and video-on-demand (VOD) content. The platform also unlocks the embedded processing power of the Samsung TV to provide faster channel change times and greater responsiveness.

Most importantly, H-Browser running on Samsung Hospitality TVs removes the need to have a set-top box in each guest room. The TV is able to interface directly with the head end, whether located on or off the hotel premises.

"H-Browser is really about creating a streamlined solution that minimizes the moving parts," says Derrick Brian, vice president of product strategy of Guest-tek,

which manages the in-room entertainment experience at the Clark & Grand. "Set-top boxes can go offline and require a manual reboot, but Smart TVs with H-Browser can be rebooted remotely and the memory is cleared when turned off for a few minutes so the guest turns on to a new session."

In addition, by eliminating the set-top box, the slim, sleek design of the TV is not obstructed by external hardware, allowing for beautiful and space-saving room designs. "Aesthetically, the TVs give a sleek, clean look," Barnes says. "Other TVs are clunky. The Samsung is like a framed digital artwork."

The Samsung 590 Series Hospitality TVs feature direct-lit LED technology, which delivers high picture clarity, vivid contrast with deep blacks, natural colors and sharp detail. LED-lit technology also has the added benefit of significant power savings – more than a 30 percent reduction when compared with similar CCFL-backlit models.

All considered, the benefits of the Samsung Hospitality TVs and H-Browser solution were so apparent that the three hotel brands unanimously agreed to standardize on them throughout the property. "All the brands have bare minimum requirements, and the Samsung passed all the individual hurdles and more," Barnes says.

QUICK PROFILE

As used at Clark & Grand

SAMSUNG 590 SERIES SMART HOSPITALITY TVS



DISPLAY SIZES (DIAGONAL):
40/46-inch class

PANEL TECHNOLOGY: LED
Direct-Lit Full Array LCD

RESOLUTION: Full HD 1920 x 1080

RESPONSE TIME: 8ms

AUDIO: Dolby™ Digital Plus

CONNECTIVITY: 3 HDMI Inputs,
USB, Ethernet RJ45/LAN, RJ-12 IR
Pass Through

WEIGHT: 40 inch – 19.8lb; 46 inch
– 27.5lb

FEATURES: H-Browser, Samsung
Lynk™ DRM, Smart TV Apps
Platform

ENVIRONMENTAL: ENERGY
STAR® compliant

STANDARD WARRANTY: 2 years
(parts and labor)



THE RESULTS

Flexible Branded Experience; Lower Costs; No Problems

The Samsung Smart TVs with H-Browser offer a high-quality experience that dovetails with what guests expect from three of the hospitality industry's most well-known brands, in a property in one of the trendiest areas of downtown Chicago. When the TV is turned on, the guest is greeted by the brand logo and customized user interface of the hotel the guest is staying at. The interactive program guide allows the guest to find channels and features easily.

"The system is flexible because it is IP-based," Barnes says. "Each of the brands can change their lineup quickly. The goal is to keep the room and the technology fresh."

The Samsung Hospitality TVs with H-Browser provided an immediate savings by eliminating the cost of a set-top box in each room. "For every dollar we shaved off the development cost, that's one dollar of equity the property owner has from the get-go," Barnes says.

In addition, the technology reduces labor costs. Brian says it takes roughly 25 minutes to install a set-top box in a

guest room. A technician must screw down the device and adjust the cables. For a large hotel property, these labor costs add up.

The most significant savings come from ongoing maintenance, though. A set-top box has additional cables that can be dislodged when housekeepers clean the room. In addition, the Samsung Hospitality TV system can be set up to reboot every time the guest turns it off. This cleans out the system's cache, and reduces the chance of an issue that might require an IT call out.

Barnes notes that the typical hotel has 1.5 percent issue rate with its in-room TV system. For a hotel like the Clark & Grand with more than 650 rooms, that translates into around 10 call outs each day that the IT and support staff must deal with. "With the Samsung Smart TV we have not had a daily support issue; we have not had a weekly issue; we have not had any issues," he says.

Because the system is IP-based technology, Clark & Grand is positioned to quickly integrate new Smart TV

features such as apps, widgets and mobile connectivity, which is crucial as guests want to control more of their experience using personal technology they bring to the hotel. "We have future-proofed the property for the next five years," Barnes says. "It's been so successful to-date that I believe this may represent a tipping point in the hotel industry moving toward an integrated Smart TV solution, rather than relying on televisions that are connected to set-top boxes as we have always done in the past."

Jonas Tanenbaum, vice president for hospitality TVs at Samsung Electronics America, says the success of the project came down to strong collaboration and a willingness to push boundaries. "The Clark and Grand property reflects bold and progressive thinking in the hospitality business. It's all about the guest experience," he says. "The Samsung Smart TV solution powered by Guest-tek on the property's IP infrastructure provides a unique, multimedia experience and is futureproof, efficient technology."



THE NEW
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