

## WNYCS ENABLES HOTELS TO OFFER GUESTS RELIABLE, HIGH-SPEED INTERNET ACCESS



**Buffalo Lodging Associates owns and manages operations for 25 hotels on the East Coast, in the Midwest, and in Florida. Many of the company's hotels carry recognizable names such as Hilton and Marriott.**

The company wanted to better serve its corporate guests by offering fast, reliable, high-speed Internet access at no cost. It found that traditional solutions for this service were often unreliable, creating unwanted frustration for hotel guests. Buffalo Lodging wanted a high-speed Internet access solution over which it would have greater control than the traditional commission-based solutions that are regularly available to hotels. With these solutions, the service providers charge commission fees for providing Internet access.

Buffalo Lodging contracted with WNYCS, a Cisco® Silver Certified Partner with Cisco IP Telephony and Cisco Wireless Specializations, to deploy a unique solution that helps ensure that all Buffalo Lodging Associates' hotels have ultimate control over their quality of service, and can also deliver wireless Internet access in hotel common areas. This deployment has resulted in more productive employees, and in the hotels attracting new and return corporate business.

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

#### Vertical Market/Technology

Hospitality/Broadband & Network Access, Wireless

#### Partner

Western New York Computing Systems, Inc. (WNYCS) is a Cisco Silver Certified Partner with Cisco IP Telephony and Cisco Wireless Specializations. Headquartered in Pittsford, New York with offices in Amherst and Syracuse, WNYCS is in its 32nd year of business and has more than 200 employees. The company is the largest Cisco integrator in its territory and has positioned itself as a Managed Services Organization. Its key platform is two-fold—the company has top sales engineers that monitor and administer accounts 24 hours a day, seven days a week, and it has a remote monitoring server at the client site that manages the client infrastructure and reports back to the main monitoring site, providing timely alerts of potential

problems. The technical support group can then proactively tackle issues and problems before they affect end users.

#### Customer

Buffalo Lodging Associates LLC owns and manages operations for 25 hotels in the Northeast, Midwest, and in Florida. Many of its hotels carry recognizable names such as Hilton and Courtyard by Marriott. The company wanted to better serve its corporate guests by offering fast, reliable, high-speed Internet access at no cost.

#### Challenge

No matter how many trunks it installed for high speed Internet access, Buffalo Lodging could not keep up with guest demand. Constant busy signals and problems with connections frustrated the guests and the staff. Company president Ron Kendall met with all of the service

providers for the hotel industry, but none could accommodate his desire to control the quality, reliability, and security of guest Internet access as well as offer it for free.

#### Return on Investment

WNYCS designed and deployed a Cisco high-speed Internet access solution with T1 lines, firewalls, routers and switches at each hotel. This reliable Internet access, which Buffalo Lodging offers to guests at no charge, is paying dividends in terms of attracting new clients while helping retain valuable existing corporate clients. At a time when business travel is down and many hotels find themselves with too many vacant rooms, companies and individuals are seeking out Buffalo Lodging hotels because of quality, free Internet access. Buffalo Lodging is enjoying a 90 percent occupancy rate and has plans for aggressive growth.

## **PARTNER SUCCESS STORY**

### **WNYCS**

#### **BUFFALO LODGING GETS INTO THE INTERNET BUSINESS**

As fast access to the Internet became more pervasive in the hotel industry, Ron Kendall, president of Buffalo Lodging Associates, LLC wanted his group of hotels to offer something more.

“We couldn’t put enough trunks in the buildings to accommodate the numbers of guests wanting to access the Internet,” he says. “They would get busy signals which was frustrating to them and to us.”

Most hotels offering Internet access charge a flat rate or daily fee for the service, and the service is provided through an outside company that earns a commission on the purchased Internet time. Kendall had different ideas, starting with the many problems that hotel guests can encounter when they are trying to gain access to the Internet in the first place.

“I wanted to address the fact that many hotels have put in high-speed Internet access that is basically non-functioning,” Kendall says. “I also believe strongly that hotels are not going to be able to charge for Internet access very much longer. I wanted a solution that we could control so that our Internet access service delivers the level of quality and reliability that our guests expect and deserve, and that we can offer for free. I talked to all of the groups that provide this service for hotels and none of them could handle our needs if we wanted to be independent. So, we decided to get into the Internet business.”



#### **MANAGED SERVICES ORGANIZATION A KEY DIFFERENTIATOR FOR WNYCS**

The decision to get into the Internet business meant partnering with an integrator that understood Buffalo Lodging’s business model and its goals for the new system. WNYCS had worked with a Buffalo Lodging sister company and came highly recommended to design and deploy a high-speed Internet access system for the hotel group.

WNYCS is in its 32nd year of business and has more than 200 employees. Headquartered in upstate New York, the company is the largest Cisco Systems® integrator in its territory and has positioned itself as a Managed Services Organization. Its key platform is two-fold—WNYCS has Cisco Certified engineers that monitor 24 hours a day, seven days a week, and has a remote monitoring server at each Hotel property that manages the client infrastructure and reports back to their main monitoring site, to provide timely alerts of potential problems. The technical support group can then proactively tackle issues and problems before they affect end users.

“This is a key differentiator for us as very few firms in the United States have this kind of infrastructure in place,” says Clark Crook, president of WNYCS. “Our Managed Services platform is crucial to everything that we do. Our profitability starts with our ability to eliminate problems for our clients.”

#### **WNYCS DELIVERS CISCO WIRED AND WIRELESS SOLUTIONS**

To meet Buffalo Lodging’s demand for both high-speed Internet guest access, and a system over which it had control for reliability and security, WNYCS implements Cisco Systems solutions. The WNYCS team set up every hotel with T1 access, firewall protection, Remote Management Servers and Cisco routers and switches. Additionally, Kendall had WNYCS install wireless Internet access in its meeting rooms and common areas.

“The meeting rooms were a real issue,” says Kendall. “It was impossible to have enough wiring to accommodate all the different kinds of meeting needs. We also have lobby breakfast areas where people congregate at certain times, and we wanted to accommodate them also. With the wireless connection added, our guests literally have access from anywhere they want.”

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### **MANAGED SERVICES PLATFORM ASSURES SMOOTH DELIVERY AND RELIABLE SUPPORT**

According to Crook, the WNYCS Managed Services philosophy touches every deployment every step of the way.

“Our Managed Services platform influences how we design the infrastructure which results in a very smooth deployment,” he says. “Everything is built and tested at our facility. Then we ship the system to the client and also send along a trained technical assistant.” A technical support group at WNYCS headquarters manages the whole process, so that all of its clients, including Buffalo Lodging, have a central repository of expertise on how the system was designed and built and how it will be maintained. This assures that WNYCS delivers consistently high-quality deployments and service.

Crooks reports that by centrally managing the deployment methodology with the WNYCS core group in the operations center, the customer rarely experiences so much as a minor issue in the deployment process.

Joe Bartelo, WNYCS sales representative, notes that the company has also built strong relationships with the telecommunications firms, which is invaluable when problems arise. “Almost everyone who has tried one of the commission-based Internet access solutions from a hotel has had problems,” Bartelo says. “If you call the service provider about the problem, they’ll often tell you to call the telecommunications company. No guest wants to deal with all that hassle. We support all of the Buffalo Lodging hotels and we know about problems through our monitoring. We work through the service providers to solve problems before they arise. Our same core group of people address everything, so they know exactly who to contact at each telecommunications company to resolve an issue, and they have it down to a science. It’s an invaluable level of service to our clients that they can pass on to their customers.”

### **FREE, QUALITY ACCESS KEY TO BOOMING BUSINESS**

So as Internet connections at hotels are more pervasive, there are growing numbers of travelers complaining about the inability to connect online from their hotel room. But guests at a Buffalo Lodging hotel don’t have those problems. And it’s a simple fact according to Kendall, that this reliable service has attracted new clients while helping retain valuable existing corporate clients.

“There is no question that our quality of Internet service attracts business,” says Kendall. “People are coming to us because we were first in line with this technology and it’s free. The question comes up constantly to our reservations clerks: ‘Do you have Internet access?’ We have booked long-term corporate guests and WNYCS works directly with them to assure security. Our cost per room continues to fall because of higher occupancy.” In fact, during the sluggish economy when many hotels have growing numbers of vacant rooms, Buffalo Lodging hotels are enjoying increasing occupancy levels. The company has new hotels under construction with plans for more.

Buffalo Lodging Associates, LLC will continue to grow with the technology, and is hoping to integrate the systems from companies it works with such as Hilton and Marriott. Interacting with those systems will give a new perspective on doing business, according to Kendall. “The more we do with this system, the more we find we can do. It’s become an important part of the ongoing evolution of how we do business.”



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