



Ramada Plaza: A Case Study of The Two Towers

Business Need

Ramada Plaza Omaha is a 363 room hotel, convention center and indoor water park, all contained over a full city block in downtown Omaha Nebraska. With the convention center and water park in the middle, the the hotels guest rooms are divided into two towers on either side, known as The Plaza and The Tower. The Plaza side had 160 analog guest and admin analog telephones and twenty SIP phones for back office functions. The Tower side was home to another 272 analog extensions and several SIP admin phones. The main business need was to connect the two towers in a seamless fashion without interrupting normal operations or inconveniencing staff or guests.

While considering what phone system to install, the Ramada Plaza also was shifting thier carrier (dial tone) provider. The previous vendor had been set up to deliver 4 digit DID numbers to the property which rang directly to extensions on the property which had the same last four digits. However, the dial plan in the other building only allowed for 3 digit extension numbers, so the DID numbers were useless in the other tower. Ramada Plaza wanted a consistent dial plan across the entire property for room to room dialing and consistency.

The other requirement was to have front desk operations mirrored on each side of the property to facilitate easy guest check in/out as well as phone answering and direction capabilities. This meant both buildings needed to know where on the property a call originated from, easily transfer it and be able to answer outside lines. They also needed the flexibility to easily change ringing options and locations on the fly as well as provide back-up service in the event of no available staff members to take incomming calls.

Solution

With Voiceware by PhoneSuite, they found the solution that solved the challenges and provided the complex hotel features required by the Ramada Plaza Project. The functionality and flexibility of the IP enable Voiceware allowed the two towers to connect together over a data network even though no telephone cabling was present, as was required for older systems. Instead, Voiceware was able to use the existing data fiber connectivity to extend Voiceware capabilities to a second analog cabinet that ran both the analog room, admin phones and deliver SIP phone and Front Desk console capability to either side of the property at the same time.

The configuration solution ended up being a Voiceware server connected to two PhoneSuite analog cabinets on either side of the property. This was the first time a single server had been connected to more than one analog cabinet and with proper programming, the solution was invisible to staff and guests. Voiceware provided multiple front desk consoles running in a HTML 5 browser, able to work anywhere the network existed on existing PC's - no clunky and expensive proprietary consoles were necessary. The browser console allowed staff to easily shift ringing patterns to any of nine presets to accomodate hourly staffing levels with just the click of a mouse. An Interactive Voice Response (IVR) system, available standard on Voiceware, was programmed and is always running in the background to take over phone answering in the event the staff is not available at any time, elegantly solving the front desk mirroring requirement.

The extreme flexibility of the Voiceware Dial Plan software allowed PhoneSuite to solve the DID and consistent dial plan challenge. "With the new carrier being installed, we were able to order the delivery of 7 digit DID numbers instead of the limit of 4 digits previously." (Mike Butler, Voiceware Installation Engineer). This allows Voiceware to read the digits and translate the called number to any four digit extension in the hotel. The flexible dial plan also allowed rooms with three digit numbers to seamlessly dial rooms with four digit room numbers. The translations and adding and stripping of digits is all done within the dial plan of Voiceware, and is invisible to the system users.

Training of the staff could also be done prior to the switch, as the system was working on the properties Local Area Network even before a single phone had been cutover to the new system. Once training was completed, cutover was ready to begin.

Outcome

Now the Ramada Plaza had thier seamless dial plan across both towers and a uniform front desk phone operation experience for staff and guests thanks to Voiceware. Watch the video of reactions of Ramada Plaza staff to the new system in the Resource section of the PhoneSuite website.