

Day three

The first panel discussion of the third day was led by Monica French of Pegasus. Other highlights included two highly informative panel discussions. Ibahn led a discussion on how to develop a Wi-Fi-friendly environment. (Panellists included Emmanuel Clave, corporate IT director from Rocco Forte and Neil Murray, regional IT director from Hilton Hotels.) And Chris Hartmann, managing director of HVS Technology Services, looked at technology's role in the convergence of business and leisure in travel. Panellists including Nick Price, CIO of Mandarin Oriental Hotels and Tom Mayer, president of Hospitality Consulting, addressed issues from the evolution of in-room technology to the importance of each link in the chain, from ISP services to guest support.

Away from the discussions, IHOF featured over 450 one-to-one meetings, which proved invaluable to delegates, allowing them to meet and share information.

The event came to a close with a magnificent drinks reception and dinner, sponsored by Intertouch and Acom, respectively, a fitting end to a highly successful event. The event gets better with every passing year, and we are already looking forward to the fifth annual meeting next year in Istanbul. See you there! [hmi](#)

ihof in brief: gerard citroen

'Unified communications: enhancing ROI and the guest experience'

Gerard Citroen, vice president of sales operations at NEC Unified Solutions, gave a highly interactive workshop looking at

how to enhance ROI and the guest experience. It touched on a variety of subjects, such as how developments in unified communications solutions could enable hotel managers to increase guests' in-room/in-house spending.

'Hotels are second homes,' explained Citroen. 'The challenge for all of us is how to define that second home. It's a combination of providing technology at the right time in the right environment and having a complete concept.'

He also stressed the importance of developing technology that is easy to use. 'You can have everything, including high-speed access, but if it's not easy to use then the guest is not happy,' he said. 'The perceived quality is very important.'

A highlight of the workshop was an interactive discussion where delegates assessed 20 issues in terms of their importance for the hotel guest. The inspiration for this was the 'multiple guest experience model' which Citroen had earlier introduced to the workshop members.

'What I really liked at the workshop is that we were sitting together with 20 senior professionals from the industry and some of the participants changed their minds as a result of the approach we took,' said Citroen afterwards. 'People were thinking like guests, and that is the key.'



ihof in brief: christian petit

'The guestroom of the future: matching technology with guest insight'

Christian Petit, the CEO of Swisscom Hospitality Services, unveiled his company's new guestroom technology, Room 2.0. The first internet service of its kind, Room 2.0 features a variety of web 2.0-based information and communication services catering directly to business travellers' and reinventing the internet experience at Swisscom's 2,300 partner hotels.

'The internet means freedom of choice,' said Petit. 'For 30 years we have been living in an analogue world and we were bound to certain devices. Now we are moving into a digital era where everyone is a producer and a consumer of information. The internet is much more flexible compared with analogue-era devices, in that it enables a personalised user experience and empowers people to interact with the information they consume.'

What is innovative about Room 2.0 is that it allows guests to tailor their stay to their own needs, offering a range of customised services as well as unlimited data downloads and priority bandwidth. 'The first thing I do when I enter my guestroom is turn on the television,' said Petit. 'I zap through all the channels only to find out that 80% is in the local language. The rest is in English and one channel in my mother tongue. Is that freedom of choice?'

Petit also bemoaned the lack of attention to technology as a guest-orientated service: 'Most hoteliers do not consider the internet as a potential differentiator. They don't give it the same value as the food and the bed, even though internet connectivity is equally important for a large number of their guests.'

'There is a digital revolution taking place in the living room, but not yet in the guestroom. However, the hotel industry can close the gap – and it will have to if it doesn't want to frustrate the guest.'

Petit sees this technology filtering down from the top hotels: 'What five-star hotels do today will be adopted by the three and four-stars tomorrow.' However, both content providers and the hospitality industry need to work together to make this a reality.



what next?

In 2008 IHOF changes its name to the International Hotel Technology Forum (IHTF) and moves eastwards to the city of Istanbul in Turkey, once the legendary capital of the Byzantine and Ottoman empires. IHTF will be held on 3-6 April 2008.

To register your attendance at IHTF 2008, or for further information, please contact Claudia Wood on +44 20 7753 4219 or visit www.iht-forum.com.