

INSTANT

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Now is a time for hotels to think twice about their expenditure. Dean Wilkinson, sales director of **Airangel**, explores how technology can be used to fight the credit crunch.

News that the credit crunch has reduced the average number of hotel stays and damaged RevPAR has been met with a 'technological fight', according to Wi-Fi specialist Airangel.

Dean Wilkinson of Airangel says: 'The credit crunch is forcing people to think twice about their expenditure and it's making hoteliers work harder to sell rooms and offer added value. Wi-Fi is one area where we're seeing renewed investment and we've had a 400% surge in enquiries over the last 12 months.'

Global Hotel Relations Group (GHRG) commissioned the survey, which revealed that the average length of stay fell from 1.9 nights to 1.5 nights in 2008 and that some guests were opting for lower star ratings to minimise expenditure.

Wilkinson continues: 'Hoteliers know that the fastest, most reliable and most intelligent Wi-Fi service is critical to their business and they are actively upgrading or investing in systems to weather the downturn. The good news is that Wi-Fi also offers marketing benefits and can have particular use in driving food and beverage spend on site. This benefit is often overlooked.'

'In the current economic climate, many hoteliers are reappraising expenditure and want to make sure they are getting maximum benefit for any investments that they make. Business travellers still need a reliable and intelligent internet connection, but hoteliers must make sure they get the most out of your investment through marketing and brand potential.'



Airangel already works for hotel chains including Malmaison, Rezidor, De Vere and Park Inn, and supplies Wi-Fi services to about 9,000 hotel bedrooms across the UK. It offers a virtual concierge service to its clients.

Hotels have recognised that bespoke branded portals and guest internet access can also provide an additional revenue stream for their businesses.

Wilkinson says: 'Savvy hoteliers use their Wi-Fi welcome page to display up-to-date information about the hotel, its facilities, partners, tourist information and special offers, thereby increasing dialogue with the guest, encouraging spend and building brand loyalty.'

'Portals can identify a user's location, then offer them tailored information. This virtual concierge service can be used to display that evening's menu for in-house restaurants, suggest running routes in the hotel's vicinity or specific offers on hotel spa and leisure facilities.'

'Equally there's scope to use the virtual concierge as a means to earn

advertising revenues from external advertisers, be that car dealerships or entertainment venues.

'Airangel's experience with hotels such as Radisson SAS at Manchester Airport and Hotel du Vin at One Devonshire Gardens shows that guests respond well to the extra information that internet portals provide and, more importantly, that the systems drive RevPAR,' Wilkinson continues.

'Through bespoke portals you can choose which brands you want your hotel to associate with and align your company to your guests. Wi-Fi is already understood to be a vital service for guests but now it is recognised as a critical way to engage with them, protect your brand and add to your bottom line.'

'Hoteliers are using technology to give them the edge and should be reassured that this is one investment that can work doubly hard on their behalf,' Wilkinson concludes. 'Wi-Fi is helping hoteliers hit back.'

Airangel is a leading supplier of wired and wireless guest internet access and works with international hotel chains, conference centres and the corporate sector. ■

Further information
Airangel
Website: www.airangel.com