

VOL. 18 NO. 16 AUG. 25-SEPT. 6, 2009

BRIEFS

Richfield veterans exit to form Greenwood

Three industry veterans recently departed Richfield Hospitality, Inc. to form a new investment and management firm called Greenwood Hospitality Group, which will be based in Denver and include offices in Hartford, CT, and Los Angeles. Tom Conroy, Ahk Hong Tan and Bill Zollars have more than 65 years of experience and have the support of several well-capitalized investor groups, according to the company.

Days Inn taps Guin as its new brand president

Hospitality veteran Clyde Guin has been named president of Wyndham Hotel Group's Days Inn brand. Guin, who has some 35 years of industry experience, will be responsible for the growth and performance of the Days Inn brand. Guin joins the company after more than nine years as senior vice president of operations for Stamford Hotels.

Hyatt IPO all about Pritzker family valuation



New home for Vagabond bolsters chain & parent

ATLANTA—Even though talks about a possible licensing agreement were under way long before this severe lodging industry downturn took hold, this month's agreement between America's Best Franchising, Inc. and Vagabond Franchise System, Inc. seems particularly timely. As part of the transaction, America's Best—

By STEPHAN C. O'CONNOR

CHICAGO—After years of industry speculation about if and when privately held Hyatt Hotels Corp. would "go public," majority owners the Pritzker family have decided right now—one of the toughest economic environments for hotels in recent history—is the moment to launch an initial public offering. Earlier this month the corporation filed a registration statement with the Securities and Exchange Commission proposing an initial public offering of its Class A common stock. While the move caused a flurry of industry chatter, the central context of the IPO continued on page 27

Aimbridge adapts to changing conditions

CARROLLTON, TX—The current downturn in likely to result in a number of casualties throughout the hotel industry and companies that are not as well established are often considered vulnerable, but that's not the case with Aimbridge Hospitality where a little planning has gone a long way. A major factor that is keeping the fledgling company on solid footing now is the foresight the company had to begin preparation for the continued on page 22

the stat corner



HOTEL BUSINESS® Technology: In-Room Entertainment

Houston's Hotel Sorella debuts with in-room tech first

By CHRISTOPHER OSTROWSKI

HOUSTON—As the first and flagship property for the new Hotel Sorella brand, the freshly opened Hotel Sorella here had to exhibit some unique characteristics if it wanted to stand out when it welcomed its first guests this month. From an in-room entertainment perspective at least, the hotel has indeed done that by deploying a first-of-its-kind technology widely used in the U.S. hotel industry.

Pushing the so-called "jack-pot" guest device connectivity to a higher level, the 214-room Hotel Sorella's never-before-seen technology is an in-room connectivity panel that incorporates stereo Bluetooth technology. The technology enables guests to wirelessly stream audio from an iPhone, including the latest iOS 3.0 version, an iPod Touch or any other A2DP-enabled computer or smart phone—including the recently unveiled Palm Pre and Nokia N97—through each room's flat-screen, high-definition television's speakers. Furthermore, the panel allows guests to move and experience music, photos, videos and other multimedia content from their own personal portable electronic devices on the guestroom HDTV through the connection of a single multi-media cable.

cutting-edge focused. According to the Hotel Sorella's general manager, Ryan Galligan, finding and deploying such a technology is simply characteristic of the Valencia Group, the creator of the Hotel Sorella Hospitality Industry Technology Exposition and Conference (HITEC) in Austin, TX. Valencia encountered this panel technology and dis-

covered that it would be a rather appropriate amenity for the luxury-focused Hotel Sorella. "The wireless application is really neat," Galligan further remarked. "You can be getting ready in the bathroom and be able to play your music on the TV while controlling it from the bathroom. It's really unique. And I personally like it." continued on page 38



Enhance your property image.
Improve your bottom line.
Increase guest satisfaction.

Surge ahead of the comp

Go directly to TELEVUE for D

Switch from cable to DIRECTV® programming from TELEVUE® and save more only will you have access to high-definition televisions and flexible financing your guests 100% digital entertainment and high-quality HD TV channel a better is that your bottom line will benefit from cutting out the ever-sp

- Flexible financing solutions make the transition affordable and free up your
- We offer the added bonus of a \$235 per room subsidy for the first 6 months
- Get it ALL - high definition programming, HD televisions, competitive financ

TELEVUE

For more information or to contact your local sales call 800.316.8876 or visit

©2009 DIRECTV, Inc. The DIRECTV logo and the Custom Design logo are trademarks of DIRECTV, Inc. Business 2009-01-14-143. HD equipment an required. Number of HD channels varies by package. All other trademarks and service marks are the property of their respective owners. www.hotelbusiness.com/readerservice For more information use ad #117.

YOUR DEPENDABLE PARTNER TODAY AND TOMORROW!

For more than 30 years, SAFLOK™ has offered hotels dynamic electronic locking solutions with a clear upgrade path. Our best-in-class technology and service support evolve to address the demands of your changing business climates. So while you may only need a simple door lock today, when tomorrow's business calls for a complete access control solution, you'll be ready with SAFLOK!

Install Quantum "Adios" quantum card reader with multi-technology capability.

Implement our new program via use of smart card.

Replace magnetic card readers with RFID readers.

Install Digital radio based and activate Messaging bidirectional communication system.

Saflok
A Member of the Kaba Group
Toll-free: 877.272.3565
www.saflok.com

Hotel pipeline shrinks for next three years

Lodging Econometrics for the first time has forecast new hotel openings for 2011 and expects some 759 hotels and 74,493 rooms to come online that year. At the same time, LE has adjusted its forecasts down for new openings in 2009 and 2010. Meanwhile, construction starts were at a cyclical low of 190 projects in the second quarter and cancellations and postponements reached a record high of 507 projects. Both figures, as well as new project announcements—which are at the lowest level in 18 quarters—reflect the current lending environment.

Forecast for new hotel openings



Cancellations/Postponements (rooms in thousands)



Hotel Sorella gives guests in-room entertainment flexibility via new tech

continued from page 9

the flexibility. If a guest wants to bring their PlayStation 3 and come to plug it into the TV, they can easily do that. Or they can plug in their laptop and relax and watch a movie by streaming it from Netflix online at a DVD. They can do all of that with the [HD multi-media interface] cable connection. Our goal is to provide the guest with as many options as possible and not relegate them to just a traditional pay-per-view system where their options are limited.

Supplying these flexible options for guests is the maker of the connectivity panel, Teleklage, which officially launched this technology at this year's HITEC. The product is formally known as the MediaHub HD.

While other versions of the MediaHub have been wall-mounted in other hotels, the MediaHub HD—the cost of which was unknown by Galligan—in the Hotel Sorella is hidden from view by virtue of its integration inside the credenza that the HDTV rests upon. "It's there behind a door, so you won't see all of the plugs sitting there," Galligan said. "It's pretty discreet. That's not an afterthought."

Meanwhile, Galligan noted that Valencia has also put some thought into how it will educate guests on this technological amenity since it is rather cutting-edge. "We're working with the vendor



to compile a piece of collateral in the guestroom that will assist the guest in using the system to its fullest potential," he said. "My job and the staff's job will also be to help guests with the process and understanding of what's available."

diaHub HD at the Hotel Sorella is, of course, each guestroom's 37-inch Panasonic plasma HDTV, which also offers free-to-guest programming, including 45 HD channels. DirecTV is the provider of that content via coaxial cabling.

As for the pay-per-view or video-on-demand offerings of the hotel, Galligan explained that there isn't one. "We spent a lot of time thinking about pay per view and decided to just go with DirecTV. We spent a lot of cap-

ital buying these beautiful HDTVs and we wanted to make sure we could offer HD programming and a lot of pay per view content couldn't deliver that. So we found in DirecTV a seamless solution that tailored to our guests. But we have the flexibility to offer pay per view in the future. We're also looking into the possibility of delivering content through fiber optics in the future to enhance the guest experience."

Rounding out the in-room entertainment experience at the Hotel Sorella is the availability of DVD player and Blu-ray player rentals at the front desk and the availability of clock radios with MP3 player capabilities in all guestrooms. Complimentary wired and wireless high-speed Internet access is also offered in all rooms and wireless access is available throughout the hotel.

Next up for Valencia will, of course, be the opening of other Hotel Sorella properties throughout the country, a process that Galligan said is ongoing, although he could not reveal the eventual locations. Even so, he said it's safe to assume the MediaHub HD will be a part of those properties as well as the other hotels Valencia already operates.