

Hospitality

**How-to Guide: Wi-Fi & Voice Communications
for Your Hospitality Clients**



Why Your Hospitality Clients Need to Upgrade Their Wi-Fi & Voice Communications

Introduction:

What's the *first* amenity that guests want when they step into their hotel room? Wi-Fi. It's the most desired amenity of business travelers. A staggering 94% of business travelers consider Wi-Fi a must, according to a recent Forrester report. Underscoring that demand, 80% or more of all travelers tote their smartphones, laptops, and tablets to hotels.

Those hotel guests don't merely want access to Wi-Fi, however. They want reliable Wi-Fi that they can access easily. After all, a whopping 89% of guests decide where to lodge based on free reliable Wi-Fi, according to the 2018 Lodging Technology Study.



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Can your hospitality clients offer strong, reliable Wi-Fi? Have they upgraded their wireless technologies in the past two years? If not, they should know that their competitors most likely already have done so or plan on an upgrade.

Case in point: Some 45% of innovative hoteliers are "making enhancements to guest Wi-Fi in 2018 and 58% are planning to add or upgrade smart TVs/streaming capabilities." Moreover, "64% of U.S. hotel guests said it is 'very or extremely important' for hotels to continue investing in technology to enhance the guest experience," according to an Oracle Hospitality-Phocuswright study.

In more than 18 years of wireless technology experience, we at EnGenius have seen owners of hotels, motels, and multi-dwelling units *continually* improve and finesse their guest services through wireless technologies to entice more guests to their establishments.

To help your hospitality clients stay competitive (and deepen their relationships with their guests), bolster their businesses with strong, reliable wireless capabilities.

The Link Between Stellar Customer Service and Wireless Technologies



In providing your hospitality clients with strong, reliable wireless technologies, you are doing more than just giving them technology. You are also equipping them with the capabilities to provide the best possible guest service to their customers.

When you demonstrate that you know how intrinsically linked wireless technologies and today's five-star hotel ratings are, you also show your clients that you understand the hospitality market.

Almost always toting devices, today's hotel guests are more digitally savvy than ever. (Americans love their Internet. Some 77% of Americans go online daily, according to Pew Research Center.)

To meet the growing demands of digitally connected guests and the desire for always-on customer service, many hotels are actively working on boosting their wireless technologies.

For example, 46% of respondents named "improving digital customer engagement/guest loyalty" one of the top 12 tactical tech objectives. Some 27% named reducing cost of managing technology as a top objective, and 26% stated "enhancing room technology," according to the lodging study.

Moreover, because hotel guests know what is possible through wireless technologies, they also expect hoteliers to harness that technology to craft more personalized, exemplary guest experiences.

Six Ways That Wireless Technologies Can Help Your Hospitality Clients (& Your Own Business)

Here's how wireless technology can be used to bolster guest services in hospitality. We're equipping you with the latest wireless stats from recent hospitality technology studies and also sharing what we at EnGenius have learned from almost two decades in the hospitality technology space.

1

A simple & smooth check-in process

"A successful check-in is not only fast but also engaging for guests," states a *Hotel Management* article. "Guests do not enjoy being in the dark about what is happening during check-in, and they will grow restless if they are standing in place while hotel employees type away on a computer for an extended period of time."

Help your hospitality clients avoid causing a bottleneck at the check-in counter: When hospitality staff members are equipped with Wi-Fi-enabled devices, hotel guests can check in from different places on the property and avoid getting caught in a long queue, especially during peak hours.

Also, during check-in, enable your hospitality clients to make accessing the hotel Wi-Fi easy for guests. Studies show that guests prefer immediate access to Wi-Fi as soon as they check in. (Seven minutes is the maximum time that the majority of hotel guests can go without connecting to Wi-Fi, according to a USA Today article.)

2

Better tracking & security with mobile keys

Consider offering your hospitality clients the opportunity to provide "mobile keys" instead of old-school ones. As simple as a QR code on a mobile device, these "keys" can deter thieves and provide a greater sense of security for hotel guests.

When your hotel clients provide mobile keys, they also support the idea that their hotel is cutting-edge in regards to technology. "On average, guests using digital keys rate a hotel seven points higher than keycard guests, with 84% of guests likely to use digital key again," states Brian Shedd, OpenKey's VP of sales and marketing, in a *Hotel Management* article.

3

Streaming in-room entertainment

Once guests enter their suites or rooms, they want to experience the best that wireless technologies can offer.

Guests want to:

- Stream content from mobile devices to the TV
- Access favorite apps like Netflix, Hulu, Pandora & Crackle
- Enjoy online gaming
- Stream personalized video & audio

After all, part of vacationing is spending time in one's hotel room and just relaxing. That's why a full 75% of guests use in-room entertainment. "About 53% of hoteliers plan to make some change with smart TVs and/or technologies that enable guests to stream content, placing the technology as the top guest-facing priority," according to a recent study.

However, struggling with buffering, dropped, or lagging Wi-Fi is anything *but* relaxing. So, make sure that you provide your hotel clients with the wireless technology that can handle the streaming demands of their guests' devices.

4

A smart, personalized in-room experience

When guests stay at a hotel, they expect a certain degree of attentiveness and indulging. Guests want their needs met expeditiously, their meals to be at a higher degree of culinary skill than at home, and their rooms to be best-suited to their preferences for comfort.

In recent hospitality publications, guests have expressed an interest in using technology devices to adjust their room environment to meet their personal preferences.

You can help your hotelier clients provide easy personalization of:

- Temperature
- Lighting
- Shades
- Blinds

For example, what one guest may consider too warm may be too chilly for another. Or one guest may like the blinds a little higher than the previous guest had them. To enable this personalization for your hotel clients, employ the latest cutting-edge wireless technologies.

5

Digital menus

Another place that you can equip your hotel clients with wireless technologies is in the hotel dining room.

For example, arm your hotel clients with digital menus instead of printed ones (which can get faded and disgusting with overuse and wear.) Providing digital menus can help eliminate incorrect orders, cater to guests' specific needs (such as for gluten-free or vegan meals), and enable easy updating of new dishes or eliminating old ones.

"Additionally, they help the customer feel as if they were at home," states a NextRestaurant article. "Business videos, food pictures, recipes, and food ingredients are just some of the things that can attract the attention of your guests."

Extend wireless capabilities beyond your hospitality clients' front desk and hotel rooms to strengthen their connection with guests in their hotel dining area.

6

Well-connected hotel conference rooms

Your hospitality clients' Wi-Fi must handle all the demands of fast-paced business. It needs to enable guests' laptops, tablets, and other devices to tackle large volumes of email, conduct online research, and transfer high-resolution business collaterals and multimedia files.

After all, not all hotel guests are vacationers. In the United States, businesses spent a whopping \$424 billion to send travelers on 514.4 million domestic business trips in 2016 alone, according to a Global Business Travel Association article.

The most current numbers from the U.S. Travel Association's Travel Trends Index demonstrate a 6.6% growth in international travel to the United States in April, and a 5% spike in May compared with the same months last year.

Moreover, in addition to those business travelers, their counterparts in other hotels and corporate offices also rely on videoconferencing for crucial meetings. Hotel guests must be able to trust your clients' hotel Wi-Fi (and thereby you) to deliver videoconferences seamlessly without glitches or lags.

A lack in the reliability of a hotel's Wi-Fi translates to your hotel client's lack of confidence in your deployment of that network. So, make sure to choose strong, steady, and consistent wireless technologies for your hospitality clients.

Despite all the aforementioned benefits of upgrading a hotel's wireless technologies, some hoteliers may resist the idea of giving their networks an overhaul.

Let's take a look at the three common obstacles.

Three Big Reasons Your Hospitality Clients Resist Upgrading Their Wireless Tech (& How to Overcome Them)

In Wi-Fi's nascent stage, hotel owners really just wanted to be able to say that they had "free Wi-Fi" to draw in more customers.

Now, leading hotels understand that setting up strong, uninterrupted wireless communication requires a certain level of expertise. They desire a thorough and well-planned network, reliable and well-tested products, and technical support to keep all the wireless communication flowing with little interruption.

However, in your mission to provide strong wireless communications, you may hear the following concerns or challenges from hoteliers.

1. Budget constraints & resistance to change

Unfortunately, not all hotels have the luxury of generous budgets. Many hoteliers have tight, insufficient budgets for their IT needs, and because of that fact, they are highly pressured to keep the hotel legacy infrastructure.

Hoteliers end up adopting the attitude of "it ain't broke, don't fix it." In the desire to save money, those hoteliers keep their legacy systems and weak Wi-Fi. However, this short-term benefit of saving money today causes long-term loss of guests (and therefore revenue) in the future.

A possible solution to tackle this obstacle is to dig deep into what hoteliers truly need (as opposed to just want, which can be placed on a different list), then work on making smart purchasing decisions to best help your clients get the most out of their existing budgets.

2. Struggling to justify ROI

In addition to a struggle against budget constraints, some hoteliers also are unable to justify ROI for the latest wireless tech advancements.

For example, hoteliers may want to begin incorporating digital menus into their hotel dining areas. However, after weighing in the costs of paying for a technological upgrade, a hotelier may flounder in projecting the positive financial benefit of it.

Because not all ROI is easily mapped out (e.g., customer satisfaction, positive word of mouth), hoteliers may find buy-in for technological upgrades by investors difficult.

"About a quarter of hotels say resistance to change is a top challenge and that goes up to 40% for hotels that consider themselves lagging compared to competitors in technology," states the study.

One possible solution is to do some research and see what your clients' nearest competitors are doing in terms of tech upgrades. In doing so, you may be able to forecast how much business that your hotel clients will lose if they don't make an upgrade.

3. Lack of expertise

The demands of a challenging environment and the growing complexity of technology mean that no hotelier can do the groundwork of setting up a wireless without professional help. (Examples of challenging environments are those with interference, different technologies, varied configurations, etc.)

Despite that fact, a popular misconception that hoteliers believe is that Wi-Fi is a plug-and-play technology: Just place access points around your property and turn them on. Done!

Hoteliers and/or novice installers don't consider how these devices will be configured, the best placement of each one, whether the devices are manageable, etc. Therefore, share your expertise and years of experience with your hospitality clients. Let them know that you've got a lot of wireless technology know-how and that you understand their competitive vertical market.

Best Practices for Access Points in Hospitality

Once you've overcome those hurdles, you'll also want to let your hospitality clients know that you adhere to best practices for wireless technologies. (In other words, you know what to do and what not to do in this space.)

Read on for a brief summary of hospitality wireless technologies' best practices.

To ensure the best outcome of your wireless technology solutions, make sure to adhere to the following:

- Place the AP as close to client devices as possible. Avoid hotel hallways. Minimize obstructions between APs and clients as well. Most guests in your hotel need to have their devices in physical sight of the AP to get the best Wi-Fi connection (e.g. in room APs).
- Make sure the hotel APs are staggered them horizontally and vertically. Do not stack them floor to floor due to interference for your guests and hotel staff members.
- Space out APs evenly. This allows for static and uniform transmit power settings. It also simplifies the channelization process.
- Use the hotel's building structure (e.g., walls and corners) to isolate neighboring APs. Avoid mounting behind obstructions, or above ceilings and near ducts and pipes.
- Place neighboring APs to not be in line of sight (LoS) of each other. If they are too close, they will have overlapping coverage areas and greater interference, especially in hotel hallways. Make sure neighboring APs are on independent/non-overlapping channels.
- Only use 20 MHz channels at 2.4 GHz. 802.11n allows for 40 MHz channels, but never use these in any multi-AP deployment. You can't have two 40 MHz channels that are independent. Instead, ONLY use 20 MHz in 2.4 GHz.
- Only use the three independent 20 MHz channels in 2.4 GHz (802.11.b/g/n): 1, 6, and 11. (Each channel is only 5 MHz separated from its neighbor.)
- Avoid DFS (Dynamic Frequency Selection) channels for indoor deployments. Use DFS channels for point-to-(multi) point links.
- Start with 20 MHz channels at 5 GHz; scale up to 40 MHz if needed.
- Use static independent channels in an alternating pattern on both 2.4 GHz and 5 GHz.
- Ensure your SSIDs are different on each band if you're not using band steering. Most environments use "Prefer 5 GHz" with a -80 dBm threshold.
- Validate the 5 GHz capabilities and limitations of known client devices, and plan your channels accordingly.
- Use static transmit power settings with at least 6 dBm on 2.4 GHz and "medium" on 5 GHz in AP Group Settings.

As your hospitality clients add more and more capabilities to their Wi-Fi networks, they also commit a lot of bandwidth to enable them. One way of freeing some of that much-needed Wi-Fi bandwidth is to employ a wireless telecommunication system for your hotel.

As a leader in premises mobility communications, we at EnGenius understand the huge impact that cordless business phone systems can make in the hospitality space and how they can alleviate bandwidth pressure for your hotel.

Let's take a quick look at the benefits of cordless handsets in such complex environments in terms of decreasing network bandwidth and increasing positive guest experiences for your hotel clients (which make for positive experiences for you and your hospitality clients).

10 Questions to Ask Before You Plan Your Hospitality Clients' Wi-Fi

Ask yourself these crucial questions to assess your customers' Wi-Fi needs. You'll then be better-informed to begin preparing a wireless network site plan for their property.



1. What's the purpose of your hotel client's Wi-Fi network?

Consider the *why* regarding this network. Ask what is (or what are) the most important applications for this network. Determine applications that will be allowed to run on the network as well as any restrictions to those applications or others.

2. Where does the Internet service enter your property?

Understand how you are going to deliver Wi-Fi to hotel staff members and hospitality guests. The location of the Internet Service Provider's (ISP) equipment will help you determine what is needed, such as Ethernet cabling, network Power-over-Ethernet (PoE) switches and/or wireless access points to deliver that service to your users. You can add fiber runs, hardened PoE switches, media converters, NEMA boxes, etc.

3. How far is the Internet service entry point from your client's desired coverage area(s)?

Knowing the distance from your ISP's equipment to the service area gives you a good idea of necessary equipment and where to place it.

For example, if your Internet service is coming into the basement of the main office, you may need to run high-capacity cabling from the entry point to other equipment to connect an access point. That will provide Internet connectivity to the office and extend it to other access points throughout the property, such as the front desk, back office, data room, or data closet.

4. What are your WAN requirements?

In medium to large hospitality deployments, it is typical to have two or more WAN connections for the following reasons:

- *Capacity.* It's common in hospitality networks to have guest traffic exceed non-guest traffic. For this reason, many hospitality deployments have two Internet connections (one going to guest traffic, the other to non-guest traffic).

- *Traffic segmentation.* Due to certain regulations, traffic segmentation may be needed. Two Internet connections accomplish compliance in regards to their regulations.
- *Redundancy.* If one Internet connection goes down, the other Internet connection can be used.

5. What is your approximate average number of users?

The average number of users (“user capacity”) helps determine the number of devices and access points that will likely access your wireless network.

Rule of thumb: Assume the network must support 2.5 devices per person, including smartphones, tablets, gaming devices or laptops, to determine the number of access points needed for your hospitality client’s site.

6. What quality & type of service or level of access do you want to provide your guests?

When you know the quality of service to offer to staff members, hospitality guests, or tenants, you can then determine the best placement for your access points for wireless capacity.

For example, do your clients need Wi-Fi by the pool? Then you’ll want to set up an IP-rated access point for them.

7. What is the construction of your buildings?

Wireless signals degrade when traveling through different materials. Concrete, wood, metal siding, fiberglass, and/or rebar in hotel bathrooms, construction, or plumbing can result in different levels of Wi-Fi signal degradation.

Understanding the construction of your obstacles in your hotel will help determine the quantity and appropriate placement of your wireless access points.

8. Do you have Ethernet & Fiber/Power cable running out to each building or desired Wi-Fi location?

Having the proper, shielded Ethernet cable or fiber run already run to buildings or centralized locations makes the deployment of Wi-Fi very easy.

Don’t have it? Then implement a secure wireless link or wireless bridge to carry the signal to a designated location. Doing so will avoid the need for additional cabling and costs, and it spare you the hassle of permits. Moreover, it avoids the disruption of the guest experience.

When considering a wireless bridge, use one that supports the same wireless speeds as the rest of your network. The more speed that the link provides, the better the experience for your guests or tenants. Also, consider the type of traffic that will flow through the wireless link. For example, it may be necessary to have a separate wireless bridge link for VoIP traffic.

9. How many suites and rooms do your hospitality clients want to equip with wireless access?

Consider the number of floors, rooms, and hospitality areas you would like to give Wi-Fi connectivity. That number can help you determine the required quantity and placement of access points and wireless bridges.

Plus, you can determine the average number of users that will be on your network at any given time.

Access points come in different form factors as well, so you’ll want to provide ceiling-mount or wall-plate access points as desired for both Wi-Fi and aesthetic purposes. Moreover, consider how much traffic each access point will be handling.

10. Do you plan to implement or expand an existing surveillance system?

Surveillance systems provide crucial 24/7 visuals on key areas and add a level of comfort and security for your staff members, hospitality guests, or tenants.

Surveillance systems also can present crucial evidence to protect your property in such cases as liability issues, vandalism, and theft.

When installing an IP surveillance system, you need to consider your client site’s available bandwidth.

Be aware that higher-resolution IP cameras will need more bandwidth than lower-resolution IP cameras do. Higher-resolution IP cameras provide sharper details, such as identifying facial features and license plate numbers.

Ideally, you should put your security system on a separate network segment either physical (separate cabling and switches) or logical (VLANs) to divide up the amount of bandwidth/speed being used between each segment. That allows you to allocate limits a needed.

Now that you’ve read through the different ways that your hospitality clients (and you!) can benefit from upgrading their hotel wireless technologies, check out the following overview of EnGenius products.

If you’d like to learn about any of them in greater details, visit <https://www.engeniustech.com.sg>

Product List:

EnGenius Solutions

Managed Wall-Plate Access Points

Wall-Plate APs are an all-in-one communication “hub” for in-room wired and wireless connectivity that’s flexible and reliable. Deploy in hotel guest rooms and multi-tenant dwellings; operate alone or centrally manage with no license fees.

As points for connecting smart TVs, phones, and PoE pass-throughs, wall-plate access points are thin and discrete, so they can be hidden behind hotel furniture or unobtrusively on walls.

Flexible, Scalable Network Switches

The Neutron Series is highly flexible, scaling to meet the needs of boutique hotels and larger chains alike.

It lets administrators quickly deploy, provision, manage, and update an unlimited number of APs and switches throughout the property or remotely across multiple properties, all from one location via ezMaster network management software.

High-Capacity Network Products That Last Long Into the Future

EnGenius’ products employ peak-performing wireless 802.11ac Wave 2 technology to support the demands of busy hotels and restaurants. Upgrading a network from older, slower technology to 11ac future-proofs it for the next five years. You can quickly and affordably add 11ac wireless coverage and increase network capacity in hotel restaurants, conference rooms, and pool areas.

Lower CAPEX + Lower OPEX = More \$\$ for Other Guest Amenities

EnGenius’ industry-leading price-performance value delivers enterprise-class performance at affordable prices without licensing or subscription fees. By providing larger front-end discounts than its competitors, EnGenius lowers overall Wi-Fi capital and operational expenses, helping operators stretch their technology budgets or provide room for other advancements.

ezWiFi Planner Network Design Assistance & Unparalleled Customer Service

Have a simple configuration question or need the assistance of our site design services? EnGenius offers a full product support system with CWNA-certified Field Application Engineers and Customer Service Technicians. Get the pre- and post-sales support you need to confidently deploy a high-performance network for your facility and guests.

Quickly Communicate with Staff & Answer Calls Throughout the Property

EnGenius’ industrial cordless telephone systems and durable handsets deliver long-range and reliability outdoors, and throughout multi-story buildings. These expandable systems are easily deployed with existing PBX and IP-PBX systems providing Push-to-Talk Broadcast and private Two-Way Intercom between handsets. Choose between multi-line or single-line systems.

ezMaster™ Network Management Software

The ezMaster’s simple, intuitive Web-based interface allows flexible access point monitoring locally, remotely, or via a cloud-based service with no licensing or subscription fees. Quickly and easily set up, manage, monitor, and troubleshoot multiple APs at the same time. See real-time network performance and monitor AP traffic through ezMaster’s at-a-glance dashboard.

ezMaster provides business-class features, unlimited scalability, and centralized management of hundreds of EnGenius APs and switches.

About EnGenius

Our Mission

Our mission is to deliver best-in-class voice and data solutions that empower mobility, enhance productivity, and embrace simplicity. We believe connectivity should come with reliability, rich features, and personalized service while maintaining affordability.

Our Company

EnGenius pioneered long-range, high-powered wireless communications and radio frequency (RF) solutions in the early 1990s. Today, that legacy continues through its broad portfolio of business-class networking and telephony solutions. As a leading global manufacturer, EnGenius maintains high control standards over its products and suppliers to ensure customers enjoy top performing solutions with enhanced features at an unmatched value.

Networking Technologies

EnGenius’ portfolio of networking solutions includes a comprehensive line of managed and unmanaged wireless solutions, Gigabit switches, and IP-based surveillance systems that deliver long-range connectivity, robust feature sets, and versatility for class-leading price/performance value.