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QT Sydney Hotel.

Challenge

The challenge stemmed from the decision to redevelop the heritage listed State Theatre office block (adjacent to the State Theatre) and the adjoining Gowings building, restoring the buildings and creating a state-of-the-art hotel – QT Sydney – in one of Sydney's prime locations. According to AHL General Manager – Corporate IT Dean Brown, the challenge was three-fold. "First," he says, "with the building being heritage listed, all the backbone cabling and infrastructure work had to be undertaken in accordance with strict requirements."

"Secondly, the Ricoh engineers would be installing the network at the same time as construction was being undertaken; and thirdly, we needed to have our corporate network fully integrated with a separate network dedicated to our customers."

Solution

The decision to award the network integration project to Ricoh IT Services was based on a number of key reasons, not least of those being a proven history of delivering complex projects on-time and to-budget – a history that goes back to 1994 when Ricoh IT Services was awarded its first contract. That was with another AHL brand, Greater Union Cinemas.

"Over nearly 20 years, Ricoh has consistently demonstrated the ability to take on even the most complex of integration challenges and deliver on the goods," Mr Brown states.

About QT Hotel

Amalgamated Holdings Limited (AHL) is the name behind many of Australia's most well-known brands and one of Australia's premier entertainment, hospitality and leisure companies.

In hospitality and leisure, it owns QT Hotels, Rydges Hotels & Resorts and the Thredbo Alpine Resort. In entertainment, the AHL Group owns Event Cinemas and the State Theatre in Sydney. It is the last of those – the State Theatre that presented a major network integration challenge, ultimately solved by Ricoh IT Services.

Integration

With the requirement to integrate two separate networks, each with its own unique components, Ricoh IT Services engineers were faced with a broad range of technologies, many from different vendors and in some instances, implemented by third-party system providers.

Within the mix were systems required for:

• Point-of-Sale (POS) terminals;
• Workstations for front-of-house and guest bookings;
• The corporate wide area network (WAN);
• Guest internet;
• Guest and corporate telephony.

In order to achieve the integration, Ricoh IT Services engineers undertook a comprehensive design exercise to ensure full data integration between disparate systems and, most importantly, establish full security between guest and corporate network services.

"It was a case of working closely with AHL and keeping abreast of what equipment was being installed by the other system providers," Ricoh IT Services Account Manager Justin Williamson explains. "Then it was up to us to work out how best to integrate the two networks, taking into account the range of protocols and interfaces involved."

According to Mr Brown, though, it was that intense preparation that paid dividends. "Across the entire Group, this was the first time we had integrated so many different systems. The fact that Ricoh IT Services was able to achieve that integration is testament in itself. From the business perspective, we now have a network that, while having an underlying complexity, can be managed centrally and, importantly, is secure."

It's on that last point – security – that Ricoh's networks integration skills were of major importance, particularly when it comes to the Payment Card Industry Data Security Standard (PCI DSS). A set of requirements that dictate the manner in which all companies that process, store and/or transmit credit card information, PCI DSS had to be carefully considered and adhered to by the Ricoh specialists.

"Given that the customer and corporate networks were being integrated, ensuring the integrity and security of data was critical," says Mr Brown. "For us, it's one of the key reasons we maintain the relationship with Ricoh. Functioning almost as part of our IT department, they have the knowledge of our business and industry that we rely on daily."

Flexibility

In stark contrast to the relatively safe and controlled environment typical of most network infrastructure projects, Ricoh IT Services engineers found themselves confronted with the requirement to wear hard hats and steel-capped shoes because of the construction work being carried out in tandem. Quite aside from the safety issues this presented, it was a case of having to literally work around building workers and consistently having to fit in with changes to building schedules.

"From a logistics standpoint, that was probably the biggest challenge Ricoh faced," Mr Brown says. "Regardless of whether they were on-site and ready to move forward with a particular part of the project, whenever the builders changed their schedule – which happened quite frequently – they had to review and replan because they simply couldn't do their work while construction was actually happening.

"What it comes down to is that we presented Ricoh IT Services with a network integration project that was complex and challenging at multiple levels, and they delivered a solution that met every one of our requirements."

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