Empowered by Innovation

NEC

Cloud Solution
citizenM Hotel Group

Customer
- citizenM hotel

Industry
- Hospitality

Challenges
- To provide cost-effective, reliable and secure hotel management solution.

Solution
- Software-based communication platform, living in a Cloud environment.
- Collaboration with telecom operator for fully integrated hospitality solution.

Results
- NEC enables both telecom operator and its end users to improve TCO,services, business efficiency and scalability.

Introduction

citizenM is a hotel group with a difference. They have established a unique brand of affordable luxury and, for their newest project, a 198-room hotel in Glasgow, they turned to Swisscom. In partnership with NEC, Swisscom have delivered a fully hosted, virtualized communications infrastructure for the innovative hotel group.

Swisscom Hospitality Services (SHS), a division of Swisscom, is a leading European telecommunications operator providing a full range of products and services for mobile, fixed and IP-based voice and data communication designed to meet the unique requirements of the world's finest hotels. The company has more than 2,000 partner hotels across the United States, Europe and the Middle East, so working alongside NEC, the two companies were the perfect match to successfully implement a cloud-based communications service for the ever expanding citizenM.

Challenges

As a leader in the integration of IT and network technologies, NEC had to combine its technical know-how with its years of experience of delivering hospitality solutions around the world. However, this project differed slightly due to the atypical way it was to be deployed, presenting everyone involved with an exciting new challenge.

Commenting on the challenges faced by the two companies, Gerard Citroen, Director of Commercial Operations for NEC Europe said "When we were invited by Swisscom to explore potential solutions, the two key words were adaptability and flexibility. Not only in technical, financial and IT performance terms but also in terms of image - the concept value of citizenM."

citizenM sought a solution that enabled them to provide complete guest satisfaction. Michael Levie, COO at the hotel group: "We are embarking on a major campaign to expand the citizenM brand to new urban destinations, with roll-outs planned in London, New York, Paris, Milan, Zurich and Hong Kong. We needed a cost-effective solution that was reliable and secure, as well as something that could be deployed quickly and easily." This, of course, meant the solution had to be a long-term one, enabling citizenM to expand and execute their growth strategy, regardless of location or timing.

Solution

Swisscom selected NEC largely based on the strengths of their NEC Sphericall platform, which is an IP based software switch, living in a Cloud environment. This service-oriented communications platform delivers scalability, low-cost of ownership and openness, enabling them to embed communications into business-critical applications and processes across the hotel. In addition, the NEC Sphericall platform is being deployed in a virtualized Cloud, which means, that as citizenM continues to expand, it can utilize the same technology at new hotel sites without incurring further costs.

This was something that appealed greatly to Levie, "We wanted to avoid all the cost and disruption of deploying our own infrastructure and were keen to significantly reduce our IT capital expenditure, whilst also eliminating on-site IT maintenance costs.".

The open web services architecture of NEC Sphericall allowed integration with Swisscom's Property Management service, providing the hotel with a fully hosted, integrated business management solution. NEC hosted the Sphericall-based platform within its local data centre, with full redundancy including daily management service, and is providing it as a CaaS (Communications as a Service) solution. In addition, they also connect to SIP Trunking Service Provider and undertook all the call rating as part of the solution, eliminating the need for citizenM to engage with third parties and ensuring that all calls follow the optimum and most cost effective route. To ensure the constant availability of the communication system, NEC has provided local ISDN gateway as an emergency backup in case there is a network failure.

"The foundation of the Cloud concept is offering elasticity in a way we can adapt to opportunities that are occurring for Swisscom and citizenM. And being responsive at the right time makes it an invaluable solution" says Gerard Citroen.

Simon L'Anson VP Sales Northern Europe & CEE of Swisscom Hospitailty Services explains the wider benefits of a cloud solution: "Using NEC's Sphericall Cloud-based solutions has allowed us to deploy a fully integrated solution to ctizenM. It has enabled the client to reduce their investment requirements which, in turn, means the guest benefits from cheaper calling both locally and internationally."

Results

The partnership yielded a successful implementation of a Cloud-based communications service for the award winning hotel group who are understandably delighted with the outcome. Michael Levie commented that, "With Swisscom and NEC, we knew we had two well-known and proven brands offering a reliable and cost-effective solution."
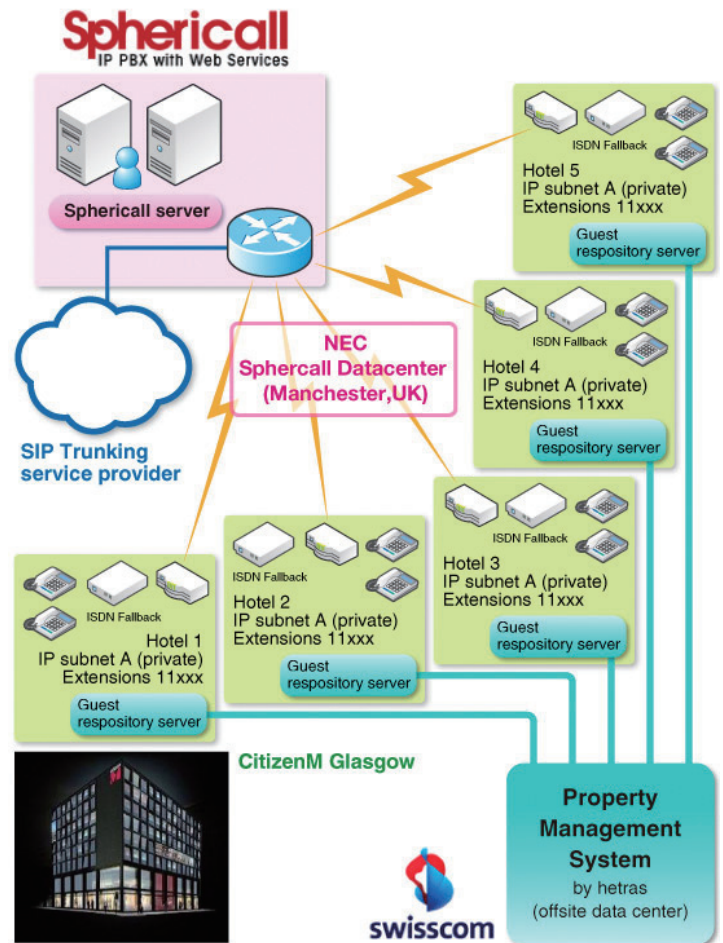
Simon L'Anson suggested a decisive component in the outcome: "Besides offering enough of the technology, it's the competence of truly global collaboration; having both a centralized centre and local specialized teams." He also cited dedication as a key factor, "We have teams who are working solely in hospitality. They breathe it, they understand it."

Both the Cloud-based services and the partnership itself proved a great success. "Swisscom always selects best-of-breed partners for any solutions it looks to deliver within hospitality. We were looking for an innovative partner with a true Cloud-based solution, which made NEC the logical choice," adds L'Anson.

And looking to the future, he believes the partnership has what it takes to deal with whatever comes their way. "The relationship between Swisscom and NEC is based on a very well laid foundation, enabling us to cope with any future changes," something citizenM and Michael Levie are delighted about, "One initial upfront investment has accounted for 90% of the work needed for further deployment elsewhere, i.e. to new hotels."