

# Five-star technology

The European hotel industry has now fully embraced technology as a means of improving both business processes and guests' experience of the hotel.

**Back-office functions** such as online booking facilities, always-on email facilities and online business applications such as inventory management have all helped to make the hotel industry more efficient. Guests have also benefited from the widespread adoption of technology through high-speed internet access in rooms, and the introduction of wireless local area networks (WLANs) has meant that broadband connectivity is now available from anywhere in the hotel, from the bar to the lobby.

However, a hotel's ability to utilise applications such as these has historically depended on the location of the hotel. The European telecoms industry has not rolled out broadband as quickly as many would have liked, and businesses in remote areas have suffered as a result. Internet via satellite services such as DIRECWAY® from Hughes Network Systems Europe (HNSE) has provided a much-needed lifeline, particularly to those in the hospitality industry.

Services such as DIRECWAY provide hotels with access to broadband and related services, regardless of size or location, allowing them to compete in the global market with real time online reservation facilities, always-on high-speed internet connections throughout the hotel and the ability to streamline day-to-day business processes.

## Rolling out in 2004

One hotel that will benefit in 2004 is the Valtur Village in Sicily. The availability of WLAN access together with a broadband satellite solution will offer customers an easy, high-speed connection between the numerous remotely located resorts in Italy.

'Valtur will open the first resort equipped with WLAN access via satellite in the summer of 2004,' says Olivia Tarulli, MIS manager at Valtur. 'This is possible thanks to the innovative technologies and co-ordinated strategy of IBM, HNSE and World Systems Consulting, the IT company responsible for the network infrastructure of the Valtur Group.' Punta Zefiro (Isola



Guests benefit from wireless access

di Favignana), Egadi Isles, Sicily will be the first Valtur resort to use this new technology.

However, it is not just large hotel chains that can benefit from broadband solutions delivered by satellite. Whitworth Hall Country Park Hotel, an independent hotel located in Durham in the north-east of England, has also recently installed DIRECWAY.

Whitworth Hall Country Park Hotel's business development manager, Dr Claire Molloy, predicts that, 'Function rooms with broadband internet access will mean we can offer corporate customers access to web-based presentations. In addition, broadband connections to the bedrooms will enable us to further target the executive guest market.'

Molloy continues: 'We are certain that our corporate customers will be prepared to pay for a premium service if it means that they can get away from the cumbersome traditional method of dialling up through the telephone exchange offered by most other hotels.'

Broadband and WLAN solutions delivered by Hughes Network Systems Europe give hotels the crucial leading edge that is needed to survive in a highly competitive market. **HMI**