

HOTEL BUSINESS

Oklahoma City Best Western Upgrades Internet To Keep Corporations Coming Back

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(except from full page article)

OKLAHOMA CITY, OK— At the 220-key Best Western Saddleback Inn and Conference Center here, high-speed Internet access has, technically speaking, been available to hotel guests for many years now. However, recently the high-speed service level was vastly improved, as the property moved beyond its previous business center-based system and installed a new hotel-wide, VDSL-based, high-speed Internet service. *“We have a progressive owner who invests hundreds of thousands of dollars each year for upgrades and renovations at the hotel to keep it looking new, so when we wanted to upgrade our high-speed Internet service, we wanted to make sure we became the place for high-speed in Oklahoma City,”* explained Pat Powell, the hotel’s general manager.

The hotel and its owner, Jim Zink, have seemingly accomplished that goal because of the new VDSL high-speed Internet network, which offers a huge bandwidth growth capacity. That bandwidth is much more than the hotel currently requires, but over time, Powell noted that the ultra-wide bandwidth will allow the property to offer other revenue generating applications, such as video-on-demand, without upgrading equipment. *“There’s no telling where the technology is going,”* Powell said. *“The typical high-speed service could be obsolete six months from now, but with this investment, we’ll have a long time before we surpass that. So we’re now the place to stay in Oklahoma City for high-speed internet.”*



Netsys-America, LLC provided the networking equipment for the hotel’s new high-speed service, which is free of charge for guests. The hardwired service is accessible in all guestrooms and meeting rooms. Wireless access is available property-wide in all guest rooms and in the hotel’s lobby, restaurant, bar and business center, which features laptop ports and two personal computers. Powell pointed out that the hotel models itself as a corporate destination, and one that happens to be the largest Best Western in Oklahoma.

Consequently, with competing hotels adding and improving high-speed Internet service left and right, Powell said that the Saddleback Inn had to make sure it offered the level of Internet service that business travelers now expect.

Powell began his search for a new provider. Initially, he said he received a bid from Cisco, which quoted him a price of about \$85,000. That price was deemed much too expensive. Other bidders talked about installing an HPNA-based service, but that would not provide the future growth potential in bandwidth available through VDSL. Finally, Powell came across Netsys, which could run the VDSL service through the hotel’s existing phone lines, minimizing construction costs while supplying a top-of-the-line service. Subsequently, Netsys was chosen for the project, which would cost approximately \$35,000.

The project would have potentially cost the hotel more, but Powell chose to self-install the service. *“Our chief engineer, Jim Smith, had never installed an Internet system before at all, but he’s very talented,”* Powell said. *“With Netsys sending him information on the proper wiring, he was able to finish the project in four days with the help of his maintenance technicians.”* The entire network includes 10 VDSL concentrators, 220 modems for the rooms, one gigaswitch and over two dozen property-wide wireless routers. Overall, Powell was quite pleased with the project since the speedy and rather non-intrusive installation allowed the hotel to keep all of its rooms available each evening. *“It’s definitely turned out to be a good investment,”* Powell maintained. *“We’ll recoup that money invested by gaining more of a share of the corporate business in Oklahoma City. It’s hard to say when we’ll get that full return on investment, but I’m optimistic that it will be within a year or two.”* Powell said that since the installation, he has not raised room rates and that the expected revenue gain from higher occupancy will, in effect, be stolen from competing hotels that don’t offer the level of Internet service that the Saddleback Inn now provides.