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EDGE

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'HOTELS NEED TO PLAN COMPREHENSIVE DATA SECURITY POLICIES AND MEASURES'

AJAI KUMAR, CIO, THE LEMON TREE HOTEL COMPANY GIVES AN INSIGHT INTO THE SECURITY ASPECTS IN HOTELS

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TECH TALK

'HOTELS NEED TO PLAN COMPREHENSIVE DATA SECURITY POLICIES AND MEASURES'

Ajai Kumar, chief information officer, The Lemon Tree Hotel Company gives an insight into the security aspects for hotels and highlights best practice implementations by the company, including deployment of a high performance face recognition solution

By Sudipta Dev

Which are the most important security concerns in a hotel and how does technology help in mitigating the risk?

There are two important aspects of hotel security - physical and cyber security. While hoteliers are embracing modern technology to safeguard guests and hotel premise by means of deploying CCTV, access control devices and security teams, cyber security is becoming a big challenge. Frauds are increasingly shifting towards the online space. To deal with the issue, hotels need to plan comprehensive data security policies and measures.

Key cards in rooms and elevators, ground intruder alarms in public areas and CCTV with video analytics can mitigate the risk of unauthorised access up to a large extent. However, to safeguard guests' critical information, PCI DSS compliant hotel software systems and data encryption/tokening technologies are useful.

What are the new interesting trends you have observed in this space?

Emerging use of mobile keys: Use of mobile keys is an evolving technology and one of the buzziest trends in hotel security is the transition from key cards to mobile keys. This is enabling hotels in driving their loyalty programmes and cuts time off check-in and checkout procedures.

Wearable technology: Hotels are seeking new ways to stay on the cutting edge of the digital movement. Today, wear-

Ajai Kumar

able technology is looking like the solution for smoother hotel workflows and better guest experiences. These devices are not only trendy but assist users in a much greater way in their personal life as well. For example, Apple Watch can sync directly with a user's phone and display messages, answer calls and give GPS directions, all from a wrist.

How are you ensuring data security in your properties?

In order to safeguard guests' precious data e.g. personal data, credit card information, addresses and affinity programme information, following practices are in place:
● Since guests' internet could be a weak point in the hotel environment for hackers to steal guests' data, we have separated the guests' Wi-Fi from hotel networks. High network security is maintained at all levels of access and storage.
● Most of our hotel front/back-end systems follow the guidelines of PCI DSS, for effective data security measures.
● Restricted physical access of confidential information to unauthorised employees by using encryption and/or to-

kenisation.
● Since security is an ongoing problem, we frequently audit our security practices to identify potential vulnerabilities and remediate them quickly.

Can you elaborate on the best practice implementations in your properties, which other hotels can look at adopting?

We have developed and deployed a "3-D walk through of the property" solution for handling evacuation and emergency situations.

Lemon Tree Hotels were pioneers in deployment of a high performance Face Recognition Solution (FRS) in its Aerocity properties. The solution deployed, intelligently matches faces appearing on the hotel surveillance cameras to a database of potential security threats provided by

local authorities. Additionally, the solution can also be utilised for whitelist management, offering customised service to the VIP guests at the hotel, simply by recognising their faces. This cutting edge technology can even use poor quality webcam images to produce the highest search results per second, and can recognise altered faces too with a high level of accuracy.

How can budget hotels and those in tier III locations / tertiary markets ensure security without spending having to spend too much on expensive technology?

Security measures are vital for hotels irrespective of their geographical location. Budget hotels in tier III locations can have basic security systems like CCTV, Door Frame Metal Detector (DFMD), and baggage scanner.