

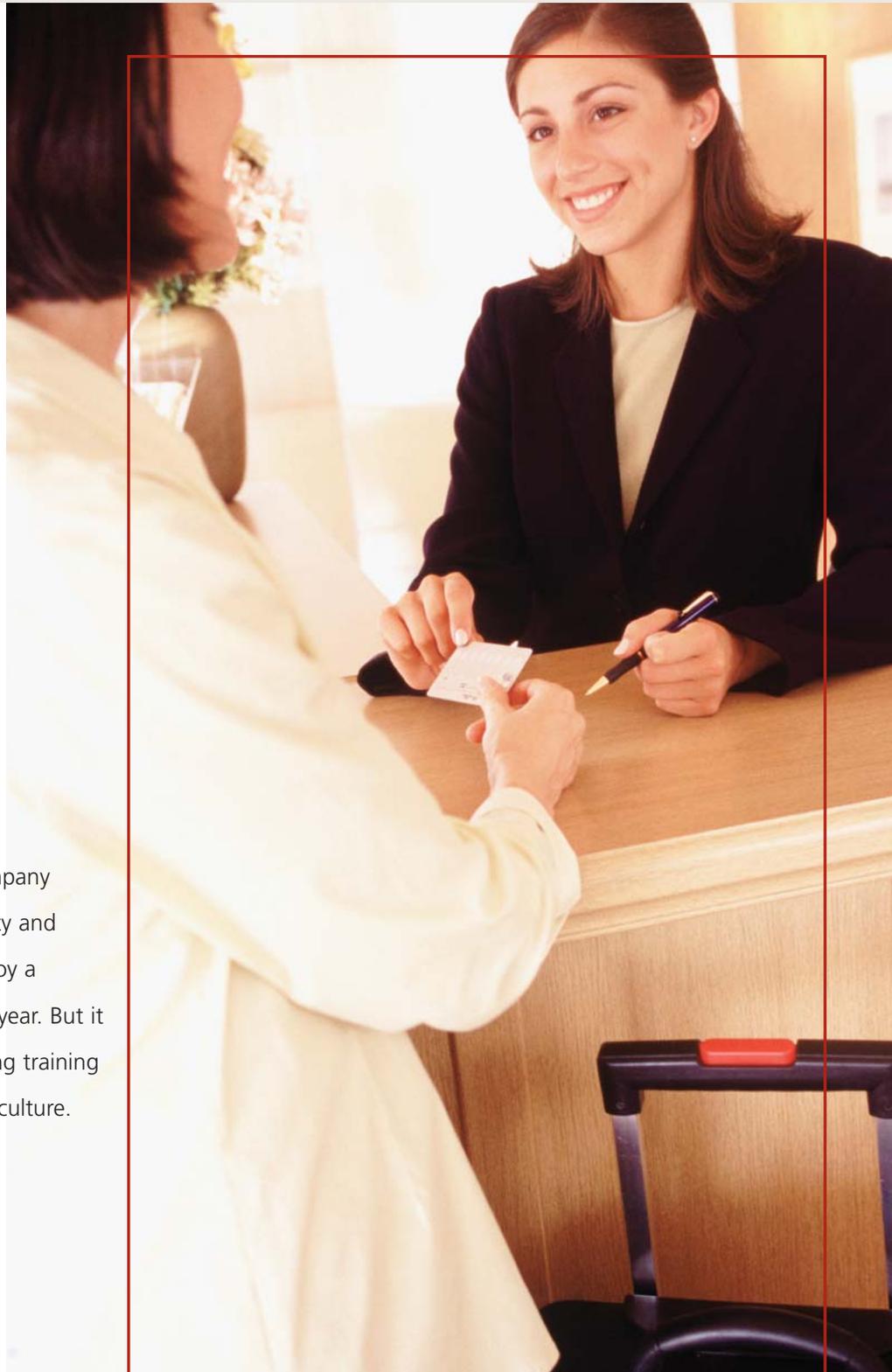
Hotel Management Company Deploys Digital Video

Networked Systems
Help Reinforce Service
Culture at Marriotts,
Holiday Inns

An Alabama-based hotel management company was thinking first and foremost of the safety and security of its staff when it decided to deploy a March Networks™ digital video system last year. But it is also finding the DVRs useful for identifying training needs and fostering the company's service culture.

Larry Blumberg & Associates Inc. (LBA), a hotel development/management company, operates 34 hotels across five states, including 25 Marriotts and several Holiday Inns.

The company had been using VCRs exclusively until late 2004 when a decision was made to deploy digital technology.



Video recording at the front desks of the DVR-equipped properties helps LBA identify training opportunities.

"We went to our telecommunications supplier, Tharaldson Communications, for advice and they recommended March Networks DVRs," says Farrah Adams, LBA's vice president of operations support.

A March Networks Certified Solution Provider, Tharaldson Communications specializes in telecommunications and technology solutions for the lodging industry and is itself a division of Tharaldson Lodging Companies, one of the largest independent hotel property management companies in the United States.

"We installed the DVR systems in a few new construction hotels and also included some in properties where the VCRs weren't working properly to do a company-wide test," says Adams.

Currently, 10 properties are equipped with March Networks 3000 Series DVRs and comprehensive viewing software.

Training opportunities

Video recording at the front desks of the DVR-equipped properties helps LBA identify training opportunities, says Adams.

"By paying attention to how customers are handled at the front desk, we can get a better understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the hotel staff, and thus determine the training needs of each individual property," she explains.

Adams also points out that management uses the video to assess overall performance – not to single out individual employees for service errors.

A T-1 network linking the company's 34 properties in Alabama, Florida, Georgia and North and South Carolina allows designated personnel at LBA's head office in Dothan, Alabama, to remotely view live or archived video from DVR-equipped sites. Installed originally to offer guests high-speed Internet access, the T-1 links also provided an ideal network infrastructure for interconnecting the DVRs and made the acquisition of a networked digital video system even more cost-effective.

Tharaldson Communications

Tharaldson Communications, Inc. (www.hotelphones.com) provides a wide range of telecommunication services to the hospitality industry nationwide. Its staff works exclusively in the hospitality market, serving property management companies as well as independent owners. To contact a Tharaldson Communications sales representative, please call 1.888.933.9770 or email TCIsales@tharaldson.com.

The remote access capability ensures that Adams and her colleagues have accurate information about incidents reported by hotel managers.

"Although it doesn't happen often, when an incident does occur it is nice to have the ability to review it firsthand when consulting with our managers," she says.

Remote access

Remote access to the digital video systems also allows corporate office staff to assist local management in the event of a security-related incident. If local law enforcement is called in and requires a still image or video clip, corporate office staff can provide that material, leaving the hotel manager free to take care of guests and staff.

"We had an incident that required the involvement of law enforcement and they were very impressed," recalls Adams. "We were able to get them an image of the person

Larry Blumberg & Associates

Larry Blumberg & Associates, Inc. (www.lbaproperties.com), a hotel development and management company based in Dothan, Alabama, has operated primarily in the southeastern U.S. for almost 35 years. The company manages 25 Marriott hotels under the Courtyard, Residence Inn, SpringHill Suites, Fairfield Inn, Fairfield Inn & Suites, and TownePlace Suites brands; two Holiday Inns; three Holiday Inn Expresses; two Hampton Inn & Suites hotels; one Red Roof Inn; and one Best Western.

they were looking for within minutes. The incident occurred in the early morning, and the person was apprehended before noon."

The March Networks DVRs are easier to use than the older, tape-based systems and provide higher quality images, she adds.

"With the VCRs, the quality is sometimes so poor that you can't distinguish a person's ethnicity, or, at times, whether they are male or female. The March Networks DVR system is truly a superior product.

"We never worry about turning the unit on or off, changing a tape, or wondering if the video is going to be there when an incident is reported," she continues. "With the number of cameras we have at each location, we are currently experiencing 30 to 45 days of archived data."

"The March Networks DVR system is truly a superior product."

Farrah Adams
Vice President, Operations Support
Larry Blumberg & Associates

Data integration

Point-of-Sale (POS) data integration, one March Networks capability LBA chose not to take advantage of immediately, offers the lodging industry (in addition to retailers) the ability to synchronize video records and POS transaction data from front desk, gift shop, restaurant and other hotel cash registers.

Integration of the DVR and POS systems allows management to resolve disputes and reduce losses more effectively using custom searches of the POS database to access video-enhanced transaction records.

LBA is still weighing a decision to retrofit all of its properties, but plans to continue deploying March Networks systems in its new construction locations, including three properties scheduled to open in 2005 and four additional properties in 2006. ✨