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# SAFE, SECURE AND SOUND

As new-age security threats increase, hospitality companies are keen to invest in sophisticated surveillance and safety solutions. All in a bid to make their guests feel secure, keep their assets safe, and protect their brand's reputation

BY BINDU GOPAL RAO

**W**hen it comes to security in hotels and restaurants, it is better to be safe than sorry. That is the premise on which these establishments are investing heavily in surveillance and safety measures to ensure the well-being of their guests, employees, property assets, as well as brand reputation. And they are leaving no stones unturned in this endeavour.

Take the case of The Novotel Goa Shrem Hotel, part of the AccorHotels, which was recently looking for an intelligent video surveillance solution to efficiently monitor its hotel premises and provide an infrastructure to boost staff productivity and improve resource management. The hotel's management fig-

1. The importance of security and surveillance can hardly be over-emphasised in contemporary times, especially as public spaces sees a large amount of footfalls.

ured that the only way to achieve this was by deploying an advanced security system supported by cutting-edge solutions.

It deployed varied models of cameras that included a mix of both indoor and outdoor models. These are installed at different locations; including corridors, lobby, parking, elevators main entrance and exits, restaurants, bars and pantry. They are also installed in utility areas such as material movement locations, electrical panel rooms and DG power rooms for monitoring.

The installation of this surveillance system has helped Novotel Goa Shrem Hotel in simplifying its security coordination as well as ensuring safety and security of guests, which was a primary concern for

its management. The successful network recording and storage provision has brought down the necessity of staff dependency; thereby increasing efficiency while cutting costs. One solution; multiple benefits!

### SECURITY MEASURES

The importance of security and surveillance can hardly be over-emphasised in contemporary times. In the context of hotels, this gains more importance as its public spaces sees a large amount of footfalls. Hence, solution providers are also shifting gears to up the ante as far as security is concerned.

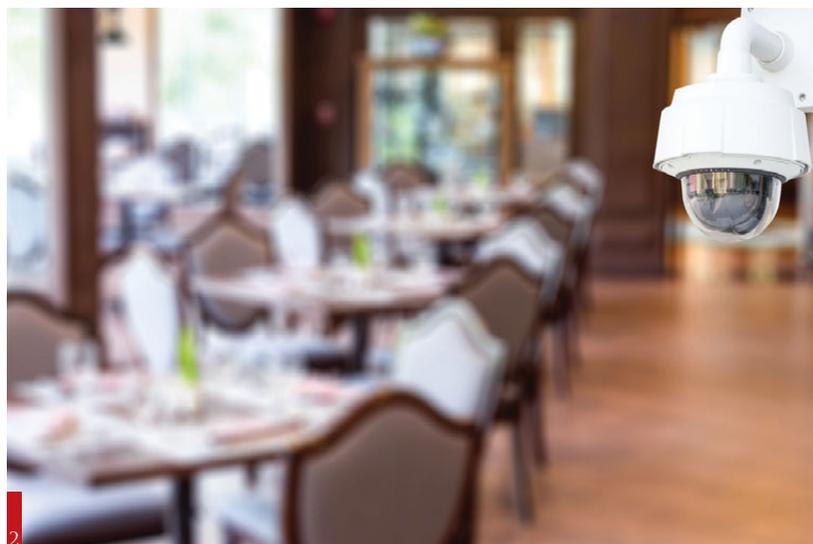
Since the 26/11 attack the hospitality industry has continuously been fighting with every challenge in respect with terrorism and other security risks by adapting to new technologies and training the security personnel and other employees as well.

To begin with, given the safety and surveillance concerns that hotels and restaurants currently face, their reputation greatly hinges on the security they can afford to their guests. "Crime and other related activities have risen substantially in recent times owing to numerous factors such as theft, cheating, harassment of guests or staff, molestation, sabotage, financial fraud, injuries and natural disasters, extending to terrorist activities as witnessed in the Mumbai attacks not just on the super luxury hotels, but also at a stand-alone popular restaurant," explained Rohit Katyal, head of sales and marketing, Justa Hotels & Resorts.

Naturally, while guest wellbeing is supreme, ensuring the protection of the property's assets includes investing in a gamut of services such as fire detection systems, explosives and narcotics detectors, sniffer dogs, boom barriers, automatic bollards, Under Vehicle Surveillance System (UVSS), automatic door operators, electronic locking solutions, baggage scanner, access controlled key cards to rooms and floors and more.

In terms of surveillance systems, many hotel chains still rely on analog technology. Security decisions are localised and there is still no common framework for security requirements. However, forward-thinking brands have started transitioning to digital systems and are developing intelligent building systems that help in the convergence of multiple networks over an IP backbone.

In addition to physical threats, another hazard is data security. The technical heads of these establishments have to constantly be on their guard to ensure that their systems are safeguarded against hacker attacks or data breaches. They have to make certain that the important information like customer data,



Suryakant Jadhav, security manager, Double Tree by Hilton, Pune.



Shawn D'Sa, security manager, Planet Hollywood Resort, Goa.

2. Unmanned CCTV systems in hotels make the investment a wasted affair.

financial details, etc, are encrypted and filed securely so that it cannot be misused.

### COVERING ALL BASES

A well-trained staff can act as the best eyes and ears for the property. They are often in the best position to identify and react to potential or actual risk, acting as the most cost-effective security system. Hence, they should be encouraged, if not rewarded, to report situations that could be dangerous.

Suryakant Jadhav, security manager, Double Tree by Hilton, Pune, said that each hotel employee should be trained as a security person, irrespective of their profile. "This will minimise threats and increase guest satisfaction. We have regular training on CCTV surveillance for all our team, in addition to having a dedicated team to take care of trouble shooting. Surprise audits and tests ensure that the team doesn't slack in their tasks," he added.

According to Anil Mohan, joint president, personnel and security, Jaypee Hotels & Resorts, training programs can range from simple to complex but there is no substitute or excuse for hotel staff not to be given basic training on the importance of security. If a hotel can afford it, advanced security training for management staff is highly recommended. Hotel owners and operators should identify the probability and severity of risk for their owned or managed property.

"This can be done based on an internal review of previous incidents, if any, at the property as well as in the hotel vicinity, by an internal security department, or outside security consultants and or vendors. An integrated security program that encompasses both manpower and physical security



systems can then be designed to best protect hotels assets," Mohan added.

Again, these solutions can be used to get a better return on investment, without compromising on the security. The advent of mobile technology and artificial intelligence has provided more efficient options to predict patterns and enhance the security and safety features at hotels.

Shawn D'Sa, security manager, Planet Hollywood Resort, Goa stated that technology is a great tool to have but it still takes a human touch to maximise it. "All staff should be trained on the importance of security and what they should look out for and try to do when there is a situation at the property arises. They should be encouraged to report incidents that are or could be dangerous. In addition to training staff, the components of an integrated security program consist of the utilisation of security personnel and the operation and maintenance of installed physical security systems."

This actually makes sense when one realises that often hotels invest in high-end CCTV systems, but it might be unmanned making the investment a wasted affair. What is required is constant monitoring either manually or by using software that can recognise suspicious activity in a particular area and raise an alert.

For example, this system can alert when there is activity in the valet parking area. It could have voice command capability, where operators can see and warn off people captured on surveillance. "Most properties have some sort of video surveillance of employee activities around sensitive areas, such as the front desk and cash drawer. But new technology enables another level of monitoring. Software enables hotel owners to match transactions with video surveillance, eliminating the need to watch hours and hours of video to find potential criminal activity. For example, the software can detect when a cash drawer is left open and will show that whatever is being passed over a scanner is actually read," said



Rohit Katyal, head of sales and marketing, Justa Hotels & Resorts.



Sanjay Misra, chief security officer, Radisson Blu Paschim Vihar.

3. Guest using a computer at Novotel Goa Shrem Hotel.



An integrated security program that encompasses both manpower and physical security can be designed to best protect hotels.

Sanjay Misra, chief security officer, Radisson Blu Paschim Vihar.

#### DOING THE MATH

With the evolution of threats, it is important to fuse physical manpower into the realm of proactive security surveillance, aided by technology. Today, interconnected solutions have ensured that hoteliers have seamless convergence of security throughout the property that can pre-empt any breach, control any leakage, counter any security attack, etc.

Mahendar Singh, assistant manager, security, Hyatt Regency Gurgaon, however, has a point to add here. "The procedures to use these equipments need to be created from the hospitality point of view. People who operate these systems need to be thoroughly trained in using the system. These security personnel should play the role of customer service executive while doing the job of security," he said.

It is quite critical that hospitality companies select security companies with care and opt for those with reliable solutions and services. After all, no organisation wants a situation where the safety of their stakeholders is compromised leading to a dent in its valuable reputation. Hence, selecting a security vendor is best accomplished after conducting due diligence by checking vendor licensing, reputation, references and financial stability. An examination of the security vendor background screening process, training programs, level of supervision, price factor are some of the necessary consideration in this due diligence process.

"We work with both local as well as international suppliers/companies. We choose to work with the local supplier because we get quick service support whenever required as per global standard," said D'Sa. Again, after installation, it is important that suppliers are proactive.

Christopher Armstrong, safety and security manager, Park Hyatt Hyderabad, opined, "We are very proactive when it comes to resolving issues with the right technical support, assuring that the allocated task is completed and the report is generated by the

end of the same day. However, it is also good to be in direct touch with the manufacturing companies so that we get immediate solutions to issues when and if required."

There is also a marked preference to work with local suppliers over international companies. "International companies have the advantage of technological advancements and here we have the advantage of service. So we prefer a good mix of both. We prefer to work with International companies who offer local support as after-sale service plays a very important role," said Rajesh Kumar, head of security of The Leela Palace Bengaluru.

**MAINTAIN, CHECK, REPEAT**

Most hotels have regular training programs on security for all including top level executives to associate level as well as Annual Maintenance contract (AMC) with service providers to ensure regular servicing is done on timely basis. Regular tests and drills are conducted to maintain effectiveness of all equipment and procedures.

Given the complex nature of hotel operations, with its numerous business verticals, running an audit can be quite challenging for its internal team or even external consultants. Nonetheless, these audits are critical, as it ensures that the safety related processes are being adhered to successfully and any glaring gaps can be plugged in regularly. Additionally, all equipment are given a once-over during the audit to ensure they are ready for use at the crucial time when the need arises.

This is a necessary protocol to be followed and hospitality companies no longer shy from it. Gaurav Choksey, owner of Mumbai's The Spare Kitchen stated that his restaurant reviews and reinvest in these solutions every couple of years depending on the improvements available in the market for digital solutions they require. "These include upgrading from SD to HD cameras, and updating the POS system with a more user-friendly version," he said. Ideally, to get the best of the deal, a property can deploy a



Security audits ensure that safety related processes are being adhered successfully and help plug any glaring gaps.



Anil Mohan joint president, personnel and security, Jaypee Hotels & Resorts.



Mahendar Singh, assistant manager, security, Hyatt Regency Gurgaon.

4. Novotel Goa Shrem Hotel.



combination of manual and remote surveillance solutions. This could include a centralised intelligent video surveillance and monitoring system with alarms, which captures high-quality images throughout the hotels 24x7, physical security guards and discreet screening of cars and baggage.

**NOW TRENDING**

Artificial intelligence has become a buzzword in the technology world, so it is no surprise that it has started making inroads into the world of surveillance and security as well. With hospitality companies already investing in solutions that offer extended enhancements, AI is the next step in that evolution. The reason is simple - it will reduce the human intervention, reduce the feeling of privacy intrusion and the introduction of enhanced technology will conserve time and increase prediction, efficiency and accuracy in the security division.

Already some solutions based on AI are available in the market, though not many hospitality companies have adopted them on a large scale yet. It might probably be a little early in the adoption curve, but technology evangelists and suppliers are confident that the day is not far when autobots will be the go-to security executives in hospitality properties. Well, how's that for some sci-fi action!