

The Rocco Forte Collection

Technology to improve Quality



An analysis of the needs and choices done by one of the most prestigious deluxe hotels group, done together with the Corporate IT Director and Serenissima Informatica. The complete data centralization to know the customer from St. Petersburg to Marrakech via Milan



Hotel de Russie, Rome, Italy



In 2004 The Rocco Forte Collection started a process to renew its IT infrastructure, starting from the Property Management System and related hardware platform. Emmanuel Clavé, Corporate IT Director of the Rocco Forte Collection, recalls the process. “I joined The Rocco Forte Collection in 2003 as UK IT Director coming from Hilton and, facing the need to renew our IT infrastructure I set up a 5 year strategy at group level. In 2004 every hotel had a stand-alone system, with

local interfaces, a local database on local servers, and many duplicated guest profiles. Guest history was difficult to have accurately as a group: the best VIP guest of The Balmoral could have walked in at the De Russie and the local GM had no way to be aware of his VIP status”. The renewal of the IT had to meet a series of goals in terms of economy of scale, marketing advantages for the Company, improvement of the processes and workflows for the human resources, data security and innovation. “We wanted to be able to turn a hotel’s VIP guest into a Group’s VIP Guest, and to do so we needed to have one single

guest profile at Group level, without any duplication. Reporting was also a major issue, we needed to be able to have effective centralized reporting on statistics and on guest analyses. All the mobile workforce needed to have access from remote to all applications and to all the data they are allowed to see, easily, at any location they may be. And, as we were – and still are – in a growth period, we needed an efficient solution in easily adding new hotels, even if not opened already”. Although one of the best well known brands in the luxury segment, The Rocco Forte Collection is a relatively small company in



**The Balmoral,
Edinburgh,
United Kingdom**

comparison to other international hotel chains. “Given our size, attitude and development plans, we were looking for a supplier that was flexible and willing to really work with us in improving services and software products and in listening the users requests. Good customer care and the ability to resolve problems quickly and efficiently was a must. Also, we wanted a partner specialized on software and hardware, able to provide support on both. We didn’t want to deal with a rigid supplier, deciding for us what to have and what to do”. Selecting such a supplier and a software within a five years strategy requires accurate planning and a selection process based on a detailed RFP, but this is not sufficient. “The

process started with the selection of the PMS system. Following a research on the international market, two companies were shortlisted and demonstration and training for the system was requested for a key selection of employees (Reception, Reservation, Revenue Management, Accounting, Housekeeping, IT, Sales & marketing, Banqueting) and a use of the system for 3 weeks thereafter. Companies were requested to provide a hosted solution with full software and hardware, and a company was identified for the VPN connectivity”. Alessandro Calligaris, Marketing Manager in Serenissima Informatica, recalls the situation from the suppliers point of view: “As Marketing Manager of our Hospitality Business Unit I

had the luck to be involved since the beginning in the selection process and in coordinating the international protel partners involved in the project, both being truly formative experiences. We did our best to demonstrate our devotion to customer service and the potentialities of the system”. The Rocco Forte Collection had decided that the new PMS had to run on a single centralized data centre, so in parallel with the software selection also the service provider was under assessment. “At the end of the trial phase the provider selected was a mix of user feedback, flexibility of the company and product, and financial offer. From the start of implementation of the Server Farm managed by Serenissima Informatica

**Hotel Astoria,
St. Petersburg,
Russia**





The Rocco Forte Hotel Abu Dhabi



into a Data Centre of Telecom Italia in Milan, it was realized that all main central application could be deployed over there. Once the initial fear of remote access passes, confidence builds and it becomes natural to move any core application in the data centre due to its reliability and data security. A planning was done within a 12 months period to convert one hotel a month to protel PMS and integrate it into the data centre. Later the same was applied for Microsoft Dynamics NAV as Back Office system and Quadrant for the restaurant bookings". Managing a such wide and complex project at international level implies to face and solve difficulties of many kinds: "The main challenges are always due to fiscal laws and legal internet access. We need to identify all tax and fiscal laws to be compliant with the PMS and Accounting system, which is worked out by protel Head Office and Serenissima who identify a local partner for the accounting system to clarify set up, as well as the legality of accessing Data over a MPLS or VPN connection in a remote country must be cleared. Also, internet availability is key and solid and stable bandwidth is required. So far, we are probably the one and only hotel company running a Data centre in Italy with all hotels, from Russia to Middle East connected to it and running PMS, Accounting, Spa, Restaurant booking and other applications on a single

The Rocco Forte Collection

- Hotel Amigo**, Brussels, Belgium
- Hotel Savoy**, Florence, Italy
- Le Richemond**, Ginevra, Switzerland
- Brown's Hotel**, London, United Kingdom
- The Augustin**, Prague, Czech Republic
- The Verdura Golf & Spa Resort**, Sciacca (AG), Italy
- Hotel de Rome**, Berlin, Germany
- The Balmoral**, Edinburgh, United Kingdom
- Villa Kennedy**, Frankfurt, Germany
- The Lowry Hotel**, Manchester, United Kingdom
- The Charles Hotel**, Munich, Germany
- Hotel de Russie**, Rome, Italy
- Hotel Astoria**, St. Petersburg, Russia

Next openings

- The Rocco Forte Hotel Abu Dhabi** – 2011
- Jeddah** – 2012
- Assoufid Golf & Spa Resort**, Marrakech – 2013
- The Shepherd**, Cairo – 2013

centralized platform". "We are extremely proud of this project, which we manage in cooperation with the Head Quarter of protel and the UK protel dealer, XN Hotels" says Michele Ferramola, the GM of Serenissima Informatica. "We hold a central role as providers of the protel services for Italy and of the hosting services, of the Back Office system and of the Spa Management system for the whole group and, through the commitment of our professionals we do our best to support Rocco Forte Collection 24/7 and help them to focus on their business". It looks like this actually has a positive impact on Rocco Forte Collection: "Having centralized all system made the support and

management much easier than the previous installation. One of the main benefit, especially in the past 18 months has been the addition of the protel Business Intelligence tool, which gave us instant reporting with almost any combination available" says Emmanuel Clavé, and it's not finished: "We are currently in the pre-opening in Abu Dhabi, and are planning openings in Cairo, Marrakesh, and various location in the Middle East. All would be linked to our current infrastructure. We are also looking at deploying more centralized applications". The Rocco Forte Collection is characterized not only for the design and the quality of service, but also for the

technological choices to serve the customers, from the building automation for the centralized management of the active and passive security of the buildings, to the general plant engineering and key encoding systems, to the energy savings. For example, through the centralized building automation system each hotel can manage the air conditioning of the rooms from remote, assuring to the customer the optimal temperature before he enters the room.

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