# ALE helps hospitality industry connect with the always-on consumer

By Cari Van Wyk

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Technological innovation has changed the hospitality industry significantly and continues to do so. Consumers are always switched on through their mobile devices and show a growing preference for using these devices to make bookings, arrange itineraries and interact with establishments. To ensure customers receive the highest level of service, hotels have had to change and improve their communications systems. To this end, Alcatel-Lucent Enterprise recently showcased its latest technology for the hospitality industry. We spoke to Ravin Naidu, the regional director South Africa, ALE, to find out how they help establishments connect to their always-on customers.

Ravin Naidu

*How has the always-on consumer pushed and influenced the hospitality industry to also adopt an 'always on' offering?*

**Ravin Naidu:** The hospitality industry is one that requires even more connectivity to their customers. With a society that is always connected to their smartphones, establishments need to ensure they have the correct infrastructure to meet the needs of constantly connected guests. Today's guests are always connected and deeply involved in social communities where they share their travel experiences.

*Are there any requirements regarding communications technologies that are specific to the hospitality industry?*

**Naidu:** The guest experience does not start and stop at the hotel door anymore. Hospitality environments need to adapt in order to not only offer a unique stay but also engage with each guest at every step of their journey - in both digital and real worlds. The hospitality industry requires robust communication technologies that enhance the guest experience. Hotel managers will require more advanced communications technologies such as unified communications on their mobile devices, advanced telephony applications such as call-by-name capabilities and video collaboration with property owners.

*Tell us about the communications devices and technologies that Alcatel-Lucent Enterprise have developed for the hospitality industry?*

**Naidu:** ALE offers a variety of products designed specifically for the hospitality industry that reduces infrastructure costs, enriches the guest experience and improves hotel operations.

One of these products is the IP Desk Smartphone, a fully integrated telephony application that gives any device (computer, smartphone or tablet) the same features as a desk phone. This helps businesses to optimise their employees' productivity and allows easy integration of remote and home workers.

The Alcatel-Lucent 8232 DECT Handset offers easy-to-use, cost-effective and reliable voice communication that addresses the mobility needs in evolving hospitality environments. This device also offers simple and efficient voice communication, enhanced usability and compatibility. The 8232 DECT Handset also provides all of the Alcatel-Lucent communication server's value-added voice services,such as dial-by-name and multi-line management, that Alcatel-Lucent fixed desk phones support.

Our Mobile Guest Softphone offers guests a better way to interact with hotel services and facilities by taking advantage of the guests' mobile connected devices. The Mobile Guest Softphone turns a guest's own mobile device into an extension of their in-room phone. The guest downloads the free application from popular online app stores and then uses the app to scan a QR code. This procedure auto-configures the app on the guest's device based on credentials input by the hotel reception desk with an easy-to-use web interface. The app allows guests to control their communications costs by allowing them to call hotel services or other guest rooms for free from their personal devices.



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### ⊞ *Are these devices and technologies customisable and scalable to suit the size of hospitality establishments?*

**Naidu:** The solutions are customisable depending on the needs of the hotel and its clients. The Smart Guest Applications comes with a base pack including Hotel Tour, Weather Forecast, Interactive Screen Saver and Languages. Additional features such as room automation can be added to the standard offering.

### ⊞ *What are the benefits of ALE's hospitality technology and what differentiates it from similar technology on the market?*

**Naidu:** ALE's hospitality offerings guarantee break through guest experiences by understanding that no matter where travellers are, they want to use the same technologies they have in their offices and homes, if not better. Even before booking a room, guests make sure that the establishment they are looking at is equipped to meet their technology needs.

We help hotels and properties worldwide make the shift to digital services. As a result, everything from room service to checkout can be available at the touch of a button or screen, using a new generation of devices, such as the Alcatel-Lucent Enterprise phones or the guests' and smartphones. Unlike other providers of communication technologies, we provide guests with a fully connected experience that allow them to be in control of their travel and environment.

## ABOUT CARI VAN WYK

Cari Coetzee is a contributor to Bizcommunity Tourism, Agriculture and Lifestyle.
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