

## CUSTOMER SUCCESS STORY LODGENET INTERACTIVE CORPORATION

Connecting, informing and entertaining travelers  
over a continent-wide network monitored by WhatsUp Gold

### Benefits

- Real-time monitoring of a cross-continent broadband network
- 24x7x365 customer service to guests
- Reduced call center costs, increased customer satisfaction
- Instant verification on installation of new networks
- Proactive network maintenance
- Strengthened competitive advantage in emerging technology

### LodgeNet Statistics

- Industry: hospitality technology
- World's largest provider of media & connectivity services to hospitality businesses
- 27,500 WhatsUp Gold device licenses
- 20,773 devices managed
- 64,027 separate up or down failure points managed
- 230,644 network interfaces managed
- World's largest WhatsUp Gold network
- Plug in: WhatsUp Gold WhatsConnected
- [www.lodgenet.com](http://www.lodgenet.com)

During any hotel stay 98% of guests turn on the television, and 87% log on to the Internet. When they do, they're usually tapping into TV and networks managed by LodgeNet Interactive Corporation, the leading provider of media and connectivity solutions to the hospitality industry.

LodgeNet began as a satellite TV company in 1980. It grew steadily and in 2007 acquired two companies with broadband capabilities, making it instantly responsible for a network of 1300 hotels in the United States and Canada.

Mike Henderson, a member of LodgeNet's broadband and professional solutions team, recalls the challenges facing the company as it struggled to integrate two acquisitions while meeting hotel management and guest expectations for broadband uptime.

*"The networks were sound," says Henderson. "What we lacked were the tools to monitor and remotely repair them. We had hundreds of thousands of critical points – and very limited visibility. You need constant eyes on all the moving parts."*

### The search for network visibility begins

Systems engineer Brian Jacobs joined LodgeNet with the responsibility to identify a network management solution. The company started at the beginning, with a buy vs. build study. Ultimately four network management solutions made LodgeNet's short list.

Jacobs first used WhatsUp Gold in 1995 – the software was installed at his university – and he'd already brought it to one employer.

*"However," comments Jacobs, "my familiarity with WhatsUp Gold by no means ensured its selection. LodgeNet conducted a company-wide evaluation, assessing four vendors on the caliber of the information technology, the quality of customer support and more."*

In the end, the decision was unanimous: *"Everyone recommended WhatsUp Gold. Even with the cost of custom programming factored in, WhatsUp Gold was by far the most cost-effective and feature-rich solution,"* Jacobs says.

Given the complexity of LodgeNet's continent-wide footprint, the company formed a team of ten engineers led by Jacobs, who remarks, *"Frankly, the task was staggering."*

The team began by creating a template of what they thought monitoring would look like. Each hotel property received an IP address and unique site ID. The LodgeNet team built a master server and copied it ten times to cover the network. They also built custom software enabling WhatsUp Gold to poll and discover the network, including the extensive dependencies among tens of thousands of devices and hundreds of thousands of network interfaces.

Using the WhatsConnected plugin, LodgeNet was able to verify that each hotel set up its network according to specifications. Says Jacobs, *"We'd never had this capability to instantly verify before – what a time saver. Just two weeks after beginning the installation we could fully monitor the network we were responsible for maintaining."*

“*In hospitality technology, we live or die by network uptime. LodgeNet delivers TV, Internet, voice and other in-room technologies to hotels and their guests. Our job is to make these services easy, fast, stable and supportable 24x7. With a network spanning all of the US and Canada, it's a gargantuan task. Using WhatsUp Gold, we went from standard, manual monitoring of our broadband network to real-time automated monitoring of the entire network in just two weeks.*”

*-Mike Henderson,  
broadband and professional services marketing  
LodgeNet Interactive Corporation*

## Quantum leaps in customer service and innovation

In the hospitality industry customer satisfaction is multifaceted and strategic. It includes responding to service requests, proactively managing the network to prevent problems, and providing innovative technologies to hotel industry leaders.

In the area of service requests, LodgeNet must respond not only to hotel management requests but also to calls from individual guests staying in any of the broadband rooms LodgeNet manages.

According to Mike Henderson, *"Before WhatsUp Gold all we could do when a guest called in was take the information and assure them we were working on it. The problem could be caused by anything. Perhaps the previous guest unplugged an access point. Maybe the room air-conditioning broke and a device melted. Now the customer service reps check the network online and know immediately what the issue is – and can give the guest a precise response."*

Moving beyond support call triage, LodgeNet's customer satisfaction strategy includes proactive support and problem prevention. With WhatsUp Gold installed, LodgeNet now identifies problems or potential problems ahead of the hotel managers. They regularly contact hotels to offer preventive maintenance.

Proactive support has resulted in a higher uptime network. Over the most recent five-month period, 97% of 1500 network anomalies were fixed before the customer called in with a problem. At the same time, proactive support has increased LodgeNet's customer service income from repair visits.

In the third facet of customer satisfaction, technology innovation, LodgeNet seeks to provide new technologies that help hotels offer guests leading-edge communications and entertainment such as HDTV, streaming Video on Demand, Voice-over-IP and more.

Mike Henderson explains that *"In the hospitality technology industry, it's not necessarily the vendors who drive change. Hotel management already knows that technology delivers a competitive advantage. Our job is to help them implement reliable leading technology as quickly as possible."*

## Working closely with Ipswitch

According to Brian Jacobs, *"Ipswitch demonstrated exceptional responsiveness to LodgeNet's needs and suggestions."* After writing custom software to manage network dependencies, he told Ipswitch about it. *"They wrote an automated dependency program and included it in the very next product release."*

LodgeNet also provided Ipswitch with detailed performance analyses. Says Jacobs, *"Our performance scalability requirements are extreme, given the complexities and huge reach of our network."* Ipswitch incorporated the feedback immediately. *"When we got the most recent WhatsUp Gold release we saw a ten-fold performance increase. What used to take 70 seconds now takes 7. That's impressive."*

## What's ahead for hospitality technology

Having a stable network that is proactively managed now affords LodgeNet the opportunity to increase its innovative services.

A customer portal for hotel managers, including integrated reports, is under development.

LodgeNet also works with hotel management on initiatives for next-generation guest room technology. A current program helps innovative hotels integrate all their guest communications onto one IP stream, known as a converged network.

According to Mike Henderson, *"Whether it's HDTV, Video-On-Demand, high-speed Internet, voice, or whatever technology comes along next, LodgeNet's goal is to keep our hotel managers – and their guests – happy. Our responsibility is to be able to tell them, 'your network is healthy, and your customers are taken care of, and whatever technology you want, we can run it and support it.' That's what counts in the hospitality industry, and that's what we deliver thanks to WhatsUp Gold."*

### About The Network Management Division of Ipswitch, Inc.

The Network Management Division of Ipswitch, Inc. is the developer of the WhatsUp Gold suite of innovative IT Management software. Over 100,000 networks worldwide — in small, medium and enterprise businesses — use WhatsUp Gold to assure the availability, health and security of their critical business infrastructure. WhatsUp Gold was named Network Management Product of 2010 by Network Computing Magazine and earned the Network Products Guide 2010 Product Innovation Award in Network Management. To learn more about WhatsUp Gold or download a free trial, please visit:

[www.whatsupgold.com/products/download](http://www.whatsupgold.com/products/download)

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