

Case Study – Blue Peaks:

TrafficMate to the rescue at Queenstown's Blue Peaks



HOW COULD WE DO WITHOUT WIFI IN THE ACCOMMODATION INDUSTRY THESE DAYS? IT HAS RAPIDLY BECOME UBIQUITOUS AS ALMOST EVERY GUEST NOW BRINGS A VARIETY OF ELECTRONIC GADGETRY WITH THEM FOR BOTH BUSINESS USE AND PLEASURE.

So rapidly has it happened that it has caught some in the industry by surprise and they have failed to keep up with increasing demands. This was the case at Queenstown's Blue Peaks Lodge and Apartments, a Skyline company.

Manager Michael McMillan said he had noticed a dramatic increase in the use and demand for Wifi from the guests staying at the lodge.

"The demand comes from all age groups. Previously Skyline had installed a Wifi provider for three of its companies in the South Island and initially that provider seemed to satisfy the requests. But by 2011 or 2012, cost was becoming a factor as most guests expected to use the Wifi for free."

That soon created problems for management at the property. "The original installation simply became overwhelmed as the provision of Wifi in neighbouring properties burgeoned," said Mr McMillan.

"Reception, strength of signal and cost all combined to create both tension and criticism over the last few years. The provider was unable or unwilling to act quickly enough to improve the system, so Skyline companies moved away from that provider."

"The TrafficMate system was known to us at Blue Peaks through the Motel Association New Zealand (MANZ). Several colleagues had recommended TrafficMate, saying that they'd had few, if any, problems and their guests had been very satisfied with the service. So we decided it was time for Blue Peaks to take their advice and make the change.

The advantage with TrafficMate is that properties can create their own billing schemes to suit their needs. Our system is prepaid (one upfront payment, plus a small annual licence fee), which allows the client to do what they want with it in terms of guest pricing.

"Skagerrak Software assessed the complex, noting our requirements to ensure a new system would alleviate our difficulties. Our stipulations were that the TrafficMate could be received in all parts of the complex, that our current costs would be significantly reduced and that the system would be both easy to administer and use. Skagerrak Software presented their findings in April 2013 and we went ahead with the company's proposal at the end of the year," Mr McMillan said.

New solution needed

This is where Patrick Vallely (CEO of Skagerrak Software) takes up the story. "A considerable drawback of the previous provider was that although they put in all the gear for free, they also took the lion's share of the revenue. They certainly didn't want to accommodate guests by providing free internet. The equipment was ageing and their billing model was deemed expensive by guests. TripAdvisor comments were glowing about Blue Peaks in general but were critical of its internet. It was a long recurring theme that was hurting the property," he said.

"Skagerrak Software's TrafficMate product is a solution in a box. We don't control the site – we supply the product that's configured to your needs. It works like a water meter with the site controlling the supply. In this case, Blue Peaks made the decision to upgrade to fibre and we provided the metering and distribution.

"It's quite an extensive property and we suggested a phased installation would work best, leaving the original metering system in place while we revamped the distribution. Our local contractor (Alpine Communications Limited) went all over the property, installing all-new access points in different and more effective places, using modern, more powerful equipment, which performed better.

"In phase two, when the new fibre came on board, we completed the switchover to TrafficMate," said Mr Vallely.

"The advantage with TrafficMate is that properties can create their own billing schemes to suit their needs. Our system is prepaid (one upfront payment, plus a small annual licence fee), which allows the client to do what they want with it in terms of guest pricing. They can create their own accounts, they can write their own tariff schemes.

Flexible choice of plans

"At Blue Peaks they offer a choice of four plans. On plan one, for instance, a guest receives 300 megabytes free every 24 hours, from the time they log in. If the chosen plan runs out, they can buy additional data blocks. It's like having an ISP in a box.

"Not only can our clients write their own price list, they take all the revenue. They can offer free internet to the amount that they prefer and at whatever rate they want to give – and then charge for the rest.

"They can do pre-pay or post-pay – they can do pay-online (through Paypal's credit card gateway) or pay-at-the-counter. We don't involve ourselves in our clients' business – in short, we're a supplier, not a partner."

Log clarity solves complaints

"With each account allowing multiple devices, the system logs traffic on each device, so each guest can see what they've been doing.

"Guests often complain that there must be something wrong with the establishment's system because their 300 megabyte voucher has been used up in a few minutes. It's quite common for people not to realise that their devices are synching remotely or silently downloading updates and rapidly eating up their allowance.

"We have two versions of TrafficMate – Standard and Pro. Standard has been out for five years and is used in a lot of accommodation properties around New Zealand. If a guest walks into reception complaining there must be something wrong with the system as five minutes on their iPad has used up their internet allowance, the property can request that we examine the logs to see what's happened.

"With the new TrafficMate Pro, guests can see their own logs, where they've been, at what time, and what has swallowed all their megabytes.

"Another advantage is the Piracy Protection, which helps protect properties by preventing guests from accessing areas of the Internet that copyright avenging legal firms may monitor," he concluded.



Blue Peaks Apartments – no more worries about Wifi.

Worry-free at Blue Peaks

At Blue Peaks Lodges and Apartments, manager Michael McMillan has no doubt that the change in systems has been worthwhile.

"TrafficMate is now in full use at our complex by way of appropriately placed bridge links, ports and transmitters. Any of the 82 motel rooms or apartments can be using up to four devices at any time. Our costs are down, maintenance is minimal; and support from the Skagerrak helpdesk is swift and reliable.

"It is a comfort to not be 'worrying' about Wifi Internet since TrafficMate took over." ■

TrafficMate
The future of Guest Internet
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