

# Exceptional digital experiences help H&B Hospitality outshine the competition

## A flexible infrastructure helps a leading hotelier meet travelers' rising expectations

In late 2017, 25-year hotel industry veteran Tyler Birchfield and his highly experienced team created H&B Hospitality Management. This private holding company was formed to consolidate management of four Hilton Hotels & Resorts®-branded properties in the Ayrley community of Charlotte, North Carolina: Hilton Garden Inn®, Homewood Suites by Hilton®, Embassy Suites Hotels® and Tru by Hilton™.

Since assuming management, H&B has earned its hotels a top position in the Charlotte market. The company's properties lead Yelp listings of area accommodations, earning 4.3 or better ratings on both Google and TripAdvisor. H&B plans to build on this success, expanding its portfolio through acquisition and construction.

*"It used to be about the personal touch... it's now all about convenience. As a traveler, I just want to get to the room. Today that means more of a hands-off, digital experience."*

— Tyler Birchfield

To stay ahead in the highly competitive hospitality industry, H&B needs to outpace its rivals by delivering the exemplary service and experience its guests expect. In today's digital world — and particularly among the business travelers H&B hotels cater to — an increasingly significant part of that experience relies on seamless, reliable connectivity.

### Challenges Complex vendor relationships and inconsistent service

Each hotel in the H&B group is a separate business that relies on a variety of services including broadband Internet connectivity, TV and voice — all of which have historically been provided by different vendors. Managing multiple relationships and service contracts across the portfolio was proving overly complex, inefficient, and restrictive, and hotel managers did not always get the prompt response needed to resolve problems in a timely manner. H&B's aggressive growth strategy required the flexibility to extend scalable network services to new properties rapidly without the complications of renewing multiple contracts or adding new vendors to the mix.



Tyler Birchfield, President and COO, H&B Hospitality Management, LLC. Client since 2011.

#### Client profile



#### Company

H&B Hospitality Management, LLC

#### Industry

Hospitality

#### Services

Fiber Internet Access  
PRI Voice  
Set Back Box TV



Demand for bandwidth is rising fast, especially among business travelers. For H&B, meeting their expectations is critical to maintaining a competitive edge.

### Rising demand for bandwidth

In the next five to seven years, H&B expects bandwidth needs to increase dramatically. With connectivity playing an increasingly larger role in daily life, H&B guest data usage is exploding. Business travelers in particular are consuming more bandwidth than ever for content streaming, video conferencing and collaboration. Also driving bandwidth demands are digital conveniences H&B has added to service its guests such as door locks operated via mobile apps, and other features it plans to offer like Bluetooth-controlled room lighting and temperature.

Future competitiveness will hinge in part on H&B's ability to provide a completely digital guest experience from check-in to check-out. To ensure it could seamlessly deliver this experience, H&B needed a network that could scale rapidly, simply, and economically, and that did not require the organization to revisit contracts each time a bandwidth increase was needed.

"We've seen big changes since we built our first hotel, Hilton Garden Inn Arysley, in 2008," states Birchfield. "At that time, the required bandwidth for a Hilton-branded hotel was a 10 Mbps circuit. These days, that would not come close to handling the traffic. In comparison, today's standards call for a 200 Mbps circuit at a minimum."

### Service reliability and support issues

H&B has to provide continuous, high-speed connectivity along with uninterrupted TV and voice service to create a seamless experience for its guests. With no budget for an in-house IT staff, the company is entirely dependent on vendors to deliver glitch-free services. While the existing Internet and voice services had few issues, satellite TV posed significant challenges when it came to delivering a positive guest experience because too often, it cut out in bad weather.

Birchfield also notes that in some instances it was difficult to get issues resolved. "[One vendor] was out of Raleigh and we could never get hold of them," he says. "When we had a problem we could never get anyone there. It was seriously disruptive and caused us a lot of issues."

### Frequently changing hotel brand standards

To maintain consistency at every location, Hilton implements rigorous brand standards for everything from décor to digital connectivity and what appears on the television in each room. These standards are specific to each sub-brand and evolve constantly in response to competitive pressure and client input. This created uncertainty for H&B, forcing its hotels to spend time and resources revisiting and occasionally modifying vendor contracts, digital infrastructure and bandwidth to ensure compliance as standards changed.

### Solution

#### Comprehensive services from a single source

H&B chose Spectrum Enterprise for its ability to deliver a comprehensive set of services to the entire hotel group, as well as its strong local presence in the Charlotte area. "Spectrum Enterprise has a good foothold in Charlotte. We have access to the people we need access to, and feel like we've developed a good personal relationship," says Birchfield.

Once the few remaining third-party contracts still in effect at some of the company's properties expire, Spectrum Enterprise will provide all H&B hotels with:

- Reliable high-bandwidth connectivity via rapidly scalable Fiber Internet Access
- A homelike TV viewing experience with an interactive program guide customized to meet each hotel's brand standards, provided by Set Back Box TV service

- Highly reliable phone service from a Primary Rate Interface (PRI) voice solution supported by dedicated bandwidth on the Spectrum Enterprise fiber network so voice and data traffic do not compete with one another

These solutions provide the flexibility necessary to meet changing business requirements, and the reliability needed to provide guests with a consistent digital experience during their stay.

### Flexible bandwidth based on location

H&B now has the ability to rapidly scale bandwidth to meet rising guest connectivity demands and accommodate evolving needs as the business grows. "It's no longer just about providing Internet access in your room," says Birchfield. "It's about being able to support a lot more data flowing, without interruptions." For example, at H&B's newest property, Tru, Birchfield's team scaled up the bandwidth to 200 Mbps to match the connectivity expectations of the brand's millennial-heavy demographic.

*"If our hotels can deliver a superior experience before others in the area, it's a definite win. But we need the bandwidth to do it, and our [Spectrum Enterprise] solution is helping us be ready."*

— Tyler Birchfield



Service quality and reliability are top priorities for H&B because for its guests, connectivity is essential.

### Dependable service from a responsive partner

Reliability is no longer a concern for H&B now that its Internet, TV and voice services are provided via a dedicated, high-performance fiber network. Because the network isn't susceptible to weather-related disruptions, guests can now watch their favorite shows and movies during storms without experiencing the disruptions that occurred with the satellite service.

"We've had very, very little downtime, whether it be with the TV content or Internet, and I don't think our phones have ever gone out," states Birchfield "It's a very positive surprise."

In addition, a local presence in H&B's market means that when support is needed, Birchfield can count on his Spectrum Enterprise account management team to ensure everything is handled quickly and competently.

### Results

#### Streamlined vendor management with better client service

The single vendor relationship H&B will have with Spectrum Enterprise once its other vendor contracts expire means it will be able to focus more resources on its core business even though each location is technically a separate company with its own service contract. In addition, onboarding of new properties will be fast and seamless since H&B will be able to depend on Spectrum Enterprise to deploy and manage all aspects of its digital services.

Notes Birchfield, "We rely completely on our vendor to take care of us. The less we have to talk to them, the better. But obviously, when things come up we're looking for fast response. And [with Spectrum Enterprise] we've got that every time."

### Guest satisfaction that drives business success

Plentiful bandwidth ensures guests get the digital experience they expect. This helps drive better business results for H&B, with the company achieving market-leading performance in a key industry benchmark, Revenue Per Available Room (RevPAR).

Birchfield explains, “Our Ayrslley Hotel portfolio has always performed extremely well against the competitive set and I would venture to say that these [Spectrum Enterprise] services play into that premium aspect of the guest experience. We’ve always tried to stay ahead of expectations by making sure that there’s plenty of bandwidth there for all guests. That means connectivity and access to content, not just to watch movies on their in-room TVs, but through their own platform of choice, be it Netflix, Amazon, Hulu or whatever they wish.”

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### Consistent experiences that keep guests coming back

H&B sees its reliable, high-quality digital services playing a large part in driving loyalty and return visits. Birchfield notes that when it comes to guest experiences, no news is good news. “When a guest walks into a room and it’s clean, smells good and the appearance is welcoming, that sets the tone and they don’t think about it after that,” he says. “And the reverse is also true. So we want to minimize negative experiences, whether it’s with the room itself or any of the technology we provide. The services are remarkably reliable and we’ve had no issues. We’ve not had a lot of contact with Spectrum Enterprise simply because there are no problems.”

### Improved responsiveness to new brand requirements

H&B can quickly adapt to changes in brand standards across its portfolio thanks to its scalable infrastructure and strategic relationship with Spectrum Enterprise. Spending time revisiting vendor contracts and technology infrastructure to ensure brand compliance is now a thing of the past, with Spectrum Enterprise taking on the role of a proactive IT partner by collaborating with H&B to plan for and respond to future changes.

“It can be tough to meet constantly changing standards, but the team has done well in working with our parent brands on that front,” says Birchfield. “It’s easy to make changes to things like TV content and interactive guides, and stay on top of connectivity requirements.”

### Positioned for portfolio growth

The same flexibility and scalability that enables H&B to better meet changing standards also makes it easier to expand its hotel portfolio. By avoiding the need to repeatedly revisit its infrastructure, the company can readily add new properties even as it accommodates increasing data traffic at existing ones.

At the end of the day, success for H&B depends on keeping guests satisfied, no matter which hotel they visit. To do that, they need the flexibility to grow without complexity, the agility to keep up with new demands from its brands and the simplicity to stay focused on delivering what travelers want. With its scalable, reliable digital infrastructure making this all possible, H&B is well-positioned to continue outshining the competition.

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#### About Spectrum Enterprise

Spectrum Enterprise, a part of Charter Communications, is a national provider of scalable, fiber-based technology solutions serving many of America’s largest businesses and communications service providers. The broad Spectrum Enterprise portfolio includes networking and managed services solutions, including Internet access, Ethernet and Managed Network Services, Voice and TV solutions, Managed Application, Cloud Infrastructure and Managed Hosting Services. Our team of experts works closely with clients to achieve greater business success by providing solutions designed to meet their evolving needs. For more information, visit [enterprise.spectrum.com](https://enterprise.spectrum.com).

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