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### **View The Recession As An IT Opportunity**

*Adam Kirby, 10/4/2009*

When businesses are forced to cut spending, one of the first things to go is usually technology upgrades. The thinking goes, understandably, that the business has survived this long without whatever new software program, so it can be foregone. Better to eliminate a computer than a person, for sure.

Still, Roger Macfarlaine is encouraging hotel companies to stop thinking of tech as easy fat to trim from the budget. Macfarlaine, Mövenpick Hotels & Resorts' vice president of systems and technology for the Middle East and Asia, says a **"saving through spending" mentality is not as crazy as it seems when the long-term picture is taken into consideration.**

"There are some guys who are controllers and hunker down and do no harm and just manage the situation and manage the status quo. Then there are guys like I am that want to stimulate the situation with optimism," he says. "We have to continue our strategy and deployment of stuff that impact and benefit the hotels."

Macfarlaine suggests categorizing hotel service-level agreements as critical or noncritical, making noncritical applications pay-as-you-go budget items. Meanwhile, save money by cancelling redundant software licenses—use one computer where you might have used two, rather than forgoing the software upgrade altogether.

Additionally, save money by renegotiating agreements and purchases with vendors; just as a hotel would rather renegotiate a group rate than lose the business altogether, vendors feel the same way about the hotel's business. "Go back and say, 'Look, we need to reconsider how much we can pay for these services, and can you help us out, Mr. Supplier?'" Macfarlaine says. "We have found that they're very receptive to that."

On the other hand, he says hotels should not delay tech projects that can reduce labor costs and increase operational efficiency, like business intelligence systems. While the costs for such technology may be tough to stomach in the short-run, they will eventually pay for themselves and will have your hotel that much better positioned to gain market-share once the economy recovers.

Macfarlaine implores his hotel IT counterparts to look at the recession through an optimistic lens. **"It's not a threat, guys, it's an opportunity," he says. "It gets us on a good footing on the road ahead."**

It's a nice thought, for sure, and it's definitely good advice for hotels that are not in any immediate financial danger. But it does beg the question: If not IT, where does the cash-strapped hotelier look for some cost savings?

Any suggestions?