

VDA'S commitment in Ireland



It may have been a fortuitous twist of fate that first brought Warren Edwards to Ireland, resulting in him being offered a temporary contract to run Italian hotel services company VDA. There was, however, nothing haphazard in the way the cutting-edge telecommunications provider made its mark on the hotel industry in Ireland and all over the world.

The company began in Pordenone, Italy, back in 1979. Early in 1980, they started manufacturing Guest Room Controls for hotels. With the company now looking forward to celebrating 40 years of operation in 2020, the individual operating companies have combined to become the "Next Generation VDA Group", with offices in Italy, UK, Ireland, Middle East and Asia.

It takes a very switched-on attitude to keep up with the lightning pace of development in today's technological world, but VDA have not only managed to keep up, but to remain in the forefront and even setting the standards for others to try and keep pace in the world of guest-room automation technology.



"In our latest wireless room controls installed in the MGM Grand Hotel in Macau," says Warren, "we have thousands of switches all talking to each other in the rooms and giving the guest control of the room, using the Vitrum Glass Switches and our mobile app."

"VDA have always had the approach to the hotel industry where we pride ourselves on listening to the needs of the designers, general managers, with being in a position to fulfil the requirements of individual properties. We can achieve this as we have our own R&D department in Italy, where we can adapt to ever-changing guest experiences: For example, Bluetooth access control where the guest can go directly to the room and gain access without even going to reception to check in, and new technologies are emerging where some hotels are adopting voice-activated TV and room controls. We have already achieved this functionality in one of our new installations in the JA Lake Hotel in UAE."

Warren first came to Ireland at a time when he was one of the senior directors of the British media group Granada. After a two-and-a-half-year stint of running a hotel and theme park following a management buy-out, he moved to Ireland with a view to a semi-retirement.

"I was only in the country three months when VDA asked me come on board as a consultant for a limited period and, lo and behold, I'm still here!"

VDA are now approaching the 17-year mark in Ireland and have become a very well established brand in the hotel industry with their installed base, encompassing services that range from the supply of televisions and interactive services to access control and in-room automation. They are in over 100 hotels up and down the country, all of whose up-to-the-minute facilities are supported by their own Irish-based engineers.

"We have a great team over here," says Warren, "with some very technical professional engineers, whose skills range from covering simple co-axial TV systems right up to the latest interactive software development."

The coming year is going to see a number of new developments too – some of which are being kept under wraps for the moment and some of which can be fully revealed, as Warren explains:



"We have an exciting start to 2020 with several new hotels opening with our products. These include the New Hard Rock Hotel in Dublin, as well as a new hotel to be operated by Moran Hotels called The Wren. I will have more information on what's being installed to follow, once the hotels open early next year as we don't want to spoil the surprise awaiting the guests' arrival."

The most telling part of the success story, however, is the fact that so many of VDA's original clients have kept faith with the company and have evolved along with them:

"What is most satisfying to our team is when we have hotels where we installed our first systems with bulky CRT TV's before the introduction of flat screen TV's way back in 2003, and have retained the clients, with some hotels on their 4th upgrade. This shows VDA's commitment to our hotels that we are proud to serve showing our longevity in the hospitality sector."

"We are looking forward to the next year where we already have four new hotel openings," says Warren. "Together with upgrades, we will have over 1,200 rooms to install starting in 2020. It will ensure a great start to the year ahead."