

ST. PANCRAS RENAISSANCE HOTEL

CASE STUDY: business

BIAMP®

PROAV BRINGS 21ST CENTURY AUDIO TO A 19TH CENTURY TREASURE OF LONDON

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—RIC BURDGE,
TECHNICAL MANAGER,
proAV

INTEGRATOR

BACKGROUND

The St. Pancras Renaissance Hotel is one of London's most recognisable buildings and is located at the terminus of the Eurostar™ cross-Channel train at St. Pancras Station. Originally constructed in the 1860s, it first opened its doors as the Midland Grand Hotel in 1873, so-named after the London Midland Railway that operated out of the station. With its gothic styling, murals, decorative ceilings and large windows, the hotel was an instant success and remained one of the most fashionable hotels in London well into the first half of the 20th century. After closing in the 1930s, it subsequently fell into a cycle of decay and neglect, which lasted 60 years.

Its revival began when the St. Pancras location was selected as the new terminus for Eurostar, prompting a huge programme to modernise the entire station and its buildings—including the original Midland Grand Hotel. The renovations have seen the hotel restored to its former glories in every detail—albeit with the addition of some ultra-modern touches. The new Marriott St. Pancras Renaissance Hotel opened in 2010.



Photo: St. Pancras Renaissance Hotel

THE ST. PANCRAS RENAISSANCE HOTEL COMPRISES THE FAÇADE OF ST. PANCRAS INTERNATIONAL AND IS VIEWED BY MANY AS THE FINEST HIGH VICTORIAN PIECE OF ARCHITECTURE IN BRITAIN TODAY

THE ST. PANCRAS RENAISSANCE HOTEL, LONDON, ENGLAND

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CHALLENGES

In mid-2010, primary contractor EMCOR Engineering Services approached long-time Biamp Systems partner proAV, to design and install a networked audio system. The system needed to incorporate the latest technology and deliver an audio solution that reinforced the entire guest experience, one that helps make the St. Pancras Renaissance Hotel a premier destination for tourists and business people alike. While the hotel was looking for an audio system that could be highly tailored to suit different areas and needs throughout the hotel, the key considerations were the tight building regulations put in place by English Heritage, the UK Government's historic architecture and preservation commission. The regulations provide clear expectations and building guidelines for any improvements made to a structure identified and protected by this organization. They include tight restrictions on building techniques and materials, enabling valuable buildings to be preserved in their original form for the future.

As a Grade 1 Listed Building the hotel enjoys highly protected status, and any kind of drilling or demolition work is prohibited—including making new holes for cables and speaker connections. Alongside this, Marriott International sets stringent guidelines for its audio-visual systems in order to maintain its high standards of customer service. These guidelines set standard specifications depending on the use of each room or space. Marriott's AV systems range from lower-quality speakers for background music in public spa areas to high-end speakers and individual remote input units in its business meeting rooms. The remote units allow any audio source—such as laptops, MP3 players, even telephone systems—to be heard in each room. In all, it made for an interesting challenge for proAV.



Photo: St. Pancras Renaissance Hotel

THE FORMER COVERED TAXI RANK FOR THE ADJOINING STATION HAS NOW BEEN TRANSFORMED
IN THE ST. PANCRAS RENAISSANCE HOTEL'S MAGNIFICENT LOBBY

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SOLUTION

Working with UK distributor Polar Audio the proAV team designed and implemented a state-of-the-art networked audio system for the entire hotel—including a networked public address and voice evacuation system using Biamp's Vocia® networked audio platform. By using Vocia, proAV installed a paging and background music system that was scalable and robust, ensuring that key messages could be communicated no matter what the situation, even during emergencies. The decentralised nature of the Biamp product meant that no matter what was happening in the hotel, the system would continue to work.

proAV's design included cabinet and ceiling speakers, which were installed throughout the hotel's public areas, plus top-of-the-range Bose® wall-mounted speakers throughout the numerous meeting rooms. Connecting each of the rooms together are three Vocia VA-8600 networked multi-channel amplifiers, each housing up to eight 600w amplifier cards, along with a

Vocia MS-1 message server. The installation also incorporated Vocia WR-1 wall remote controllers in each of the six meeting rooms, the main lobby, the bars and spa complex, as well as the Vocia DS-10 desk station microphone at main reception. The new system harnessed Vocia's decentralised architecture to deliver a network of amplifiers, speakers and desk stations connected by basic Cat5 cables and Cisco Power-over-Ethernet (PoE) switches. This provides a reliable audio solution, which is reliable and flexible enough to grow with the hotel's needs now and in the future.

Vocia's networked architecture lent itself perfectly to the strict building regulations governing the entire renovation. The only wiring required was a highly flexible Cat5 cabling, which was easily worked through narrow cracks and spaces within the walls. Thanks to Vocia, the hotel now boasts a highly resilient, flexible audio system for background music and paging, which provides the flexibility and audio quality the hotel demands, along with an easy-to-manage, decentralised structure that complements the building's highly protected status.

"The restriction on drilling holes in the walls for our cables really forced us to think out of the box on our design proposal," says Ric Burdge, Technical Manager at proAV. "Vocia's network-based architecture and inherent flexibility made it the obvious choice for the job. In some areas, we were pushing cables through cracks and loose cement—if we'd had to worry about more than one cable in each room we would have had real difficulty with the installation!"

Burdge continues: "The joy of Vocia's networked model is its simplicity. You simply plug all the components together using Cat5 cabling, configure the server software, and you're in business. Not only did it make it much easier to install, given the restrictions on drilling holes for cable runs, we could also do all the configuration from one central location, with no need to run from one room to the next."

The tight building requirements meant that laying the cables alone took more than two months. While the cabling was installed, the proAV team built, configured and tested the Vocia system offsite, before installing the completed system and mounting the speakers. After extensive testing the system was finally signed off in July 2011.

CONCLUSION

Thanks to Vocia, the Marriott Renaissance Hotel now has an audio system for the 21st century that perfectly complements the building's Victorian heritage and protected status. It allows the hotel to provide its guests with a unique visual and audio experience, while giving staff the control and flexibility to transmit paging messages to specific locations as needed.

Photo: St. Pancras Renaissance Hotel



THE BEAUTIFUL GRAND STAIRCASE AT THE ST. PANCRAS RENAISSANCE HOTEL HAS BEEN PERFECTLY RESTORED BACK TO ITS FORMER 19TH CENTURY GLORY