



Sigmawifi Case Study: Hotels, Don't Do It Yourself



Boutique hotel management, with a fun theme twist of the unexpected



Lark Hotels

Industry: Boutique Hotel, Hotel Management, Resort, Hospitality
Location: New England and Beyond

About Lark Hotels

Boutique hotel management is Lark's specialty. Lark Hotels embrace the locations they are in — but in playful, unexpected ways. Think "sense of place" with imagination and a touch of mischief. Lark invites its guests to experience modern luxury in the heart of iconic destinations, to feel the pull of a nostalgic getaway while surrounded by today's amenities and to find attentive service when they want it and privacy when they don't.

Lark is growing: by leveraging the success of its existing collection of design-driven boutique properties in iconic locations, Lark will replicate this model consistently, keeping the properties unique with a nod to each property's individuality.

Central to Lark's success as managers and developers is its core team of hospitality, design and marketing veterans.

"We aim to surprise and astound, with both our properties and our service. For example, our hotels offer a fun, cheeky, modern twist with embellishments and amenities that go way beyond expectations - but all done with a playful wink."

- Rob Blood
CEO, Founder & Owner
Lark Hotels

Overview

After managing someone else's Nantucket property, in the early 2000s Rob Blood, Lark Hotels' current CEO, set out to establish his own brand of boutique inns...with a twist: his goal was that his hotels would embrace the locations they are in — but in playful, unexpected ways. This "unexpected sense of place" would give the properties a level of fun and levity reflective of their location and "theme" to positively enhance his guests' memorable experiences.

Rob and his team began working on properties in coastal cities and resort destinations in the northeast of the United States through both management contracts and select joint venture partnerships. As the company grew, Lark Hotels was officially established in 2012 - with the "Lark" name a reflection of the word's three definitions: the morning songbird, the antique weekend getaway car, and (especially) the notion of doing something just for fun.

A self-described real estate junkie, Rob and his team are growing Lark by looking for opportunities (aka project hotels) all the time. These gems are distressed properties in great locations that are tired, worn, and in need of repositioning. This is where Lark shines.

Iconic locations continue to be the defining selling point for Lark, found in central locations in the places people know and love. Based in Amesbury, Massachusetts, Lark currently manages nearly 20 properties, and its principles have partial or full equity stakes in a number of the inns. Lark is growing rapidly, adding 3 or more hotels to its portfolio a year.

How did Sigmawifi help Lark Hotels?

Custom Solutions for Unique Requirements

Overcome the DIY Network Challenges

Jumped Through Many "Hoops on Fire"

Exceed Guest Expectations

Memorable Positive Impression

The Challenge

With smaller, boutique hotels, the focus is on the guest experience. How can you leave your guests with something so positive and memorable that they come back again and again? Lark Hotels specializes in finding and cultivating diamonds in the rough: inns and small hotels that are in great locations but need to be brought into the 21st century for amenities, furnishings, decor, and service. These hotels can be enormous projects, especially when it comes to modernization. Balancing updates with feasibility, wants with needs, and budgets with ROI is key to Lark's success. In the end, Lark wants guests to expect the unexpected and have them be pleasantly surprised again and again.

The Approach

Jumping Through Hoops on Fire: When Lark first began renovating hotels in 2012, physical and visual interior design touches carried the experience. Technology and high-speed internet were not the main focus at that time. However, over the years, as Lark grew, so did hospitality technology needs, requirements, and expectations - as did its role in providing an outstanding guest experience. As an innovative thought leader in the boutique space, Lark wanted to merge technology with theme and style. They realized it was essential to partner with an innovative hospitality tech company with the same cutting edge vision. In 2015, Sigmawifi entered the picture to do a tech overhaul of Lark's first larger property, Summer Camp on Martha's Vineyard. The partnership grew from there. Fast forward to 2019, and Sigmawifi manages all hospitality technologies for most of the Lark properties. Not only was Sigmawifi a visionary in the space, but they also were able to accommodate the often tight renovation deadlines to ensure things were done according to strict construction deadlines. From WiFi to cameras, TV and audio to phones and wiring, Sigmawifi has been a single-stop outfit to support Lark's IT needs.

The Solution

Inns Like No Other: Lark can be described as many things: cookie-cutter is *not* one of them. A cookie-cutter approach to their network would never work. They needed a custom and personal solution for their technology needs. Rob and the team at Lark wanted a technology partner to do the heavy lifting: develop a plan for network updates, obtain all the equipment, work on-site regularly and perform all maintenance and service needed, so they preferred to work with a local vendor. Fortunately, Sigmawifi was centrally located from many of their properties. Sigmawifi began working with Lark to make sure that the guest experience matched (and exceeded) expectations from the technology side, discussing options with Lark to enhance the guest network experience to a level where pervasive technology was a huge asset - and more pleasant surprises could be offered. Sigmawifi began with Sumer Camp, retrofitting technology to meet needs. They now consult and install new solutions for individual properties (retroactive and new builds). To simplify the process going forward, early on Sigmawifi standardized solutions across the portfolio, which manages the renovations and opens of new properties much more efficiently. In addition to WiFi, included in the managed technology portfolio for Lark are all sound and audio systems, televisions, cameras, low voltage systems, cabling, and equipment.

The Results

Twists With Positive Technology Surprises: Sigmawifi is the solo technology and WiFi partner for all Lark Hotels. Working with Sigmawifi, Lark has experienced smoother new hotel openings and renovations across the board. Sigmawifi's influence on procedures and technology have unified the IT and tech experience into a stress-free, timely and budget-conscious process. Lark now proudly offers fast, reliable and secure WiFi for guests, and operations enjoy a private network for cloud-based processes (including POS). With Sigmawifi's hand-holding, Lark easily transitioned from DIY networks to sophisticated modern technology systems supporting amenities such as in-room iPads, smart services, and video streaming, with connectivity across the entire inn grounds. Guests report amazing experiences - with no connectivity complaints - so they remember their unique and positive stay, not bad WiFi.



"In hospitality, we are extremely loyal. Our partners need to adhere to the same values as we do - and we found an excellent partner in Sigmawifi. They share our excitement, energy, and motivation to offer our guests a high-quality and memorable experience. We look forward to continuing to renovate and open new hotels with Sigmawifi by our side."

- Rob Blood
CEO, Lark Hotels



About Sigmawifi

Sigmawifi specializes in permanent and mobile indoor and outdoor wireless solutions for car dealerships, hotels, RV parks, construction, campgrounds, restaurants, marinas and more. Sigmawifi is a specialized division of our Parent Company, Morse Technologies Network Consulting, Inc. focusing on specific technologies tailored to specific industries.

sigmawifi.com

