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## Technology Trends: Get connected

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More and more guests are traveling with portable media devices. Some hoteliers estimate that 70 to 80 percent of business travelers carry a laptop computer into the guestroom, and 40 to 50 percent of business and leisure travelers bring their portable digital media players.

Here are four easy steps for designers to successfully implement guest connectivity centers:

### **Step 1: Start with your goal and desired budget in mind**

“Before you even think about the design aspect, always make sure you have a clear goal and budget in mind for a GCC implementation,” says Jeremy Rock, president of the RockIT Group. “Without that, some aspect of the GCC implementation is likely to fall short of the owners’ or the guests’ expectations.”

Answers to the following questions will guide the design team, management team and ownership through a successful decision-making process and budget formation:

- What portable media devices do our guests expect us to support with a GCC?
- Where in the room will guests expect to connect their devices with a GCC?

### **Step 2: Select the guest connectivity center that meets your needs**

In terms of installation options in a guestroom, there are four types of guest connectivity center products, with different positives for each: in-wall, in-furniture, desktop/tabletop and integrated with a sound system.

While the aesthetics of installing a GCC into a wall may appeal to designers, “putting guest connectivity centers into walls can be very costly, as licensed electricians may be required to install them, and they can be expensive to replace in case of needed repairs or a brand refresh,” says Bogdan Andriychenko, guestroom technology consultant at Hilton Hotels Corp.

“In-furniture implementations are often preferable to in-wall due to more flexibility in the design of the guestroom,” says Mike Kosla, director of sales at LG Electronics USA. “However, the desktop or tabletop is also a great option since installations can often be done with existing case goods, saving hoteliers money.

"A new option for GCC implementations is a sound system; models from Bowers & Wilkins, ZVOX, Denon and Bose offer options ranging from full guest connectivity centers integrated with the primary audio console to dock accessories.

### **Step 3: Determine where to place the guest connectivity center in the room**

The old adage of "location, location, location" is as important in guestroom design as it is in choosing where to build a hotel.

"A guest connectivity center has to strike an aesthetic balance that allows it to blend into the hotel room but still be noticeable enough for guests to easily find," says Al Williams, VP of design and construction for Hyatt Hotels.

"While still planning for ease of use by the guest, designers should also be careful to place a GCC where there is room for the guest to set his or her portable media device beside the GCC," Andriychenko says. "You don't want to create a safety hazard with guests stringing cables across a room to connect their device with the GCC."

### **Step 4: Consider all aspects of the guest connectivity center implementation to formulate your budget**

Budgeting for a guest connectivity center in a room design includes much more than just the product itself. Factors to consider when formulating the per-room budget are: cabling/wiring (one wire versus multiple cables in a bundle), installation labor (union versus non-union labor and licensed electricians versus low-voltage wiring specialists), a stock of spares (in case installed GCCs are damaged by guest use) and even cables for guests to use to connect their portable media devices to the GCC.

"Designers should consider whether a GCC product requires a large cable bundle or a single wire connection to the TV," says Jon Dumbauld, VP of sales and marketing at Communication Integrators. "Single-wire connections can reduce installation costs and be much easier to hide, as well as offer more placement options for the GCC in the room by enabling a longer distance between the TV and the GCC."