



Some venues use food preparation areas as entertainment

# The Big Picture

Nowadays it's not unusual to read articles in which someone will describe a situation as being a microcosm of a larger situation; to be frank, at "Architect & Specificator" we do it all the time. However, in some instances, the reverse is true.

When we recently spoke to Mark Martinovic, CEO of Hotel Spec, he had some fascinating things to tell us about the issues involved in designing kitchens and bathrooms 'en masse' for hotels and resorts.

**Anything from a 3 point budget, 3m<sup>2</sup> bathroom, to a 6 point 15m<sup>2</sup> bathroom for the hotel rooms**

"Hotel Spec offers a basket of services ranging from a complete turnkey package of Development Management for a hotel, to project coordination, design and technical services to the architect and engineers in terms of layouts and services requirements," he says, by way of introduction. "We also turn our attention to procurement, logistics of getting everything delivered on site at the right time to on-site installation, testing, commissioning and staff training in the use of equipment."

### Significantly different

Mark explains that there are some significant dif-

ferences when approaching design of hotel facilities. "Depending on the brand of the hotel operator and also the grading of the hotel, you could have anything from a 3 point budget, 3m<sup>2</sup> bathroom, to a 6 point 15m<sup>2</sup> bathroom for the hotel rooms," he says. Points refer to plumbing points, with a 3 point typically being a basic WC, shower and hand basin.

Taking a high-spec design and applying it through a 200 room hotel may seem daunting, but Mark is unfazed by the task. "The bathroom part is easy, as typically you design one in detail and then copy it across to all 200 bedrooms," he says,



Mark Martinovic, Hotelspec



Each venue may have its own personality

making a gargantuan task sound amazingly simple before conceding that there may be variations for suites or different configurations of rooms. "But essentially, this is the principle."

Mark explains that on the kitchen side, the term 'high end' applies to the technology and brand of equipment but for the most part, the customer never sees that. "Unfortunately a lot of clients also don't 'see it' in terms of the initial capital outlay, but the wiser ones know that they have an asset that is more efficient and far outlives the cheaper options," he stresses.

"From the customer's perspective in terms of 'show kitchens', where the restaurant patron can see what is happening in the kitchen, it is generally necessary to include better finishes and careful planning to integrate design with function."

### Trendsetting

This leads to the topic of trendspotting, which often arises when working on projects that receive a lot of the limelight. "A few years ago, the 'show kitchen' was a big trend," he tells us. "The idea was to create a restaurant's own 'theatre' with the action in the kitchen, for example flames etc.

"Personally I think some have killed this concept, for instance restaurants that have decided that noise is part of the theatre and it becomes overwhelming. However, some establishments still do this well and in an elegant and understated manner, emphasising clean, high-end design coupled with quietly efficient kitchen operations."

### Super-showers, shorts and sanitation

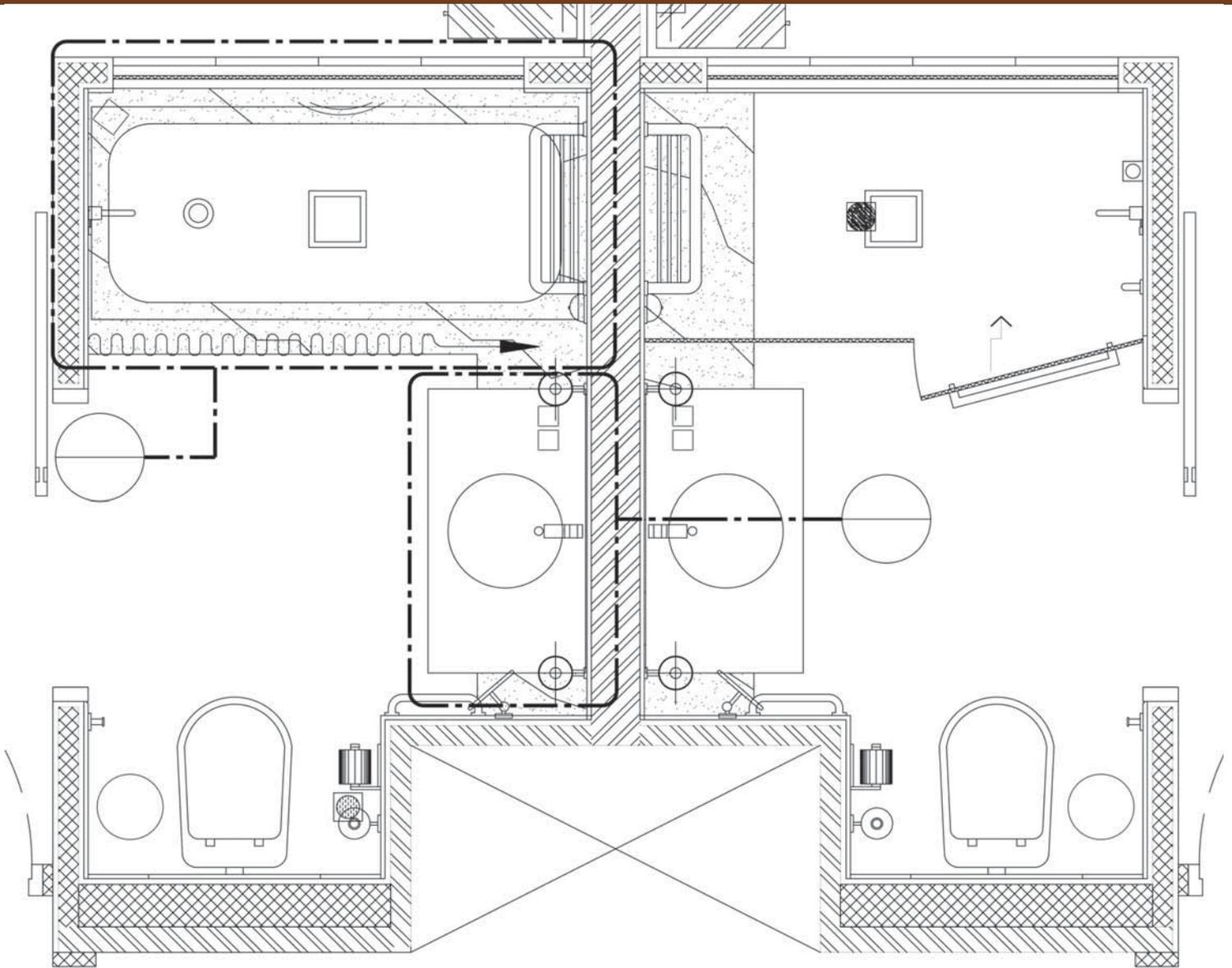
Mark educates us further, saying that in the bathrooms, there are countless technical details that are not even noticed. "Some relate to comfort and convenience and many relate to hygiene. For example, the height of the WC pan, the position of the toilet roll-holder in relation to the pan (these days the trend is to do a double roll holder instead of the old fashioned single holder and spare toilet roll holder), other conveniences such as sani-bag holders and waste receptacles."

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Some simple hygiene principles in terms of easing the task of housekeeping can be applied in any bathroom, for instance the height of a wall-hung pan from the floor should allow a mop to clean under, an under-slung basin provides for unobstructed and easier access to the vanity counter while counter top basins installed too close to the back wall allow bacterial growth to accumulate.

### Super-size showers

Beyond cleaning, location and height of various accessories such as towel rails and soap dishes are incredibly important as studies show that the guest experience in the bathroom is normally one that sticks in their minds. "Not hard to imagine – when your shorts are down, if things aren't where they should be, you can get a little frustrated!" Mark laughs.



A current trend in the 3 and 4 star hotels, particularly in new builds is a 'feature' shower. "Basically they 'super-size' a good shower cubicle and omit the bathtub altogether," he says. "There was a time – I still see it occasionally now – where the wall between the bathroom and bedroom was a glass screen wall. This may have blinds, or

**When your shorts are down, if things aren't where they should be, you can get a little frustrated!**

in the really high tech options, 'smart glass' with a frosted effect that becomes completely opaque when switched off and completely clear when switched on." Both of these approaches have been used effectively in developments where space limitations may impact the size of a guest bathroom, or even the main en suite.

Meals may be buffet or a la carte, with each requiring its own special approach

### Full-on services

"On the kitchen front, well this is another animal altogether," he continues. "Compared with a domestic home, you can imagine the difference, but even in comparison with a commercial high street restaurant, there are many significant variations. For example, a city business hotel with 200 rooms may have major conference and banqueting facilities, room service, a snack menu served beside the pool and in the bar and probably more than one restaurant." He uses the Sandton Sun and Hilton Sandton as examples of these principles. Both have large conference areas, and as 5-star venues, provide full food and beverage services to the pool deck as well as snacks at the bar.

"Typically, in a larger branded hotel you would have what is called the All Day Dining (ADD) restaurant which serves breakfast, lunch and dinner. Breakfast would probably be buffet-style service, lunch depending on the room and conference occupancy could be buffet or set menu and dinner set menu (table d'hôte) or a' la carte. Then there would be a second speciality restaurant serving a' la carte and banquet rooms serving either a set menu or a buffet lunch or dinner and sometimes hors d'oeuvres at the pool or other outdoor venue," Mark elaborates.

### It's a production

Obviously all of these functions need to be accommodated, along with the staff running the show. "All the preparation for the above often happens in the main 'production kitchen', which handles the main dry and cold storage, Garde Mange, Bakery, Patisserie, Butchery, Fish Prep, etc.," he says.

"Then there are separate kitchen areas for each outlet as well as the 24-hour room service preparation area. Then you have a planning area for the room service mise en place and order-taker's cubicle, access to a service lift to take orders up to the floors, a larger than normal dish - and ware-washing area, stores for buffet and banqueting equipment and of course much larger circulation due to a fair-size staff complement."

### The nitty gritty

However, with this level of complexity comes a plethora of other concerns, most important of which is safety. "In terms of priorities, first and last is Food Hygiene and Fire & Life Safety," Mark emphasises. "We use the international standard HACCP or ISO22000 in laying the foundation for food safety.

"Spatial planning, fire and life safety planning in a branded hotel is far more stringent than a stand-alone restaurant and consideration to ambient temperature, extraction rates, make-up air, fire-suppression canopies, floor drains, non-slip hygienic surfaces, human traffic flow, to name a few are vitally important," he says.

Other external issues are LPG (gas) storage, electrical



loads, water supply (hot and cold) and the standard of the water, and grease interceptors. Then from a hygiene point of view, waste management is highly important as this is a high risk area and source of contamination and bacteria which should be managed. The cruise lines in particular champion this process with excellent waste separation rooms that are airconditioned to avoid bacterial growth.

### Unfortunately a lot of clients also don't 'see it' in terms of the initial capital outlay

Wet waste is macerated (liquefied) and disposed of immediately, while dry waste is separated for recycling purposes and compacted on site (or on ship rather) and removed in port.

While not all hotel facilities lend themselves to residential applications, there's a lot to be said for their approach to hygiene and efficiency, not to mention the luxury aspects. Who wouldn't like a bathroom with a smart glass wall that is also easy to clean? If it keeps travellers coming back for more, it's very likely to find a place in a successful development.

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