

For Immediate Release

Got videoconference?

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Honolulu, HI – While researching to write an article about concierges, Dr. Arnaldo came across an article about a “Virtual Concierge” using state of the art technology somewhere in California. Determined to bring new information to the article as well as to his students, he finally tracked down Anna Morris, Head Concierge at the Westin Santa Clara. “Would it be possible for my students to visit you?” he E-mailed Anna. “But of course! And my GM approves it as well!”

After searching for three weeks, however, Barbara Voigt, Director of Instructional Media Services at Hawaii Pacific University, could find no suitable venue in terms of costs or logistics. Then out of the blue came Clifford Planning, LLC. One of the principals, Janine Clifford, herself an educator as well as a family friend of Barbara, simply offered her videoconferencing facilities to Barbara.

The rest is history (see pictorial). Student and instructor feedback addresses video quality, sound quality, conference facilities, and comments about our host, Anna Morris or “Virtual Anna”.

Behind the scenes. The Westin Santa Clara funded \$50,000 to install a T-1 line in Anna’s residence about 3 years ago. This is in itself is another story (www.virtualwerks.com). This T-1 line was limited to connection between the property and Anna’s residence that is about 80 miles away. Only weeks ago, the Westin further modified the infrastructure allowing Anna to videoconference anywhere in the world via DSL phone line and an ip address. When HPU (through Clifford Planning) connected with Anna that was Anna’s first videoconference outside of the Westin Santa Clara. So history was made on both shorelines!

About the author:

Mario Arnaldo, Ph.D. continues to teach a core-required course, Hotel & Resort Management, at the Travel Industry Management Program, Hawaii Pacific University. He has been teaching a traditional “in the classroom” section since 1997 and started an additional “online” section since summer 2002.

Student and instructor feedback on "Virtual Anna" videoconference

Wed 7 Apr 2004

5:30 pm – 6:30 pm Honolulu time (8:30 pm – 9:30 pm Santa Clara time)

Between

Anna Morris, Chef Concierge
The Westin Santa Clara, California

And

Hawaii Pacific University
TIM 3110, Hotel & Resort Management Web section
Dr. Arnaldo's class

Courtesy of Janine Clifford,
Clifford Planning, LLC Conference Room,
841 Bishop Street, Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

Quality of video *Student composite* Gets an "A"; looked good and Anna looked very personal; the quality was quite good; excellent! *Dr A* I am inclined to believe the lighting might be improved on Anna's side. I'm not sure what Anna could see from her side, and she might have the same comment for our side.



Quality of sound *Student composite* Excellent, sounded crisp & lively; the sound was just like talking on the phone! We could all hear very clearly! *Dr A* If I closed my eyes, and used only my ears, it would be very difficult to tell whether or not Anna was in the room or if she was on the phone.

Impression with Anna's handling of student questions *Student composite* She answered our questions very professionally and explained really well. She had good answers to our questions, and it was interesting when she talked about things that have happened. Good, and quick to respond, very intelligent. We felt she handled the questions very politely and effectively. Anna was great, very up-to-date and current for today's business world. The Westin SC was very

smart to jump on Anna's idea. Many properties will soon follow. Anna is definitely the right person for the job, seems to be good with people. Knows customer service. Since you have one pilot in place, you can now expand at minimal cost. More and more people will need training and will be hired in the future to do these kinds of jobs. *Dr A* If I had to select a person to represent me or my organization, I would have no second thoughts selecting Anna; if the Westin SC refused to release Anna, then I would arrange for Anna to train my alternate selection. Anna was indeed the perfect host!



Impression of Clifford Planning, LLC facilities *Student composite* New age design of office, using technology to the fullest! State of the art! Very professional. The meeting room was nice and modern, and comfortable. *Dr A* I've seen conference rooms in 37 countries on 4 continents, and Clifford Planning, LLC is in the top 3 I've seen! A closer look shows that attendees can stay track of the time in several cities; the dry-erase markers are for an electronic board (not shown in picture); left hand screen shows what attendees see, while the right hand screen shows the attendees (what Anna sees from her end). The conference table picture reflects the video quality I was hoping to enjoy while viewing Anna.



A closeup of the two screens. Not shown is a remote control that the conferencer can use to close in or out of the subject, and pan the room if needed.



Attendees from Dr. Arnaldo's TIM 3110 class (Hotel & Resort Management) are interacting with Anna.



This view shows that 16 attendees can very comfortably sit at the table and enjoy the view without blocking or being blocked by anyone else. There is room *around* the conference room to easily accommodate another dozen people not seating at the table.

Other comments *Student composite* Very inspirational for a lower level management employee to take matters into her own hands on behalf of the hotel. We really had a very good time. Anna was very polite and nice. Videoconferencing might be mind-boggling for some, but we were very happy to be a part of it! This is a great way to save space in an office when you have to simultaneously conference with many people. This eliminates the need to travel and saves on travel-related expenses. Can be applied to any industry, from doctors to lawyers. Train hotel staff of different properties by ONE HR office using videoconferencing. Connect different properties for internal purposes. Use the same or similar system for the front desk. *Dr A* Once the infrastructure is in place, videoconferencing opens a multitude of opportunities: conducting classes all over the world; conferencing with research associates; seminars & workshops; hands-on training that provides the 3-D affect not possible in text books (instructing CPR & 1st Aid, how to make a bed or set a table, etc.).
