

A TOWERING ACHIEVEMENT

Vancouver's New Shangri-La Features State-of-the-Art RF Control Systems



As Vancouver's newest mixed-use hotel/residential tower, the 61-story Shangri-La is a true architectural wonder and now the city's tallest building – commanding breathtaking views of the surrounding mountains, waterways, and metropolitan area. Open since January 2009, the property boasts a 119-room five-star hotel on its first 15 floors, 300 residential condominiums occupying floors 16 through 61, the renowned Market restaurant and Chi Spa, a specialty foods supermarket, and gallery space for public art.

The Shangri-La is a technological marvel as well, featuring the absolute state-of-the-art in remote-controlled automation systems for both commercial and residential use. With a single, simple-to-operate remote control device, guests and residents can control everything from sophisticated A/V and videoconferencing equipment to home theaters, lighting, and window coverings.

Vancouver-based Millson Technologies, Inc. provided system design and integration for all of the technology solutions within the hotel, teleconferencing business center, and residences. Remote control systems from RTI are an essential element in Millson's design for the Shangri-La. "Intuitive technology is especially important in a hotel/conference/residential setting, where the users might be guests or residents with little or no technology training who are using these systems for the first time," said Richard Millson, president of Millson Technologies. "RTI's solutions helped us fulfill the property's objective to offer systems that are not only leading-edge, but intuitive and easy to use the first time."

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RTI's T3-V and T2-C universal handheld controllers and XP-8 processor played key roles in delivering these high performance control systems for the residential component of the Shangri-La property. These solutions are enabled by RTI's exclusive two-way communication platform, designed to enable feedback from a wide range of electronic and environmental systems in residential and commercial applications. RTI systems feature cutting-edge programming software and offer tight integration with third-party devices such as the Lutron Homeworks® lighting control system featured in the luxury condominium homes. "The XP-8 RF antenna system works exceedingly well and is very reliable, considering we're operating in a 61-story glass building made of concrete and steel. We have dozens of remotes all in close proximity to each other, and they all work perfectly with no interference," said Millson.

The hotel portion of Millson Technologies installation includes the Chi Signature Spa and fitness center, the business center, meeting rooms and a 30-seat private theater decked out in the most advanced A/V and videoconferencing technologies available.

In the business center, an RTI handheld controller is used to operate every component, including the lighting, window coverings, the LifeSize® videoconferencing system, the Sony flat-screen HD displays, and a specialized HD document camera mounted in the boardroom ceiling that enables meeting attendees in remote locations to view high-resolution images of documents anywhere on the tables surface.

The RTI controllers offer a compact, yet powerful alternative to the large, hard-wired touch screens that are typically required for an A/V installation of this complexity. "In the board room, for instance, a larger touch screen controller would normally be installed on the table, taking up valuable space that meeting attendees need for their laptops and papers," said Millson. "With this installation, anyone can just walk into the boardroom and pick up the remote, and with a single button push activate a preset for a meeting that dims the lights, closes the sheers for privacy, launches the video conferencing system and connects the meeting to the remote location. This is the type of one button scene activation that RTI solutions are perfect for."

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After several years in operation, the Shangri-La conference facility has rapidly gained a reputation among meeting planners as a premier meeting destination in Vancouver. "According to the hotel manager, many people book the business center specifically because they want to access the video conferencing system," Millson said. "There is lots of hotel competition in the city, but the simplicity and ease of use of the RTI based HD system we created for this installation has established Shangri-La as the new benchmark for others to beat."

In addition to the conference facility, RTI's T2-C controllers can be found in dozens of the 300 Shangri-La luxury condo residences – all of which were sold before the project even broke ground. Millson Technologies included the controllers as part of its Residential Technology Options™ program, which gave condo purchasers the ability to pick and choose

from several technology options including home cinema, distributed audio, lighting control, motorized window coverings and full Automation systems.

"The tower is essentially all glass and this means there can be a huge amount of sunlight entering the building. This and other factors make infrared-based control a poor choice for controlling the various systems. The only reliable choice was to specify RF based control," said Millson. "RTI's RF technology is rock-solid and reliable, which is a big reason why we have included RTI solutions as a core component in our designs for many years."



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