The Fast-Forward
Tech Stack for 2024

The Hotel Yearbook Technology 2024

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Welcome to HYB TECH 2024 - These are fascinating times for our industry!

Tech Stack

Ian Millar

Manager of Institute of Business Creativity & Senior Lecturer at EHL Hospitality Business School

The world of hospitality technology has indeed been an interesting one since the pandemic. During the pandemic, we saw a few incremental changes but nothing major. If there were one takeaway, then it would have been the shift to a more autonomous guest experience, and if we are honest, there is nothing too wrong about that, depending on the occasion the hotel wishes to give. Move forward to 2023, and we have seen quite a few small and incremental changes, some innovative and some promising to make considerable changes to hospitality.

Let's start with the smaller stuff. There is still the shift towards cloud computing adoption, it is still relatively slow in places, but with a new breed of systems embracing open API, this should accelerate. The days of legacy systems, complicated interfaces and contracts should hopefully be a thing of the past. Cyber security is an ever-present topic, not extremely exciting, but probably the most important we need to address as an industry. Social engineering and phishing still pose a daily challenge that we must deal with, bearing in mind the plethora of sensitive information we as an industry hold.

Seeing the recent announcement from Apple of the vision pro, even though at the moment it seems very overpriced and has some technical flaws (battery life), we have to as an industry, ask what this technology will change especially for our customers. In one article, we have looked forward to 2030; we need to imagine how customers will consume our products. Will a website and some social media be enough or do we need to shift to immersive site visits, virtual reality tours of our properties and then the integration of AI assistants who will plan our trips for us in a heartbeat?

That is the perfect segway into one of the hot topics, AI. Chat GPT and similar products have been all over the news, and quite rightly so. Still in its infancy but growing AI has the potential to disrupt hospitality massively. It will put an end to our long-winded manual processes. Guest interactions will change, and yes, some employees and departments could disappear altogether as the technology becomes more precise.

With that said the most topical discussion we will be having is not about technology at all. It's about people. We all know since the pandemic, the hospitality industry has been suffering from a massive human capital problem. This is the most acute in front-line operations. However, it also applies to our world of technology. Gone are the days when we would recruit people to fix printers and program the POS. Today we need specialists, and lots of them, from specialists who genuinely understand cloud computing, SAAS and open API. We need experts in cyber security to keep us safe. We need data scientists to help us organise and exploit all that data we have sitting in massive data lakes, and to the end, we need people who can help us truly understand how AI can help the industry. These are fascinating times for our industry; we are now seeing a shift from the "it's a people business" to "it's a digital business". For sure, we must never forget what hospitality is genuinely about, but we must at the same time embrace these new technologies and how they can best support us by creating amazing experiences for our guests and also our employees.

Enjoy the read!

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Ian Millar — Manager of Institute of Business Creativity & Senior Lecturer at EHL Hospitality Business School
Ian Millar is Manager of Institute of Business Creativity & Senior Lecturer at EHL Hospitality Business School working on the Student Business Projects and delivering hospitality technology courses. His double expertise in the areas of hospitality and information technology sets him at the forefront of new developments in the international hospitality industry. He is Certified Hospitality Technology Professional and a frequent presenter at international IT conferences as well as the author of numerous hospitality technology articles. Ian serves as an advisor to various hospitality technology companies and was a Member of the Hotel Industry Expert Panel for the Singapore Tourism Board advising hotels in the region on best practice technology usage. He is also a mentor for the Metro Accelerator program, advising various hospitality technology start-up companies. He is currently on the HITEC Amsterdam advisory council, organizing Europe's largest hospitality technology conference.

EHL Hospitality Business School — www.ehl.edu
EHL Hospitality Business School (Lausanne) is an ambassador for traditional Swiss hospitality and has been a pioneer in hospitality education since 1893 with over 25,000 alumni worldwide and over 120 nationalities. EHL is the world's first hospitality management school that provides university-level programs at its campuses in Lausanne and Chur-Passugg, as well as online learning solutions. The School is ranked n°1 by QS World University Rankings by subject and CEOWorld Magazine, and its gastronomic restaurant is the world's only educational establishment to hold a Michelin Star.

Subscription Model's Next Destination: The Hospitality Industry

Innovation

Robbie Karver

Principal, Strategy & Transactions, Ernst & Young

Synopsis
Amidst shifting consumer behaviors in the post-pandemic hotel industry, traditional loyalty programs have diminished appeal, leading businesses to explore alternative strategies such as subscription models. These models provide consistent revenue for hotels, offer luxury experiences to attract customers, and create a sense of exclusivity that enhances brand affinity. With a particular focus on the growing market of digital nomads, subscription models cater to the modern customer's need for convenience and flexibility. Businesses need to consider their target market and conduct a thorough cost-benefit analysis to implement a successful subscription model that boosts customer retention and brand loyalty.

While past summer seasons have proved to be integral in rebuilding the hotel industry following the pandemic, it's important to reflect on what lessons learned to evolve business strategies. From changes in booking preferences to updated cleaning standards, evolving market conditions are forcing hoteliers work harder than ever before for brand loyalty. That's why hospitality companies should adjust their tactics to cater to diverse travel options and distinctive experiences.

For example, many hotels are rethinking their loyalty programs. In the past, companies have relied on loyalty programs to secure customer retention. While this was a successful tactic before the pandemic, as customers reevaluate what they are looking for in travel, traditional loyalty programs have lost their appeal. There are fewer incentives for guests, like keyless entry and room upgrades, which leads them to look elsewhere for the best deals.

So, how can hospitality companies attract new customers this season? The answer lies in subscription models. While historically subscription models have been leveraged by retail companies, there are numerous benefits for the hospitality industry, like consistent and guaranteed revenue. And many global travel brands all have offerings of curated subscription model experiences with a focus on luxury and personalized experiences to attract customers.

Subscription models have the potential to provide perks for customers that go beyond the typical rewards program, providing customers with unique experiences and positive memories. With this model, customers feel like they are getting more out of their stay without overspending. Further, subscribers feel the exclusivity that the service offers, resulting in enhanced brand affinity.

Overall, the VIP feeling increases customer retention and keeps consumers coming back for more.

Here are a few things to keep in mind when implementing a subscription model in hospitality:

- **Identify the market:** The subscription market is growing, due largely to demographic preference and societal change, particularly with the rise of 'digital nomads' and the blurring of work and vacation. In fact, between 2019 and 2020, the United States saw a 96% increase in people describing themselves as digital nomads, meaning they hold traditional jobs without one primary home base. These digital nomads are combining work and play, taking advantage of their work trips and incorporating leisure into their itineraries.To appeal to these new vacationers, companies should consider subscription model packages that feature luxury vacation experiences and expand loyalty perks beyond free Wi-Fi to drink deals and private events.

- **Cater the business model to the modern customer**: Convenience and flexibility is essential with the modern customer, so it's key to identify areas where businesses can provide those experiences. In doing so, companies can build a base of subscribers that creates predictability and data to further improve customer experience. To further attract customers, companies can add different subscriptions tiers or levels with unique membership perks with the option to level up or down in tier as needed.

- **Consider cost-benefit analysis:** When discussing the idea of subscription models, a recurring challenge to be mindful of existing demand without offering travelers unnecessary or unusable perks and discounts. Executives should consider their strategy in full to ensure it is right for their business and customer base.

As we navigate the change in consumer behavior in the travel sector, companies that find subscription models that work for their business and their target market will be set up to succeed. Further, by providing exclusive and memorable stays at a low monthly cost, customers will know that they are getting the best experience possible - and companies will see brand loyalty soar.

Robbie Karver — Principal, Strategy & Transactions, Ernst & Young
Robbie has over 15 years at EY providing a broad range of services focused on real estate, hospitality, travel and tourism consulting to a wide variety of clients. His work is focused on growth strategy and transactions for clients which range from real estate developers, institutional investors, tourism destinations, hotel management companies, cruise lines and theme park operators, among others.

Ernst & Young Hospitality Services Group — ey.com/us/realestate
The Hospitality practice at Ernst & Young LLP ("E&Y") is the leading practice among the Big–Four public accounting firms. E&Y audits 37% of the sales of the top 100 hospitality companies in the United States. The hospitality industry must address an increasingly complex array of issues that include supply, demand, competitive, financing, and globalization. The vast expertise of our skilled industry specialists allow us to assist our clients in addressing the challenges that face their industries and affect their business. The Ernst & Young Hospitality practice has professionals across the country dedicated to our hospitality industry clients.

What are the future talent needs in hospitality technology?

Human Stack

Carson Booth
COO for EMEA at Hospitality Financial and Technology Professionals (HFTP)

The rapidly changing hospitality tech stack for hotel groups/brands develops the need for different skill sets inside corporate IT teams. While still managing legacy platforms, vast new areas of expertise are being created around managing SaaS, data storage & security, API connectivity, payment gateways, and more. However, the problem is that these new skill sets are also in high demand by other industries. Young tech professionals just dream about a cool job at global tech companies that provide a rapid career path, rich benefits and salaries, and exciting new technical skills.

To better understand this topic in the current environment, former Starwood Global VP Property Technology Carson Booth reached out to his peer group with the following question:

SO... BEYOND BEING ABLE TO TRAVEL THE WORLD, WHAT INCENTIVES DOES OUR INDUSTRY OFFER THIS NEW GENERATION OF TECHNOLOGY PROFESSIONALS? WHAT ARE WE OFFERING TO RECRUITS WHEN THEY ARE WEIGHING THEIR EMPLOYMENT OPTIONS? WHERE ARE WE FINDING THIS TALENT?

MONIKA NERGER

Group Global Chief Information Officer
Mandarin Oriental Hotel Group

Thank you for the opportunity to share thoughts on the important topic of IT talent recruitment to the hospitality industry. First and foremost, we need to focus on talent retention and ongoing development and upskilling of the people we have in our organizations. With the fast pace of change in technology, we should prioritize education, up-skilling and in-house development of our IT colleagues. This could also include apprenticeship programs for those who are looking to enter IT from other fields. When considering how we attract new IT talent to our industry, the discussion of 'war on talent' inevitably surfaces. We need to broaden our reach in terms of sources of IT talent, geographic locations and mobility and incentives that are compelling. These could include financial support for MBAs, technology certifications and even personalized coaches.

FLOOR BLEEKER

Group Chief Technology Officer (CTO)
Accor

At Accor we are working on many of the topics that you mentioned in your video. Over the last 10 years we have seen a gradual shift from on property, very broad expertise to above property deep technical expertise to the ability to effectively manage third parties including SAAS, cloud and outsource partners. I believe we are attractive for tech talent as we offer an opportunity to innovate in an industry that is not yet fully disrupted. We offer talent to be very close to the real business and we offer a quick career path for those that are mobile. Being a global company we don't rely on a single labor market and that helps us when we are in need of high demand skills like cloud and security.

MATT SCHWARTZ

Chief Technology Officer (CTO)
Sage Hospitality Group

When hiring IT professionals we look for five qualities: (1) Is the candidate friendly?; (2) Is the candidate patient?; (3) Is the candidate tenacious?; (4) Does the candidate demonstrate a commitment to continuous learning?; and (5) Does the candidate appear to fit into our corporate culture and values? The business function of IT evolves faster than any other business function and we don't see the pace of change slowing down in the future. That said, the future talent needs in hospitality technology are the same needs we have today; candidates who possess the five qualities listed above will do just fine. For specialized areas such as cybersecurity, business intelligence and network architecture, we look for the five previously mentioned qualities plus domain expertise. No need to compete against Microsoft, Amazon and Google. No need to find "perfect" candidates who won't last long. Some of our best associates were friendly hotel and restaurant staff members with a curiosity for technology. The future needs leaders with open minds.

TIMO KETTERN

Director Technical Field Services Openings EMEA
Hilton

In my opinion, hotel companies offer a lot that attracts technology talent to our industry. The industry is in the middle of a vast transition from legacy to (hybrid-)cloud which gives young talent the opportunity to be part of a program that creates the future tech stack of a hotel organisation – you don't get that in big corporate tech. We offer true Diversity! Hospitality has always been welcoming to everyone and traditionally people form different cultures, ethnic background, religions, etc work with each other – that is just natural to the industry. Bundled up with the opportunity to travel for work to some of the most spectacular cities and sites around the world, makes for a great place to make a career. All the best and talk soon Timo

BARRY THOMAS

Vice President Technology - Raffles & Orient Express
Accor

There has been a distinct shift in hospitality technology in recent years. When recruiting for our teams, we are no longer looking for IT generalist who can do a little bit of everything, we need specific SME's who focus on core functions – Data, Security & Privacy, Guest Tech & Innovation, BI, Project Management and Infrastructure to name a few. These are areas which require dedicated experts, to be successful you can't have a team that does a little bit of security and a little bit of innovation.

We are also looking for people with a partner mentality who understand the business and have the strategic vision to introduce technology to support the business goals and objectives. We do not want our IT leaders sitting in basements behind closed doors doing "IT Things" that the business doesn't understand.

It can be difficult to recruit talent especially against some big tech companies, however the recent redundancies seen across the tech industry (Google, Meta, Twitter, Amazon etc) has helped resource availability on the job market and the view that some tech companies can be ruthless with their workforce in difficult times. As an industry which many people fall in love with after working in it for a few years, we need to focus on talent development, talent retention and the growing talent from within... Look after those in our teams as these are our leaders of the future.

ANDREW EVERS

Group Director of IT
Rocco Forte Hotels

So you asked us what's the future talent need in the hospitality technology space? That's quite a long question. In order to be able to answer that in 1 minute, I'm going to need to oversimplify. So I think the most important thing that we now need is to understand life beyond the IP address.

It's not all about infrastructure. We now need to understand the individual hotel, the individual brand, and represent that in everything that we do in technology. We're in the boardroom, we're in the bedroom, we now touch guests, sell services to guests, and technology is now a part of the overall guest experience.

So that has to be aligned to everything the hotel brand represents. It's also really important that we collaborate with our colleagues in digital marketing, in revenue, in reservations. We now need to understand exactly how the hotel works and worry less about how System X talks to System Y. It's more about the data.

Where does the data go? Who does it serve? Is it useful? Is it correct? Once we understand the hotel, we understand the brand, then we can start to deliver a technology service that really represents that.

JAIME GONZÁLEZ-PERALTA

SVP & Global CIO
Radisson Hotel Group

In these times when we have a strong desire to nurture and attract talent within our organizations, I believe we have a significant opportunity in our industry, which is also one of our strengths. We prioritize providing exceptional experiences to our guests and customers, and we aim to extend that same level of experience to our employees. This becomes a distinguishing factor that helps us attract and retain talent.

We offer customized career paths that cater to various opportunities across different departments, allowing us to tailor individual experiences. We strike the right balance between working in the hotel and the corporate office, creating an encouraging environment.

Additionally, our industry is known for its agility. Therefore, transitioning between jobs and moving from one position to another can be accomplished swiftly.

Furthermore, another area we focus on is tailoring career paths for individuals, both for those seeking to become experts in their respective fields and for those aspiring to managerial positions. This provides opportunities for them to enhance their technical and managerial skills.

Lastly, we leverage our worldwide presence to source technology talent from wherever it is available, allowing individuals the option to relocate or remain in their home countries. I appreciate your question, and I look forward to seeing the results.

MIKE DICKERSBACH

Technology Strategist & Chief Digital Officer
Highgate

If you look at the spectrum of the hospitality industry, we have always offered one unique trait that you typically do not find in many other verticals: The chance to work in technology, with a completely diverse background that may not have included technology.

Those entering our space may have begun in accounting, front office or food & beverage- any of the many disciplines within a hotel. When reviewing other industries, it's not typical to see someone working in finance and then move to sales or engineering- yet that is one of the very best traits our industry has provided for a long time.

Speaking from first-hand experience, I came up from the F&B side, after earning my bachelor's in food service management. I spent several years as a restaurant manager and then was able to transform my career by moving to the accounting department managing payroll and AP. I obviously didn't have experience doing this, but our industry has traditionally been a patient one, where on-the-job training has been part of the culture for generations.

Ultimately, from accounting, I moved to a regional IT position, and then moved up to the ownership side as their head of IT, eventually earning my Masters in Information Systems. We live in a time where students are looking hard at what they want to do either during, before or after college and I would encourage anyone that isn't really sure on what they want to do in life, to try anything within a hotel.

I would also add that, we, as hoteliers, have to look forward and realize that legacy systems that are still in place can produce frustrations for younger generations entering our industry. We need to be able to offer tools that allow these younger workforces to manage the business in a real-time, data-driven, fluid environment. We can only achieve that by architecting now, the tools we will need for tomorrow.

TOMEU FIOL

Global Hotel Technologies Director
Meliá Hotels International

Hospitality Technology talent is unquestionably a topics that concerns all of us. We are experiencing it today, and most probably the problem is going to become bigger in the short-

midterm. Is time, as usual when we have challenge, to innovate. Not only attract, but retain the technology talent for our industry. Because when we are talking about technology in hospitality and talent you are not only competing with the other hotel or tourism companies, you are competing with the Technology companies and this changes completely the rules. It is not a matter of wage conditions, thus is quite complicated to compete with the Big Technology companies at this point. You need to offer and convince your future new talent with challenges, project, initiatives were they could engage and participate, even leading them.

When we think about which are the positions, roles, talent we will need, at a glance I think we will need: Hospitality Experts, as I usual say, the key thing about the technology for business companies (not technology companies) is not technology itself, is about to understand how to use it. Therefore, people that comes from the hotel operations, hotel and sales management, F&B operations are, based on my experience, key to a Hotel Technology Department. We will need of course API's developers, the world is moving fast to a point where the API's are going to rule the Hotel Tech Stack. It does not matter if you build or buy software, you must have at least a super team for managing the API's first companies. AI and Data engineers/analyst are going to be key also and most probably the most complicated roles to find and keep because the emerge of the AI. Finally, you will need hardware guys, for a certain period of time we have forgot these roles, but in my opinion as Hotel are still a Physical Business, managing all the IoT to merge the digital and physical experience, and for instance the advent of the hard robots in hospitality will increate the need to have this roles in our teams.

In terms of acquiring and retain talent, as I have said is quite complicate to compete with Tech Companies. So that you need to be imaginative, of course you can and you must go to the college or professional training schools, but it is not going to be that easy. But, there is a difference in our business that we need to explore, every year you we plenty of young people which is starting to work in our hotels, normally as a training or for a partial work meantime they are studying. There is where you have a window of opportunity to engage and reconvert that emerging hospitality workers in your future talent for Hospitality tech. You need to complete you plan with a fantastic and up-to-date platform to train these new talent. At the end you need to find other ways to acquire talent, and salary is no the way.

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Carson Booth — COO for EMEA at Hospitality Financial and Technology Professionals (HFTP)
Booth has held top positions across multiple sectors within hospitality. Most recently he worked as COO of a U.K. hospitality payments startup and as CEO of SnapShot, a Shiji Group brand. He also served as Global VP, Property Technology for Starwood Hotels & Resorts and general manager for the Starwood International Licensing Company Sàrl, Luxembourg. Throughout his career, Booth has volunteered his expertise by serving as a director on multiple industry association boards, including HFTP and HTNG. He has particular insight on HFTP in Europe, having served as chair of the HITEC Europe Advisory Council.

Hospitality Financial and Technology Professionals (HFTP) — hftp.org
Hospitality Financial and Technology Professionals (HFTP®), established in 1952, is a hospitality nonprofit association headquartered in Austin, Texas USA with offices in United Kingdom, Netherlands and Dubai. HFTP is recognized as the spokes group for the finance and technology segments of the hospitality industry with an international network of members and stakeholders. HFTP uniquely understands the industry's pressing issues, and assists its stakeholders in finding solutions to their challenges more efficiently than any organization. HFTP offers expert networks, educational resources, career development programs, research, leadership opportunities and conferences and events.

The Generative AI Revolution in Hospitality

Generative AI

Tristan Gadsby

CEO and founder, Alliants

Synopsis
Artificial Intelligence (AI) has revolutionized the travel and hospitality industry, with contactless experiences and AI-powered ecommerce becoming increasingly crucial. The COVID-19 pandemic accelerated these trends, making messaging platforms like WhatsApp and WeChat more prominent, leading to improved customer satisfaction through instant replies from AI chatbots. Generative AI has brought significant advancements, such as enhanced chatbots, and the potential for personalized service at scale. These AI-powered systems can create travel itineraries based on customers' preferences and give staff insights for more personalized interactions. Despite these advancements, the importance of human touch in the hospitality industry remains vital, balancing the benefits of AI with personal recommendations and interactions. While AI continues to streamline hotel operations and provide valuable insights, it also has its limitations, emphasizing the enduring value of personal touch in hospitality.

INTRODUCTION

Artificial Intelligence (AI) has become an integral part of our daily lives, so much so that we often take it for granted. We experience AI in various ways, such as online shopping recommendations, social media news feeds, GPS and route planning tools.

The travel and hospitality industry has also leveraged AI to great effect. From OTAs and Airbnb excelling in product recommendations and targeted marketing, to hotel groups using AI integrations to learn about customer needs and preferences, the impact of AI on our industry is significant.

THE RISE OF MESSAGING AND CONTACTLESS EXPERIENCES

The COVID-19 pandemic accelerated the adoption of contactless experiences and increased our reliance on AI-powered ecommerce and streaming services. Alongside this trend, messaging platforms like WhatsApp and WeChat gained prominence.

Hotels that embraced messaging during the pandemic witnessed substantial improvements in customer satisfaction as guests received instant replies to frequently asked questions (FAQs) through AI chatbots, often in their preferred language thanks to AI-driven instant translation capabilities.

This trend has continued, with the volume of messages exchanged between hotel staff and guests tripling compared to the pre-pandemic period. Guests clearly appreciate the convenience of utilising a channel they are already familiar with in their daily lives.

EMPOWERING GUESTS WITH CHAT AND REAL-TIME DIGITAL ITINERARIES

Combining a chat function with guests carrying a real-time digital itinerary on their phones has proven highly effective. This combination typically results in a 30% increase in average customer spend per stay, as guests find it easier to plan and enjoy their trips. However, while AI brings considerable benefits, it must be balanced with the human touch.

The misconception that a chatbot can replace human interaction has led to customer frustration. Instead, a blended approach is necessary, where AI handles FAQs while human staff respond to more complex queries.

GENERATIVE AI 'S IMPACT ON HOSPITALITY

Generative AI represents a significant leap forward in capabilities, enhancing the quality of chatbots and other automated functions. Unlike rule-based systems or pre-programmed responses, generative AI leverages neural networks designed for natural language understanding.

Once a hotel's compendium is fed into a generative AI model and trained to comprehend guest journey context, it becomes even better at answering a broader range of queries from guests.

THE POWER OF HYPER-PERSONALISED SERVICE AT SCALE

Yet, what I think is really exciting about generative AI is that it is going to increase the ability of hotels and brands to deliver hyper-personalised service at scale.

Generative AI can create travel itineraries based on customers' interests and timelines as well as offering personalised recommendations to enhance their stay.

In the very near future, generative AI will greatly improve the day-to-day duties of customer facing staff. For instance, receptionists and concierges can be provided with brief guest summaries each morning highlighting essential information that staff can leverage in interactions. This will enable staff to offer more informed and personalised assistance.

For example, the summary might say that Mr & Mrs Wharton swam with turtles yesterday and had dinner at Nobu. This gives the concierge a heightened level of knowledge and awareness when in conversation with the Wharton. If the concierge can also see from their digital itinerary that they have free time in the afternoon, they can make some personal suggestions about how the Wharton might spend their afternoon.

ENHANCING AUTOMATED PROCESSES AND PROACTIVE SERVICE

Let's imagine we are at a golf resort. It's 4pm when a guest cancels their tee time at 9am the next morning. That doesn't leave much time to resell the slot, but an AI-powered bot can automatically send an invitation to everyone in the resort who is interested in golf.

In general, generative AI will improve automated processes that stem from a single event. So, when a cancellation occurs, it can trigger a series of actions that minimise revenue loss and enhance the experience for other guests.

CATERING TO THE YOUNGER LUXURY CONSUMER

The luxury segment is witnessing a shift with younger consumers becoming a significant target market. According to a recent Bain & Co report, wealthy individuals aged 20-35 are increasingly engaging with luxury hotel brands.

These digital natives are accustomed to predictive rather than reactive services, and generative AI can help meet their expectations.

We know that guests typically request restaurant reservations and spa treatments on the same day or the day before. This rarely gives hotels the opportunity to successfully accommodate these requests.

However, by delivering an AI-powered personalised choice of activities, venues and experiences in the destination prior to arrival, guests are encouraged to plan and book their stays in advance.

This not only reduces the burden on hotel staff but also enhances guest satisfaction, leading to more fulfilling travel experiences.

CONCLUSION

Generative AI represents an exciting progression in our ability to streamline hotel operations and increase efficiency, freeing up staff to focus on providing personalised service. This in turn creates more loyalty, more ancillary revenue and more memorable experiences for each individual guest.

To complete the virtuous circle, generative AI can provide valuable insights into guest behaviour and preferences, allowing hospitality companies to make data-driven decisions to increase revenue.

Having said all that, delivering great hospitality is still about people and personal touches, and there are limits to what generative AI can do. Most obviously, at the time of writing this article, the basic version of Chat GPT has limited knowledge of the world and events after 2021, so it will not be able to recommend a new restaurant that opened last year.

Tristan Gadsby — CEO and founder, Alliants
Tristan is the co-founder and CEO of Alliants and has spent his career focusing on using technology to make companies and industries more seamless and accessible to consumers. Alliants helps high-end hotels deliver on their luxury promise and was conceived while Tristan was a director at Opodo.

Alliants — alliants.com
Alliants has helped some of the world's most respected luxury hotel, travel and retail brands deliver exceptional customer experiences. Founded in 2009, we have built industry changing technology solutions, including award winning mobile apps and chat applications that transform the digital guest experience. Millions of users around the globe use our technology as guests of the world's most luxurious hotels and brands.

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Engineering A Sustainable Future: Empowering Change In The Hospitality Industry

Tech Stack

Christine Choquel
Deputy Chief Technology Officer - Accor

Synopsis

In this article, Accor's Deputy CTO, who also heads the IT Strategy & Performance team, outlines Accor's commitment towards sustainability in business operations, citing the potential of technology in addressing global challenges. They have been instrumental in eliminating single-use plastics, working towards achieving net-zero emissions, and driving substantial change across the hospitality industry. Accor's sustainability strategies, embedded at all levels, have led to a majority of employees being trained in recognizing and addressing the industry's environmental and social impact. Accor Tech, under their guidance, focuses on reducing the direct carbon footprint of their information systems and innovating "Tech for Green" solutions. The significant projects for 2023 include a transition to cloud computing, a new sustainability reporting tool, and pioneering energy reduction technologies in hotels. The tech-driven initiatives are not only poised to lower their environmental impact but also resonate with an increasing number of stakeholders prioritizing sustainability.

I decided to study engineering when I was in high school and have always been fascinated by maths and by the excitement of solving problems. Engineering works on rigorous scientific principles and natural laws: that's what makes it both so challenging and so rewarding.

For me, technology is in a really great position to help find solutions to sustainability challenges, although, of course, more fundamental social and economic changes are an equally important part of the picture.

I am Deputy CTO at Accor, also leading the IT Strategy & Performance team. Our Accor-wide sustainability strategy is founded on science: we aim to contribute to a Net Zero World, bring our absolute emissions to zero and play our part in preserving the natural environment and resources. We are determined to make our business model truly sustainable, by acknowledging the implicit limitations of Planet Earth, and embedding this recognition at the heart of everything we do.

Put simply, we need to dramatically transform the way we operate and innovate and make some difficult, disruptive changes.

Accor prides itself on being best in class, and we are now even more committed to change expectations working across the whole hospitality industry to create a truly diverse and sustainable future. Globally, the challenges we face are shared: working together is the only possible solution. Of course, our personal commitment and our leadership matter, but I believe our IT teams have a key role to play in championing the changes we need to make.

Over the past few years, Accor has made significant commitments to real change. We eliminated single-use plastics from hotels. We also set our sights on achieving net zero by 2050. In 2021, we set an ambitious emissions reduction target of -46% by 2030 (Scopes 1 & 2) validated by the Science Based Target Initiative in line with the Paris Agreement.

For change to really take hold, it needs to become real and achievable across every part of the business - from front-line to our Corporate offices. This is why our Chief Sustainability Officer reports directly to the CEO and, in 2022, 97% of colleagues across the world followed a 6+-hour School for Change online training, ensuring they are fully aware of the challenges and possible solutions to the industry's environmental and social impact.

Adopting sustainable practices is basically just the right thing to do. However, it is also an opportunity for our industry to become more resilient. If we don't monitor, control and improve performance, we risk the foundation of the business: inaction could potentially cost USD2-4 trillion globally in lost revenue over the coming decades. Indeed, sustainability issues also impact our relationship with a growing number of stakeholders, from guests to B2B partners. According to a recent Booking.com study, 75% of travelers factor sustainability into their accommodation choices. Similarly, 70% of Accor's global strategic accounts have committed to Science Based Target sustainable criteria, and more and more B2B clients are prioritizing sustainability when they ask for proposals.

As an industry, tourism and hospitality takes its toll on the environment: total greenhouse gas emissions stood at approximately 5.2 giga tons per year in 2019 and may rise by as much as 20% by the end of the decade. This represents a substantial 9-12% of total global emissions.

At Accor Tech , we work on two distinct areas of environmental impact. Firstly, the direct carbon footprint of information systems is estimated at about 2%, and **Green IT initiatives** address this immediate area of concern. These emissions lie directly within our control as a tech team. We also work to create innovative **Tech for Green** solutions that help reduce the remaining 98% of emissions across the business, especially those within Operations.

In 2023, we have three specific areas of focus: the continuing Move to Cloud, the implementation of a new sustainability reporting tool, and our leadership on innovative energy reduction technologies in hotels.

Move to Cloud is central to the Green IT strategy. One of its benefits is a substantial reduction in the climate cost of resources. The potential to share storage capacity and optimize energy usage makes a significant impact on emissions.

We estimate a reduction of 80% on the carbon footprint of servers, just by taking them off premises. For tech teams, there are many advantages to Cloud technology, but the positive impact on the carbon footprint confirms this as **a happy win-win for tech, the environment and the business.**

It is a guiding principle of Strategy & Performance that 'what gets measured gets done' and accurately **measuring emissions is an area where technology can make a significant contribution to achieving Accor emissions targets**.

By the end of 2022, over 70% of our hotels had implemented a new sustainability reporting tool. Water and energy use can all be tracked using supplier invoices, effectively using technology to make day-to-day emissions measurement much easier. Hotels now know what energy they use, can set realistic goals and see the impact of changes they make.

So, as a hotelier, once a server has moved to Cloud and the hotel has implemented a new sustainability reporting tool, what additional solutions can tech offer?

With a significant proportion of emissions coming from hotel Operations – especially from guest rooms – tech and the IoT have a solution: **smart thermostats**. These automatically sense room occupancy and atmospheric conditions to calibrate heating and air-conditioning. Pilots indicate a 35%+ reduction in energy use. This is a positive outcome for tech and the climate, while also reducing energy consumption and the resulting costs for our hotel owners.

One of the additional challenges faced by any industry is how to embed sustainability into every facet of project planning and implementation. Our approach has been to establish sustainability as an Accor Tech OKR (Objective and Key Result), ensuring it remains central to every decision made.

This year, we are adding a tech component to Accor's very successful School for Change, raising awareness of the climate cost of tech in all our hotels and offices and sharing how every employee can contribute to lessening its impact.

Sustainability is, by definition, a work in progress. **Despite the global and industry challenges ahead**, I am truly optimistic. Techies are, by nature, problem solvers and many tech people and scientists are working hard to find solutions to address sustainability challenges. At my own level, I am committed to working across the industry, with my peers, to find and share solutions, using tech as a powerful enabler.

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Christine Choquel — Deputy Chief Technology Officer - Accor
Christine Choquel has held the position of Accor Deputy Chief Technology Officer since January 2022. She shares oversight of technology services for Accor's global hospitality businesses with the CTO. Her role is focussed on technology governance and strategy.

Accor — group.accor.com/en
Accor is a world leading hospitality group offering experiences across more than 110 countries in 5 400 properties, 10 000 food & beverage venues, wellness facilities or flexible workspaces. The Group has one of the industry's most diverse hospitality ecosystems, encompassing more than 40 hotel brands from luxury to economy, as well as Lifestyle with Ennismore. Accor is committed to taking positive action in terms of business ethics & integrity, responsible tourism, sustainable development, community outreach, and diversity & inclusion. Founded in 1967, Accor SA is headquartered in France and publicly listed on Euronext Paris (ISIN code: FR0000120404) and on the OTC Market (Ticker: ACCYY) in the United States.

Giving legacy systems a new life with two-way middleware new tech integrations

Jan Jaap van Roon
CEO at IreckonU

Synopsis
Integrating new technology into legacy systems is a challenge in the hospitality industry. Middleware solutions offer opportunities to revitalize these systems and enable seamless customer experiences by bridging old and new systems. Real-time data access and integration of operational data using AI and machine learning enhance operational efficiency and drive loyalty. Cloud-managed middleware is the key to revamping legacy systems and placing customer experience at the forefront.

PROBLEM/CHALLENGE

In the hospitality industry, we must constantly add new layers of functionality to our existing systems to keep up with technological development and market trends. Integrating new tech in legacy systems is a particular challenge where those legacy systems were not built with multiple integrations in mind. Legacy systems are a huge investment and when integrating new tech, we have to protect that investment in a stable environment while adding new technology, sometimes even experimenting, to leverage that investment and increase ROI by creating new opportunities. To ignore the challenges is not an option – no integration means no future and the future is offering seamless experiences to your customers.

SOLUTION

Where there are challenges, there are also opportunities so what I would like to do is shift the conversation away from simply effective, low-risk, low-cost integration to giving legacy systems a new life by employing middleware solutions that enable two-way communications among all systems, old and new. This achieves the optimal result by creating a single source of truth and Golden Profiles that normalise and clean data that then then become what I call 'actionable'. If you really want to benefit from integrating new tech in legacy systems, you need two-way synchronization with good data, and this is done with middleware that has the capability to add new flows that previously did not exist.

THREE SCENARIO

The trend of adding Extract, Transform, and Load (ETL) data ingestion systems. ETL solutions are low code, no code solutions to manage an integration process that combines data from multiple sources into a single data store that is loaded into a data warehouse.On the surface, these data pipelines seem like a good solution to systems integration, but they are not that great a near-real time or on-demand data access which is crucial to Multiple booking-engine integrations for instance.

They also don't scale very well and when the data transformation phase gets heavy this limitation hinders time-to-insight, so it doesn't facilitate the sort of seamless experiences customers expect at check-in check-out.

To make advances in operational excellence it is necessary to integrate operational data (normally legacy systems data such as PMS, CRM, CRS, and POS) but transforming that data into activation channels (such as your website, loyalty programs, email marketing, and social media) in such a way as to not only have your Golden Profile but to also have that ability to add new flows. This becomes interesting when systems have the capability to apply Machine Learning and AI to detect problems and opportunities so hoteliers can be proactive with strategies and those new flows can be automated.

Ultimately, what we want is to enable seamless experiences with middleware managed on the cloud that has the capacity to handle and manage the normalization and cleaning of big data in real-time to facilitate delivering those seamless experiences that cross the bridge between the digital and physical worlds to create the 'wow' experience that will exceed expectations. For example: Your guest checks in seamlessly, all systems go – he or she uses the kiosk, gets an electronic key, this is all becoming standard. Your legacy system (PMS for instance) is integrated via robust middleware, so their loyalty program is updated they get an upgrade at a discount because of their status -so far so good. When they open the door to their room the TV plays happy birthday because it is indeed their birthday but only once, so it's a pleasant surprise and not an annoyance. The TV didn't know it was their birthday, but the legacy system did, the new check-in tech of getting their electronic key on their phone (uniquely theirs), was a bridge, and opening the door was the action that triggers the TV to play the tune and we have a 'wow' experience that has delighted your guest and increases the likelihood of repeat business and cultivates loyalty.

CONCLUSIONS

Seamless experiences and new flows are the future. For the most part, the hospitality industry is behind but the opportunities are there we just need to think about system integrations in a new frame, with the guest experience at the center of actionable data ecosystems. Looking at the integration of new tech in legacy systems as an opportunity to give those systems a new life.

■

Jan Jaap van Roon — CEO at IreckonU
With his vision that IT should be the enabler and not the bottleneck, Jan Jaap van Roon started Ireckonu in 2014 to create quality and innovative software. For nearly ten years, Ireckonu has been a leader in cloud-based software for the hospitality industry and as CEO Jan Jaap has provided the leadership and vision to innovate the guest experience and serves some of the industries most prestigious portfolios. He lives in Amsterdam where Ireckonu is headquartered and when not busy with work he races cars.

Ireckonu — ireckonu.com
Founded in 2014, Ireckonu is a Dutch company committed to empowering the hospitality industry by putting guests at the center of new digital foundations. With over 60 employees globally, the company provides SaaS products and services to some of the world's leading hotel brands.

Transforming guest experiences: the role of digital identity in hospitality

Guest Journey

Pedro Torres

Founder and CEO, Youverse

Synopsis
The hospitality industry is evolving with the adoption of digital identity management systems. Traditional identity verification methods, often time-consuming and insecure, are giving way to more efficient and secure digital identity verification. By implementing decentralized systems and biometric face authentication, hotels can improve the guest experience through expedited check-in processes, personalized services, and enhanced privacy. However, challenges such as data protection compliance, data decentralization, and system integration must be addressed. This digital transformation presents significant advantages for both hoteliers and guests, streamlining processes, and bolstering data security in the digital age.

Identity in Hospitality is not what it used to be. For some people, identity is simply a passport, maybe a driver's license. For others, identity can also include a loyalty card or an access card. To many, it is about a username and password to access some website or even an email address. The truth is: identity is all of that. Those are simply examples of particular facets of our identity in Hospitality.

Managing guest identity presents a significant burden for hoteliers in the hospitality industry. Firstly, hoteliers must establish verification processes and systems to confirm the identity of guests, which can involve requesting identification documents, such as passports or driver's licenses, and cross-referencing them with reservation details. Secondly, guest verification adds complexity and friction to the check-in process, leading to longer waiting times, guest dissatisfaction and ultimately lower revenue per available room. We all know staff should focus on high-value human-touch guest interactions that add to the hotel top line instead of typing numbers behind a desk. In a digital world, why would staff even need a desk anyway?

One of the headaches in managing identity in hospitality, is all the inaccurate data floating in hotel databases that were simply mistyped and which generate overhead and can make properties non-compliant with national laws. But the biggest headache is that properties store too much personal information, and they will be liable for any breaches. Remember all those hundreds of thousands of passport scans stored somewhere in your back end?

So what is the future of identity in hospitality? One thing is certain: the future of identity in hospitality is digital and hoteliers need to automate its verification and delivery. Another is that privacy will be at the core of how they should go about it. But how exactly can such transformation take place in the coming couple of years and what factors should hoteliers take into account? This is what this article is about.

AUTOMATED DIGITAL IDENTITY VERIFICATION
Striking a perfect balance between rigorous verification and a smooth guest experience can be challenging. Automated digital identity verification offers an answer for hoteliers to mitigate the burden of guest verification, cut down on operational costs, and improve the whole guest experience. Essentially, it enables remote check-in: guests can simply take a picture of their ID and a selfie to validate their identity and then all guest information can be accurately received by the

property management system as usual. No manual intervention, everything flows smoothly. Such approach is already mainstream in the security-driven compliance-obsessed banking industry all around the globe, so why wouldn't it be suitable for hotels?

Check-in is the first contact hotels have with a guest. Moments like these can make or break their experience. Sadly, waiting at the front desk and filling out paperwork are common friction points. The last thing anyone wants after a long trip is to arrive at the hotel, tired from traveling, and have to wait until their identity is verified and their data is entered into the system. Digital identity can solve many of the challenges that the hospitality industry currently faces, including friction on the guest experience and operational inefficiencies.

PRIVACY, PRIVACY, PRIVACY
It is no secret that the hospitality industry faces numerous challenges, and many of these challenges are related to guest identity. Data privacy concerns are at an all-time high, guests have become very wary of sharing their personal information. It is not acceptable anymore to ask for a full passport scan that is stored outside the guest's control, fully ignoring all privacy principles just because it is consented by the guest. It's also a major liability for hotels. But how exactly can hotels deal with this?

An emerging concept -- decentralized digital identity -- brings improved privacy for guests and streamlined processes that can help hoteliers to reduce operational costs. With digital identity, staff doesn't need to spend time getting guest information; they can then focus on creating more personalized experiences. And with its decentralized nature, privacy issues get solved by design.

DECENTRALIZED DIGITAL IDENTITY: THE WAY PRIVACY SHOULD HAVE BEEN SINCE DAY 1
So what exactly is decentralized digital identity? To put it simply, it's a way to manage identity data that doesn't store personal data in a centralized database and that is fully controlled by the user. Let's contrast this with a centralized identity system, where our identities are usually managed and stored by a single entity, such as the government or some private company. Personal data is out of individuals' hands and managed entirely by entities. The burden of data management, protection, and security falls on organizations. Plus, identity could be compromised if the central entity is hacked, or the data isn't properly protected.

In contrast, a decentralized system eliminates the need for a central authority, reducing the risk of hacks or data breaches. In such systems, customers have complete control over who has access to their identity data and for how long, via verifiable credentials. They can choose to share just the necessary data, such as name or nationality, instead of sharing the full identity information or scans of passports, thus providing an additional layer of privacy.

COMBINING DECENTRALIZED DIGITAL IDENTITY WITH FACE BIOMETRICS
Pairing decentralized digital identity with biometric face authentication in the hospitality industry has the potential to revolutionize the guest experience.

Face authentication offers a convenient and secure way of verifying identity, eliminating the need for physical documents or identification cards. By capturing and analyzing facial biometrics, guests can prove their identity from anywhere, at any time, using only their smartphones — during the check-in process or whenever identification is required.

When these two technologies are combined in the hospitality industry, numerous benefits emerge. Firstly, the check-in process can be expedited and made more efficient. Guests no longer need to fill out forms or present physical identification documents. They'll present their ID card once — and then a verifiable credential is created; one they can use every time they stay at your hotel. This streamlined process saves time for both guests and hotel staff, reducing wait times and improving the overall guest experience.

Additionally, the combination of these technologies enables hotels to offer personalized and tailored services to their guests. Once a guest's decentralized digital identity is verified, hotel staff can access relevant information about their preferences, previous stays, and special requests. This allows for a more personalized check-in experience, where guests can be greeted by name, offered their preferred room amenities, or presented with personalized recommendations and offers based on their past preferences.

By integrating face biometrics with decentralized digital identity, hoteliers can provide guests with full control over their identities and better customer service at the same time.

CHALLENGES AND BENEFITS OF IMPLEMENTATION
We have seen how digital identity can transform the guest experience in the hospitality industry. However, there are several challenges in implementing digital identity solutions. There are data privacy concerns that must be addressed to ensure that guests' personal information is protected.

As hotels embrace digital identity solutions to enhance guest experiences and drive revenue, it is crucial to prioritize and safeguard the privacy of guest data. Respecting data privacy not only builds trust with guests but also ensures compliance with data protection regulations.

Here are key considerations for hotels when creating and managing guest digital identities while maintaining data privacy:

- Compliance with data protection regulations: Hotels must comply with applicable data protection regulations, such as the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) in the European Union or the California Consumer Privacy Act (CCPA) in the United States. This includes obtaining necessary consent, providing access to guest data upon request, and promptly addressing data breach incidents.

- Decentralization of data: Instead of storing all guest personal identifiable information in a centralized database, the best identity and biometric solutions use decentralized technologies, reducing the risk of a single point of failure and unauthorized access. Decentralization also gives guests greater control over their data by enabling them to manage their own digital identities and selectively share information with trusted entities.

- Integration: A face authentication or identity management solution that seamlessly integrates with any hotel apps and Property Management Systems (PMS) holds significant importance in the hospitality industry, ensuring compatibility and interoperability, reliable performance in high-demand times, and handle a large amount of guest data and transactions without compromising system performance.

CONCLUSION
Digital identity based on biometrics is a game-changer for the hospitality industry. Its ability to improve guest experience, streamline processes, and reduce costs cannot be understated. With use cases such as self-check-in, improved loyalty programs, and faster payment methods, it presents benefits for both hoteliers and guests.

By embracing decentralized digital identity and pairing it with biometric face authentication, hotels allow guests to really enjoy their stay. Not only does it align with the evolving expectations of guests in the digital era, but it also positions hotels for long-term success, ensuring unprecedented levels of information security and data privacy.

Pedro Torres — Founder and CEO, Youverse
With many years of experience in technology, innovation and product design, from large telco companies to medium- size companies and start-ups, and a strong research background, Pedro Torres has worked for the last seven years in global executive positions in customer experiences based on biometrics to enable immersive and seamless journeys. A strong believer in decentralised self-sovereign approaches to privacy, Pedro has been leading efforts to provide the necessary protection and control to users as they authenticate for convenience with their face in multiple services such as proving identity to create a bank account, automatically checking-in to hotels, picking up car rentals or pay for goods and use loyalty in a fully contactless on-the-move fashion. Pedro has recently co-founded Youverse to disrupt the world of private authentication.

Youverse — youverse.id/use-cases/hospitality
We dreamt about opening a bank account just by saying it out loud; or never having to remember one single password or carry any cards. But we wanted something special, we wanted users to authenticate without having to disclose their biometrics to anyone. So, we began building the future together as a team. In the Youverse vision of the world, every interaction requiring authentication should be possible with a simple look. Right now, there is no offer in the market providing ubiquitous private handsfree authentication.

Harnessing a holistic commercial strategy to break the 'silo mentality'

Distribution & Revenue

Gino Engels
Chief Customer Officer, OTA Insight

Synopsis

As the COVID-19 pandemic brings about unprecedented disruption, the hotel industry must pivot and adapt by embracing innovation and developing a holistic commercial strategy. Traditional siloed operations should give way to a unified approach, integrating sales, marketing, revenue management, and distribution teams under one strategic umbrella. Leveraging technology and data analytics, hotels can gain actionable insights, forecast demand, devise targeted marketing campaigns, and set effective pricing strategies. With the agility to quickly adapt, hotel operators can seize growth opportunities, improve operational efficiency, and foster collaboration, ultimately leading to sustainable profitability in a dynamic market environment.

Periods of disruption often serve as catalysts for innovation, and the hotel industry is currently experiencing a transformative phase due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. Formerly successful strategies have quickly become outdated as consumer behavior, competition, and forecasting methods have evolved.

This article explores the importance of recognizing and seizing new growth opportunities by adopting a holistic commercial strategy in the hotel industry. By breaking down departmental silos and leveraging technology solutions, hotels can enhance operational efficiency, foster collaboration, and achieve sustainable profitability.

THE SHIFT FROM TRADITIONAL APPROACHES

The pre-COVID business landscape no longer accommodates the hotel industry's conventional practices. To thrive in this new and dynamic environment, hotel commercial teams must rapidly identify emerging opportunities.

Amidst the crisis, investment in innovation may have taken a back seat as short-term issues demanded attention.But, it is crucial not to overlook the potential for growth through innovation. By prioritizing innovative solutions, hotels can differentiate themselves from competitors, gain actionable insights, and develop a unified commercial strategy.

BREAKING DOWN SILOS: A PARADIGM SHIFT

In the past, hotel commercial teams have predominantly functioned with a "silo mentality." Individual departments worked independently, stunting collaboration and blocking unified organizational goals.

This disjointed approach not only diminishes efficiency but also prevents hotel commercial teams from seizing opportunities promptly. Overcoming this mentality calls for leadership that cultivates a shared vision and encourages teams to focus on profitability. A comprehensive commercial strategy becomes essential to merge sales, marketing, revenue management, and distribution teams.

DEFINING THE HOLISTIC COMMERCIAL STRATEGY

A holistic commercial strategy unifies revenue-generating teams within a hotel, including sales, marketing, revenue management, and distribution.

Typically overseen by a Chief Commercial Officer or Director, this strategy needs executive approval to challenge industry standards. By employing data-driven decision-making and adjusting to a rapidly evolving market, hotels can calibrate their strategies to current circumstances, streamline efficiency, and bolster profitability.

EMBRACING CHANGE FOR GREATER EFFICIENCY

The pursuit of operational efficiency and data-driven strategies should not be seen as a seismic transformation but rather as an evolution that has been accelerated by the pandemic.

Many leading industry players have already embraced these changes, collaborating closely with revenue management, distribution, and digital marketing teams to enhance profitability.

While smaller hotel operators may face unique challenges, they possess the agility to quickly adapt without bureaucratic obstacles.

EMBRACING TECHNOLOGY: THE KEY TO SUCCESS

To effectively implement a unified commercial strategy, hotels need technology solutions that provide actionable insights throughout the commercial cycle.

Utilizing real-time data equips teams to devise common strategies and track progress, guaranteeing steady success. Effective demand forecasting, in combination with targeted marketing initiatives and dynamic pricing, form the backbone of the commercial cycle.

FORECASTING DEMAND IN DYNAMIC MARKETS

Embracing new market intelligence, powered by forward looking data is the first step to breaking the silo effect at your hotel and implementing a holistic commercial strategy.

Historical data has taken a backseat and it is now mission-critical to utilise technology capable of unveiling new and evolving patterns of customer behavior.

These technologies empower commercial teams to identify early demand signals and swiftly convert potential guests from passive observers to active bookers. Revealing unconstrained demand and providing a competitive edge.

In a market characterized by rapid fluctuations, predictive market intelligence offers a lifeline. It enables hoteliers to generate accurate forecasts, facilitating informed revenue decisions based on real-time, forward-looking demand projections.

By effectively predicting demand levels through early demand signals, hoteliers can seize short, mid, and long-term revenue opportunities, outpacing competitors with well-calibrated pricing, discounting, and promotional strategies.

IDENTIFYING AND CAPTURING DEMAND WITH DATA-DRIVEN SALES AND MARKETING STRATEGIES

Market intelligence can provide real-time insights into the origin and development of market demand. This granular information encompasses sub-location/airport of origin, geo-search, stay patterns, and various accommodation types, including alternative rentals.

Armed with data on booking windows, stay patterns, and demand origin, hoteliers can craft targeted marketing campaigns that resonate with guests still in the inspiration phase of their customer journey.

By personalizing digital advertising efforts and directing them to areas with proven demand, hotels can achieve improved return on investment (ROI) and increased revenue. Such data-driven marketing approaches enable budget optimization, allocating resources to high-demand markets and segments while minimizing investment in those unlikely to yield desired ROI.

CAPTURING DEMAND WITH AN EFFECTIVE PRICING AND PROMOTIONAL STRATEGY

Setting room prices appropriately serves as the cornerstone of revenue management.

However, crafting an effective pricing strategy amidst a myriad of factors can be daunting. Real-time, actionable data is the key to gaining control and making confident decisions. While demand is subject to frequent changes due to events, timing, trends, and competition, the difficulty lies in balancing supply and demand.

To overcome these complexities, automated rate intelligence is essential. Leveraging real-time rate and market data, revenue managers can swiftly analyze competitors' rates and adjust their own, enhancing efficiency and freeing up time for crucial tasks.

It also empowers all commercial departments, providing a bird's-eye view of the rate environment, thereby improving business performance and informing marketing campaigns.

FINAL SAY

Now is the perfect time to develop a holistic commercial mindset and strategy, driven by real-time historical, current and future-looking data, which bridges the gaps between your departmental silos.

By realigning your commercial 'North Star' you can effectively pivot to a more efficient way of working and get the best out of your revenue generating teams - establishing yourself as a market leader in 2023.

Gino Engels — Chief Customer Officer, OTA Insight
Gino Engels is the Co-founder and Chief Customer Officer of OTA Insight. Since 2012, the company has grown from a small disrupter challenging an established marketplace, to a business supporting over 60,000 hotels and accommodation providers in 185 countries.

OTA Insight — otainsight.com
OTA Insight empowers hoteliers to deliver smarter revenue, distribution and marketing outcomes through its market-leading commercial platform. With live updates, 24/6 support, and highly intuitive and customizable dashboards, OTA Insight integrates with industry tools including hotel property management systems, leading RMS solutions and data benchmarking providers.

HYB

iPhone? My Dad Used to Have One! Welcome to the Post-Screen Era

Innovation

Simone Puorto
Founder | CEO | Futurist

Synopsis
In "Why the Metaverse won't be like Snow Crash," the author explores the cultural and linguistic influence on the perception of technological innovations, using Apple's Vision Pro as an example. The piece argues that societal reactions to technology are heavily influenced by the language used to describe it. By renaming the term "metaverse" to "spatial computing," Apple aims to reshape the narrative around immersive digital experiences, distancing from dystopian connotations and proposing a new, neutral, and optimistic perception. The author examines both the merits and potential downsides of the Vision Pro, highlighting its superior performance, user-friendly design, and potential to redefine the human-computer interface, yet expressing concerns about its size, limited battery life, and high price tag. The piece concludes with a prediction of Vision Pro being a stepping stone towards a future where XR devices become an integral part of our everyday lives, reshaping our interaction with technology.

The words we choose to describe the world around us shape our perception of reality, influencing how we embrace or reject ideas, beliefs and -of course- innovations. In this context, Apple's **Vision Pro** offers a refreshing (and long-due, if you want my personal opinion) departure from the dystopian overtones associated with the term *"metaverse."*

If you're familiar with the latter, you may also know that it originated from a sci-fi novel, evoking connotations of an oppressive and surveilled society, akin to Orwell's 1984. Ludwig Wittgenstein, one of the most influential philosophers of all times, offers an insightful perspective on language, viewing it as a means of creating a representation of reality. He contends that most problems, prejudices and biases often arise from communication misunderstandings from a flawed or ambiguous representation of reality.

Linguist Edward Sapir supports this thesis, asserting that **humans are not simply passive observers of the objective world**. Instead, they are profoundly influenced by the language that serves as the medium of expression for our society. In a nutshell: **if we hate the Metaverse so much, it may be due to its linguistic connotations rather than its technological ones.**

Here is where Apple's Vision Pro boldly shifts the narrative from a Big-Brothery-*metaverse* to the more encompassing, neutral, and forward-looking **"spatial computing."** Rather than succumbing to Meta's juvenile narrative (the central character of Snow Crash is the quintessential cyberpunk cliché: a skateboarder-hacker-drug-pushing-pizza-delivery boy) and by creating a new term, Apple does what they do best, create a new market with new definitions, redefining our perception of immersive digital experiences.

Well - semantically, at least.

WHY THE METAVERSE WON'T BE LIKE SNOW CRASH
Ridley Scott's iconic *"1984"* Super Bowl commercial concluded with a scrolling black text that declared: *"On January 24th, Apple Computer will introduce Macintosh. And you'll see why 1984 won't be like 1984."* Fast-forward to today and we can rephrase that to: **"On June 5th, Apple Computer will introduce Vision Pro. And you'll see why the Metaverse won't**

be like Snow Crash." 1984 saw IBM portrayed as the Orwellian company in Apple's narrative, while in 2023, **Meta** holds the villain mantle (even though they are not even half the size of Apple). As the great Mark Twain once observed, *"History never repeats itself, but it does often rhyme."*

Once again, Apple finds itself at the forefront of technological innovation, determined to shape a future that redefines not only extended reality, but -*de facto*- the human-to-computer interface, transcending the cheesy pitfalls of a pulp-magazine-kind-of-narrative. Spatial computing is not limited to changing how we interact with videogames and social networks, but also aims to transform our perception of the world around us. This device may not merely be a headset, but rather a paradigm shift in how we perceive and engage with reality.

In an illuminating conversation I had with a friend a few days ago, he made an argument that the term *"smartphone"* has become obsolete. According to him, the functionalities and uses of modern devices extend so far beyond mere phone calls to the point that using the word "phone" in the name is a *reductio ad absurdum*. When we reflect on our own phone usage statistics, we realize that making or receiving calls constitutes a very small minority of our overall interaction with these devices.

I think that this realization lays the groundwork for understanding the profound significance of Apple Vision Pro—a leap forward into a future where spatial computing reshapes our perception of technology. Think of when the first iPhone was introduced, and we had no idea that we would end up spending more time watching mukbang videos (if you don't know what I'm talking about, don't Google it...) on TikTok than sending 160-character SMS messages to our friends.

Similarly, we can only perceive a fraction of the possible future applications, use cases, and positioning pivots that Vision Pro will take. And this is another IDK moment for me: the (obvious) lack of a killer app during the Vision Pro presentation may not be such a bad thing after all, let's not forget that this was a developer conference.

THE YEAHS:
- One of the remarkable aspects of the Vision Pro is its superior performance. Users that tried the device report close-to-zero-latency, with the visuals exhibiting "retina" quality, devoid of visible pixels, creating an immersive experience that doesn't feel like peering into screens but rather interacting with the real world.

- Vision Pro's integrated eye-tracking technology, allowing users to interact with the interface by simply directing their gaze. Interface elements respond to eye movements, enlarging icons and options and even opening apps with a simple finger tap. For marketers, this opens a whole new set of opportunities in terms of data tracking, making it some kind of heatmaps on steroids.

- One of Apple's core strengths lies its commitment to creating user-friendly products. The company has a history of transforming industries by reimagining how we interact with technology, and this focus on ease of use can potentially overcome one of XR technology's primary challenges: complexity.

- Forget about Quest's cheap plastic; being an Apple product, it adheres to their familiar design language: brushed aluminum, shiny glass, and soft fabrics. quite evident that they have out-engineered, out-designed, and outspent every XR headset company around. Vision Pro goes beyond being a mere accessory; it functions as a full-fledged MacBook. It does not just integrate with your laptop or phone but rather it might replace the necessity for such devices entirely.

THE NEAHS:

- Lack of corresponding entry-level equivalent device. Apple has chosen to launch the headset as "pro" device without a corresponding entry-level equivalent. This decision may underscore Apple's commitment to delivering a premium experience and emphasizes the significance of the Vision Pro in shaping the future of technology, but it can be a significant deterrent.

- The size remains a significant barrier to mass adoption. I can live with the 80's-Alberto-Tomba-ski-mask design, don't get me wrong. The hardware itself is undeniably impressive, boasting 24 million pixels across the dual panels, far surpassing most headsets. Additionally, the combination of the R1 chip alongside the M2 chip results in a remarkable system-wide polling rate of 12ms. The real-time 4K passthrough view of the actual world adds to its appeal. However, considering how people were reluctant to be seen wearing Google Glasses back in 2014 (or even RayBan Stories more recently), I have serious doubts about the widespread usage of Vision Pro outside, where true XR travel experiences occur. While the price may not deter die-hard Apple fanboys, unless the device is significantly reduced in size (ideally to one-third of its current dimensions), I don't envision it achieving mass adoption.

- The limited on-device battery power of Vision Pro, which lasts for approximately 2 hours, poses a significant challenge. Considering its potential to kill the monitor and smart TV market (which, in my opinion, it undoubtedly will), this becomes a notable drawback. Imagine wanting to rewatch the Lord of the Rings trilogy on Vision Pro—such an immersive experience would require a substantial number of external power banks (or wall outlets) to sustain the device throughout the extended viewing duration.

- The concept of a functional digital avatar created solely from a direct facial scan taken by the device feels a bit too reminiscent of the Black Mirror series, even from my tech-enthusiast perspective.

... AND THE IDK

- Sure, Vision Pro comes with a price tag of 11 Meta Quest II, positioning it as a high-end headset. However, this is in the same price range as HoloLens 2. Moreover, Vision Pro's value might not lie (at least in the immediate future) in mass consumer adoption but rather in its ability to facilitate new use cases and applications, not unlike the iPad Pro, which found its niche among individuals and enterprises.

CONCLUSION

Vision Pro, not unlike the iPhone, can be the device we didn't know we needed, with some claiming it may be the most advanced tech product ever created. This might be an overstatement, but the device will likely serve as a stepping stone toward future XR devices that Apple will continue to refine and develop. The scanning and volumetric capabilities of the Vision Pro, coupled with spatial video and images, can potentially revolutionize entertainment and communication - and, by association, travel. As usual, the device represents Apple's relentless pursuit of excellence in execution rather than invention, building upon existing technologies but refining them to perfection.

This may be an important catalyst for broader adoption and acceptance of augmented reality experiences. Imran Chaudhri, Apple's former Director of Design and co-founder of Hu.Ma.Ne, expresses a different perspective regarding XR devices. According to Chaudhri, all the Quests, HoloLens, and Vision Pros out there simply relocate the screens we already have closer to our eyeballs, representing a shift in proximity but not necessarily in usage. Maybe. One thing is certain: when my three-year-old child is in his teens, he will look at iPhones in the same way I look at rotary dial phones—as outdated relics from a long-forgotten, romantic time.

Simone Puorto — Founder | CEO | Futurist

Simone Puorto is a journalist specializing in tech, keynote speaker, podcaster, consultant, published author of four best sellers on marketing, writer for the main industry blogs, Metaverse Ambassador, and co-organizer of the first-ever travel and hospitality event in the metaverse (#HNmetameetup), crypto evangelist, MBA lecturer for schools such as ESSEC and Les Roches, Advisory Board Member for BWG Strategy, founder of the Travel Singularity consulting firm, CMO for TelltheHotel and E23 Delivery, and active member of the Italian transhumanist association. During his 25-year-career, he was General Manager for a boutique hotel chain and VP of Global Accounts for a French-American web agency. He has advised many hotel groups worldwide, helped to consolidate one of the leading Italian hotel chains, and acted as an advisor for countless startups. He defines himself as a "Renaissance Futurist" and lives and works between Rome and Paris.

Travel Singularity — travelsingularity.com

Travel Singularity is a consultancy firm for hotels and travel technology providers whose vision is to solve the growing need for connecting the dots between digital disruption and existing technology. Founded in 2017 as a partnership of educational consultants, the firm actively supports cooperation between biological and artificial staff and advocates for an open, collaborative, hyper-connected industry where humans can flourish and innovate, free from the repetitive tasks they are now obliged to perform daily. Its founder, Simone Puorto, is a journalist specializing in tech, keynote speaker, podcaster, consultant, published author of four best sellers on marketing, writer for the main industry blogs, Metaverse Ambassador, co-organizer of the first-ever travel and hospitality event in the metaverse (#HNmetameetup), crypto evangelist, MBA lecturer and CMO for TelltheHotel and E23 Delivery. He often refers to himself as a "Renaissance Futurist," supporting post-human, anti-speciesists, and transhumanist values. Over his career, spanning over 20 years, he consulted for hundreds of international hotel groups, travel tech vendors, and startups.

HYB

Future Shifts in Cybersecurity Focus

Data & Security

Lynn Goodendorf
Cybersecurity Advisor and Author

Synopsis
Amid rapid tech advances and the shift to remote work, cybersecurity has become a pressing concern. Recent incidents, such as Toyota's 2023 data leak, highlight the vulnerabilities of cloud-based data storage. Ensuring software security through thorough vetting, transitioning to password-less technologies, and enhancing endpoint security are essential to counteract threats. Specialized training for staff and strengthening network resilience against potential failures are also crucial. As we adapt to this evolving technological landscape, a proactive approach to cybersecurity is indispensable.

We have seen some remarkable and rapid changes in technology architecture and strategies in the past few years. The pandemic accelerated the use of cloud services. And we have seen many hotel jobs move to a remote working arrangement either at home or to support multiple locations. On top of this, travelers are using their mobile devices extensively and expecting high availability and performance in Wifi and Internet connections. At the same time, we are developing innovative new ways to serve our guests using mobile devices connected to cloud platforms that are Internet dependent. Meanwhile, cybercriminals are well organized and moving fast to adapt their attacks to this changing environment. What are the implications for cybersecurity in all of these changes?

First of all, we need to shift our focus to safeguard our Confidential data in cloud-provided services. As an example, there are some lessons to be learned from a serious data leak suffered by Toyota reported initially on May 12, 2023. Customer data of 2.15 Million people in Japan was leaked from cloud-connected platforms for over 10 years. The leak was due to human error in a misconfiguration of the database settings from "private" to "public". The cloud platforms involved provided customers with in-car entertainment, assistance in the event of car accidents, and the option to sign up for the new AI (Artificial Intelligence) driver assistance. This type of vehicle connectivity and cloud-based data management is considered essential for the future of autonomous driving and other AI features and as such was a strategic priority.

Toyota committed to taking these actions as a result of this distressing data loss: 1) auditing all cloud settings; 2) implementing a system to monitor these cloud settings, and 3) educating employees on data handling rules. In addition to those remediation actions, penetration testing of the cloud platforms is recommended to identify this type of exposed data on the Internet. If it had been done, the exposed data leakage would have been identified quickly.

But this is only one small aspect of cloud security. From a cyber attacker's perspective, *software is the target.* Jason Schmitt, general manager of Synopsys Software Integrity Group, recently said in an interview with CSO Magazine, "The risks include poor software hygiene, security, and reliability, and they arise because companies do not prioritize security when developing, procuring, and managing their business-critical software."

We cannot afford to sign contracts and implement new technologies without thoroughly testing and vetting the security of the software. It is a disgrace to see how known coding errors are repeated over and over again in new software or in new versions or updates of software in reputable and established companies. No matter how buttoned down security is in the cloud infrastructure and network of a system, hackers can go straight to target data through vulnerabilities in the application code.

And then there is our long-standing first line of defense: passwords. In the future environment, we can expect the adoption of password-less authentication technologies and those changes have already begun. On World Password Day, May 5, Google announced that it is moving forward with passkeys that allow a fingerprint ID, facial ID or a PIN on the phone or device you use for authentication. Apple is rolling out this type of technology in iOS16 compatible devices and Microsoft is using it through its Authenticator app.

Stronger and new types of authentication for logins require focus because theft of login credentials is expected to continue as a primary attack method. This is in fact, the root cause of many large-scale data breaches. So it is vital to embrace these new password-less technologies.

Today and going forward, a robust end-point security strategy and defense system is critical.

Many of the breaches suffered in the hospitality industry have been due to the infiltration of malware. And these paths for malware will still be open in endpoint devices. The proven technique and best practice are to deploy application whitelisting to all endpoints including smartphones, laptops, desktops, tablets, and servers. Antivirus is not enough due to the rapid number of zero-day viruses, malware, and the difficulty of keeping all devices patched quickly.

In addition, mobile device management is mandatory. The essential functionality of a mobile device platform includes asset management, the ability to remotely wipe/delete lost or stolen devices, the ability to manage software updates and patches, the ability to monitor security features to ensure they are in place and working, etc.

As another shift in focus, we can expect criminal hackers to continue to exploit human behavior. This element of defense is called the human firewall and without it, all the investment you make in security tools and systems can be bypassed by hackers. Trends are indicating that this type of cyber attack technique will escalate in the coming years. Consider having additional specialized training for finance, human resources, sales, and catering teams, anyone using POS devices, and IT staff.

And finally, we need to strengthen network resilience as we are more and more dependent on cloud-provided services and remote working. The action to take is a review of potential network failures or outages which can reveal failure points and mission-critical applications or systems that need to remain on-premises. Outage points can occur with a router and WiFi equipment or cabling, both interior to a building and exterior cable routes. Electrical power failures and network software misconfigurations or errors are examples of other failure points.

There are ways to mitigate these risks but how long has it been since such a review and risk analysis has been conducted?

We can be encouraged that many of these tools and techniques are already available. We can surely expect them to evolve and develop further but it is really a matter of shifting our focus for the future.

■

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Lynn Goodendorf is a cybersecurity expert whose previous roles include Group Information Security Officer with Mandarin Oriental Hotel Group and Corporate Risk and Chief Privacy Officer with IHG. She currently serves as VP of the Information Systems Security Association's (ISSA) Metro Atlanta chapter.

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Lynn Goodendorf is a cybersecurity expert whose previous roles include Group Information Security Officer with Mandarin Oriental Hotel Group and Corporate Risk and Chief Privacy Officer with IHG. She currently serves as VP of the Information Systems Security Association's (ISSA) Metro Atlanta chapter.

Four Ways To Create a Hyper-Connected Journey for Today's Traveler

Guest Journey

Miguel Flecha
MD and Accenture's travel and hospitality practice lead in Europe

Synopsis
The travel industry is in full swing again on a domestic and international scale, despite ongoing economic volatility. Our recent Consumer Pulse Survey found that eight in ten (78%) of consumers are planning leisure travel in the next year, with half of them planning two or more trips. Additionally, research from the Mastercard Economics Institute reported that global flight bookings were up 31% in March 2023, compared to March 2019.

As the industry focuses on capturing this desire to travel and driving growth through customer acquisition, organizations must focus on something that on the face of it seems simple to do, but is in reality still a challenge for the industry. Travel companies must put the traveler at the front and center, by fusing together the entire journey from end to end and using technology to better connect all touchpoints.

While the industry made great strides during the pandemic in terms of technology investment, the traveler journey is still fragmented, with most companies only fulfilling certain stages, and missing out on the opportunity to add broader value and create greater consumer relevance through personalization.

As we've learned by now, disruption is no longer the exception, but rather the rule, and the pace of change we're continuing to experience calls for a new strategy — one that prioritises continuous reinvention, centered around technology. We call it Total Enterprise Reinvention. Our research shows that 95% of travel companies focus on transforming parts of their business, rather than the whole, and tend to treat transformation as a singular program, rather than an ongoing process.

So, how can travel companies create a more cohesive journey? Let's explore this further.

IMPROVE THE FOUNDATIONS

Advanced technologies including automation, data, and artificial intelligence (AI) have had a major impact on the travel industry and continue to evolve and transform the way travel companies interact with customers, helping them differentiate from the competition and build long-lasting relationships.

Embedding AI into travel companies' business processes at scale can create hyper-personalized experiences, provide real-time assistance, anticipate customers' needs, streamline their operations and reduce costs. Our research found that AI-influenced revenue for travel companies more than doubled between 2018 and 2021 and is projected to triple by 2024. However, only 13% of travel companies surveyed were considered AI "achievers" who are significantly ahead of the rest in using AI to reinvent core parts of the business.

For example, Saudia Airlines recently announced that it is to use artificial intelligence technologies to enhance its digital infrastructure and build more than 260 new digital and electronic services in the next two years. Through this project, Saudia aims to create seamless and curated journeys with hyper-relevant experiences across digital and human-driven interactions.

IT ALL STARTS WITH INSPIRATION

The travel journey begins with inspiration. Travelers go back and forth dreaming, researching, planning, and comparing destinations, carriers, accommodation and activities across different channels for months, making it difficult for travel companies to identify the marketing source for each sale. Inspiration needs to be delivered in an exciting and engaging way, but the current media investment model is requiring travel companies to rethink these, with traditional media being challenged by YouTube, TikTok, Meta, and Netflix.

Radisson Hotel Group is an excellent example here — blending technology and data with creative expertise to develop personalized campaigns across its digital channels. It has created a new integrated AdTech (advertising technology) and MarTech (marketing technology) stack, offering in-depth market analysis and embedding advanced data analysis capabilities to optimize the performance of its paid media campaigns and drive sales across all touch points. Through this project, Radisson aims to improve consumer awareness, increase the effectiveness of its digital marketing programs, drive more traffic to its branded website, and deliver exceptional customer experiences.

ELEVATE THE PURCHASE EXPERIENCE

To appeal to today's traveler, it goes without saying that the online purchase and mobile app experience must be seamless, intuitive, and personalized. Organizations should focus on transforming their direct sales channels, offering a differentiated product and experience that excels that of any third-parties, offering additional value beyond their own products and services to address the entire journey.

IHG Hotels & Resorts recently addressed this customer need, revamping its mobile app with an elevated user experience for travelers and hotel owners across its 18 brands and more than 6,000 hotels globally. The new IHG One Rewards mobile app provides an end-to-end personalized experience for booking, check-in and managing its loyalty program. For example, it features a customized home screen, chat-based digital concierge, and milestone rewards for its customers.

MEET THE DEMANDS OF THE NEW TRAVELER

In a world in which travelers shift their needs and expectations more rapidly than we've seen at any other time in history, travel companies need to be on the side of the new traveler, anticipating and meeting their new demands to engage and build loyalty. It's time to offer more stimulating, valuable, and personalized services and experiences. Think holistically about their end-to-end experiences and break down silos to drive value from multiple angles.

Organizations should create an omnichannel experience with integrated digital servicing and self-service processes through automated technologies, reducing costs, increasing revenue through better sales integration, and uplifting customer satisfaction. This will also reduce the time employees spend on monotonous tasks, empowering them to deliver higher value and more engaging work.

CONCLUSION

It is important to recognize that while the industry was forced to quickly innovate and reinvent during the past few years, that journey doesn't stop here. Firms should take stock of technology investments to date and ensure full ROI is realized. Reinvention is continuous — not finite — and as we face headwinds of economic turbulence and new expectations from the traveler, ongoing innovation through technology can help travel companies adapt to this ever-changing travel landscape and tap into bold opportunities to increase the value of, and for the "new" traveler.

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Solving the trust paradox for travel AI

Generative AI

Fotoulla Damaskos
EVP, Brand Strategy and Innovation, National Research Group (NRG)

Synopsis
The rapid proliferation of conversational AI technology in the travel industry promises a streamlined travel-planning process for consumers. However, despite evident enthusiasm for this innovation, data reveals a paradox of trust: while consumers desire the convenience of AI planning their vacations, they hesitate to entrust it with sensitive personal information. Concerns extend beyond data protection to the accuracy of AI recommendations. As travel brands scramble to capitalize on this technology, they must prioritize "low stakes" use cases to foster trust gradually, ensure robust data safeguards, and avoid premature commercialization that could jeopardize user confidence. The journey toward mainstream AI acceptance in travel planning will require a keen understanding of the evolving cultural context around this technology and adaptability to changing consumer behavior.

As recently as a year ago, the idea that significant numbers of consumers would soon be asking AIs to plan their vacations for them would have seemed laughable; or, at the very least, a sci-fi dream many years, if not decades, ahead of its time.

How quickly things change. Since the public release of ChatGPT in late 2022, and the resultant boom in AI-powered applications, the travel industry has been playing catch-up—trying to develop tools and services to take advantage of the obvious consumer interest in the technology.

A National Research Group (NRG) study in April found that 61% of US travelers were interested in the idea of using conversational AI to help plan an upcoming trip. Since then, major industry players like Expedia and AirBnB have announced plans to add AI functionality to their apps and web services; hotel chains like Hilton have begun to roll out in-room AI assistants; and a slew of popular travel influencers have started extolling the virtues of AI-powered travel planning to their legions of loyal followers.

Q Would you be willing to use an AI like ChatGPT to help plan your travel in the future?

No—definitely not: 12%
No—probably not: 27%
Yes—definitely: 17%
Yes—probably: 44%
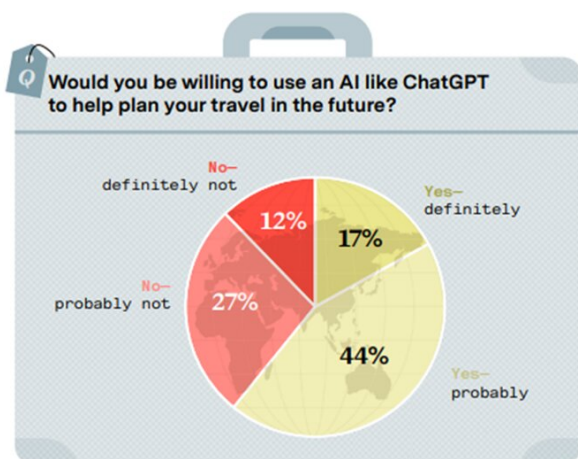
But amidst this breathless hype, it's worth pausing to consider some of the potential pitfalls that lie ahead. Consumers' experiences with conversational AI over the coming months will, inevitably, play a major role in shaping the way they feel about this technology—and in determining whether or not they're willing to make it a core part of their travel-planning arsenal.

So, the onus is on travel brands and tech companies to get ahead of these potential pain points that may stand in the way of this technology successfully making the leap from early adopters to a mainstream audience.

THE PARADOX OF AI TRUST
A central part of the appeal of AI, from a consumer perspective, is the possibilities it offers for lessening the emotional and mental drain that so often comes along with organizing a trip. In theory, a virtual travel assistant could be used to book hotels, manage a budget, find deals on flights, make packing lists, and organize visas. It could, in other words, take on all the boring admin tasks that go into planning a vacation—freeing people up to devote their energy to more exciting activities like researching the local area or choosing which attractions they want to add to their itinerary.

And therein lies the rub. For an AI assistant to successfully complete these sorts of tasks, it would need access to a wide range of potentially sensitive customer information. But unfortunately, most consumers say they're not yet comfortable with the idea of handing that kind of information over to an AI. Fewer than a quarter of travelers, for example, say that they'd be willing to let an AI have access to their visas, passports, or other travel documents. And even fewer say they'd consider sharing information about their children and their needs when traveling with an AI.

This, in essence, is the core paradox of AI for the travel industry. On the one hand, consumers say they're excited about using the technology to take the hassle out of planning their vacations. But, at the same time, they're unwilling to invest it with the level of trust that would be necessary to do that job in a meaningful way.

The problem becomes even more complex when we consider the fact that this question of data trust—"Can I trust that you're going to adequately protect and not misuse my personal information?"—is only one half of the equation. There's also the question of *recommendation trust* that needs to be considered: "Can I trust that the information the AI provides me with is both accurate and reflective of my specific wants, needs, and preferences?"

This latter problem may be an even thornier one to solve. A vacation often represents the culmination of months, if not years, of saving up and planning, so consumers inevitably feel a strong sense of pressure to make sure the quality of the trip justifies the time and money expended on it. In that context, a single mistake by an AI could have enormous emotional ramifications–and could turn people off from the technology for a lifetime.

DESIGNING FOR THE LONG-HAUL
So, what does this all mean for the travel brands currently racing to bring their AI-powered travel solutions to the market?

For one thing, they will need to make some canny decisions about which types of use cases to prioritize. Brands need to be prepared to take their customers on a long-term journey when it comes to building trust in this technology

— and that means encouraging them to play around with conversational AIs in "low stakes" situations first, before asking them to share sensitive personal data with those AIs or make major travel decisions based on their recommendations.

Moreover, brands will need to ensure that they have the necessary safeguards in place to reassure users that their data will be treated with the level of respect it deserves. In practice, that will mean resisting the temptation to move too quickly when it comes to commercializing this technology. If, for example, consumers start seeing targeted ads clearly based on information they've shared with an AI travel assistant, that could sour them on the technology before it has a chance to fully demonstrate its value-add.

The good news, however, is that none of these problems are insurmountable. In fact, early data suggests that the more time consumers spend playing around with platforms like ChatGPT, the more trust they're willing to place in conversational AIs. So it's possible that some of these challenges will naturally start to resolve themselves as this technology becomes more deeply integrated into other aspects of consumers' daily lives.

Nonetheless, it's crucial that travel brands investing in this space recognize the reality of the consumer landscape as it is today—and that they temper their expectations for what the average traveler is willing to use AI for. You can build the shiniest, most powerful AI tools imaginable; but that's only half the battle. Finding an audience for them is going to require a deep understanding of the evolving cultural context around this nascent technology, and a finger on the pulse of changing behavioral norms.

■

Fotoulla Damaskos — EVP, Brand Strategy and Innovation, National Research Group (NRG)
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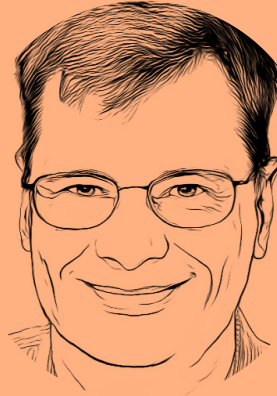
Today's Evolving Cloud Infrastructure in Hospitality

Distribution & Revenue

Klaus Kohlmayr
Chief Evangelist and Development Officer, IDeaS

Synopsis

In this article, IDeaS' Klaus Kohlmayer delves into the opportunities and challenges associated with the adoption of cloud technology and Revenue Management Systems (RMS) in the hospitality industry. The article highlights how industry-specific legacy systems, data security concerns, and unique operational and regulatory requirements have contributed to a slower pace of cloud migration. Despite this, the benefits of scalability, reduced maintenance costs, and real-time data accessibility are driving more hotels to transition. The volume of data being processed by RMS providers has doubled since 2018, necessitating robust infrastructure and enabling cost-effective implementation. Future trends suggest further advancements in cloud infrastructure and data integration, potentially making cloud data centers accessible from any location, reducing costs, increasing availability, and decreasing latency. The future of the hospitality industry lies in leveraging the voluminous data collected for informed decision-making and automation.

What if you could open your cell phone and access notifications to understand what has happened in your market immediately?

What if you didn't have to do anything? What if the system did all the work for you?

Now, imagine if you could go online and purchase a revenue management system (RMS) for your small or independent hotel, download it, and begin implementing it immediately.

Or what if your RMS was available from anywhere, via your phone or smartwatch? No, really. Visualize that you are on vacation, and your owner/GM calls to ask you what's going on at the hotel you manage. With a quick glance at your phone, you provide that answer without rushing to get to a computer.

These ponderings may seem futuristic, but what if the future is now?

But why now? What has changed to enable advancements such as these? To better understand these transitions, we need to look at the challenges.

WHY HAS IT TAKEN SO LONG TO MOVE THE HOTEL TECH STACK TO THE CLOUD?

The connectivity of today's world relies upon the now-ubiquitous data centers scattered around the world. While most business-critical software exists in the cloud today, much of the hospitality stack has been hosted in private data centers. This has made migrating the hospitality stack to large data centers such as Amazon (AWS) or Google more complex, contributing to the time it has taken for widespread adoption.

The hospitality industry has relied on legacy systems developed before cloud technology became prevalent. These systems were designed for on-premises deployments and typically required complex integrations between various hardware and software components. Migrating these systems to the cloud required significant effort, including rewriting, or refactoring the software code, adapting integrations, and ensuring data compatibility.

From a data security and privacy perspective, the hospitality industry handles sensitive customer data, including personally identifiable information (PII) and payment card details. Cloud adoption requires thoroughly evaluating security measures and compliance requirements to ensure data protection and regulatory compliance.

While cloud-based solutions offer long-term benefits such as scalability, latency, and reduced maintenance costs, some hoteliers have been hesitant to invest in initial migration efforts due to concerns about return on investment (ROI) and the potential disruption to existing operations.

The hospitality industry has unique operational and regulatory requirements that must be considered during cloud migration. This includes property management, point-of-sale, and revenue management systems (RMS), third-party vendor integration, and industry standards compliance. Ensuring that cloud-based solutions meet these needs has taken time and effort.

THE RISE AND DEMAND FOR REVENUE MANAGEMENT IN THE CLOUD

Despite these challenges, the hospitality industry and the SaaS vendors that make up the technology stack continue to advance to embrace cloud technology. Certainly, RMS has been in the private cloud since the early 2000s, but as the number of properties converting to RMS increased, a larger infrastructure has become necessary.

With a rich history of more than 30 years, revenue management isn't the new kid on the block. From its earliest days, revenue management was designed to optimize the revenue potential of data regardless of market conditions. It consists of numerous components focused on predicting demand and optimizing price and availability.

But while hospitality software providers have traditionally been seen as the least likely to migrate to the cloud environments of AWS and Google, the accelerated advancements in cloud technology, mobility, and backend integrations have changed that narrative.

From an RMS provider perspective, the quantity of data being processed has more than doubled since 2018. Leading providers are handling upwards of 10 billion pricing decisions every day. This requires infrastructure and capacity to deliver pricing decisions to each hotel before 8 am local time every day. It also means the cost of implementation decreases while increasing the speed and scalability.

Taking steps to go "cloud-native" means dramatically accelerating every part of the product development process, transforming concepts into capabilities far faster than had previously been possible. The engineering resources of an organization like AWS are a force multiplier that, if used properly, enables product development organizations to innovate and deliver value more rapidly, more reliably, and more securely.

WHAT'S NEXT?

From a cloud infrastructure point of view, as with most technology, it's hard to keep up. Hyper-scalers Google, Amazon, and Microsoft have been leading the data-center market for years with massive data centers located around the world. However, that seems to be on the verge of disruption as well.

For example, Larry Ellison announced a new strategy to build hundreds of small cloud data centers around the world at the Oracle Database Summit in May 2023. The company believes that doing so will differentiate it from competitive cloud providers. What this means for the hospitality industry is yet to be seen. However, if Oracle is successful, it will ensure cloud data centers will be accessible from any country, potentially reducing costs, increasing availability, and reducing latency.

Data integration between key hotel tech stack providers has been happening for the past several years. Partnerships AWS and others are bringing us closer to a truly cloud-native model. What does all this mean for your hotel? It means ongoing, instant software updates, less maintenance, and more data at your fingertips.

The hotels of the future are going to be the ones that know how to leverage the millions of data points that are being collected, incorporate that into their decision-making, and automate those decisions as they market, distribute, price, and sell.

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Klaus Kohlmayr — Chief Evangelist and Development Officer, IDeaS
As Chief Evangelist and Development Officer for IDeaS, Klaus role is to challenge existing thought processes, create stimulating conversations and help bring to live the future of Revenue Management and Pricing in hospitality and travel. Klaus has been working to challenge the status quo for the last 20+ years. He re-joined IDeaS from TSA Solutions where he led the company's global commercial, operations and strategic partnership initiatives. Previously with IDeaS he started the companies' global consulting division and led teams that partnered with leading hotel companies to jointly develop the world's first group price optimization and function space revenue management solutions as well as requirements for new pricing methodologies. An advocate of lifelong learning, Klaus holds a Bachelor of Science in Hotel Management, has studied business at Henley Management College, real estate investment and asset management at Cornell University's School of Hotel Administration; and finance and strategy at the Singapore Management University.

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AI-controlled Hotel Room Pricing: The Index Fund of Revenue Management

Generative AI

Matt Schwartz
Chief Technology Officer (CTO), Sage Hospitality Group

Synopsis
In his article, Sage's Matt Schwartz explores the impact of artificial intelligence (AI) on the travel industry. It highlights that while AI will change how people travel, it will not alter the fundamental reasons why people travel, which are to create lasting memories, enjoy unique experiences, and spend time with loved ones. The synopsis acknowledges the potential for AI to enhance travel through advancements like auto-pilot and carbon-friendly transportation. It further discusses how AI will transform the technologies that enable travel, such as interactive booking experiences powered by AI agents and the automation of functions like Revenue Management. The synopsis suggests that while AI-controlled pricing services may outperform the majority of Revenue Managers, there will still be a need for human creativity and expertise in leveraging nuances to generate revenue. It concludes by emphasizing the importance of IT professionals in identifying and implementing AI solutions strategically to enhance travel experiences while embracing our human senses and enjoying the wonders of the world.

It seems that everywhere you turn, people are talking about artificial intelligence, and it's time to have an honest conversation about AI and travel. Will AI change travel? Yes. If you're a hospitality technology professional, should you be concerned? No. Let me explain....

AI will not change why people travel. As humans, we travel to create lasting memories, to enjoy unique experiences, and to share time with family and friends. Unless AI gets implanted into our cerebral cortexes, like in the science fiction novel Ready Player Two by Ernest Cline, AI will never replace the taste of a fresh croissant from a boulangerie in France. AI will never replace the feel of skiing fresh powder while taking in the beautiful views of the Rocky Mountains. AI will never replace the smell of savory spices coming from the kitchen of an informal restaurant in India. AI will never replace the sound of the Amazon jungle. And, AI will never replace the sight of the sheer awesomeness of wild animals roaming the Serengeti plains in Tanzania. Okay, maybe AI will get pretty close for sight and sound, but the taste of a fresh croissant? No way.

While it will never replace experiences – the *why* that drives people to travel – AI will undoubtedly change how people travel. One of the ways is obvious – more auto-pilot. And hopefully, we'll have more carbon-friendly travel vehicles that rely on AI for optimized routes. Solar-powered, supersonic jets anyone? Yes, please.

In our industry, the biggest changes from AI will come in the technologies that enable travel. We are already seeing these changes with the integration of ChatGPT and Online Travel Agencies (OTAs) like Expedia and Booking.com powering interactive booking experiences.

In some cases, these changes will lead to greater efficiencies. For example, it's inefficient for each individual hotel or hotel brand to store my preferences. In the future, my personal AI agent will "talk" to the hotel's AI platform and share (with my approval) my preferences for high floors, extra pillows, and local beer. Further, my personal AI agent, who knows my every move, will communicate how and when to adjust the room thermostat to my ideal temperature prior to and during each

room visit. And imagine if instead of scrolling through a TV guide of 100 channels, my personal AI agent told the hotel's AI platform which channels I enjoy watching and curated the TV guide down to the 10 or so channels I might actually watch. Every element of my hotel stay could be choreographed by my personal AI agent, from restaurant reservations to spa bookings to requesting the valet to bring my car around to alerting the housekeeping staff when to tidy my room and what specifically needs to be tidied – just make my bed and replace two towels please.

In some cases, these changes will lead to near-complete automation of specific functions; and somewhere near the top of the list of the biggest areas for automation will be Revenue Management. Here's a mathematical function that requires 24x7x365 attention to a large amount of disparate data that is constantly changing. Remember the three V's of "Big Data" – Volume, Velocity, and Variety – Revenue Management has this in spades. Competitor rate data, RevPAR Index data, local event data, air travel data, weather data, website analytical data, call center data, group booking pace data, social media data, guest review data, new hotel supply data – the list goes on and on. The human brain, even assisted by decision support systems, cannot incorporate insights from all of these data sources in real time to make corresponding adjustments to hotel room rates.

Now imagine AI-controlled pricing. Think of all the advantages of an AI service that never goes home at night, never sleeps, never takes the weekend off, never calls in sick, never goes on vacation, never asks for a raise, and never quits. An AI service that can process endless streams of data from numerous data sources and make intelligent sense of all that data, separating the nuggets from the noise, and translating those nuggets into price change recommendations. And going one step further, taking those price change recommendations and integrating seamlessly into the hotel's Property Management System (PMS) to update those price changes automatically with no human interaction.

And if such an AI service existed, would there even be a need for Revenue Managers? I imagine the answer is a resounding "yes". Remember, earlier I said a *near-complete* automation, not a complete automation. Why? Well, Revenue Management has nuances. And the smartest, most creative Revenue Managers will find ways to exploit those nuances and leverage them to generate revenue in ways that an AI-controlled service may not contemplate.

That said, I see a future where AI-controlled pricing services not only outperform the majority of Revenue Managers, they will displace the majority of Revenue Managers; just as stock and bond index funds outperform the majority of actively managed (i.e., human-managed) investment funds. Sure, a few investment fund managers find ways to outperform the index funds each year, and a few Revenue Managers will find ways to outperform the AI services, but that will be the exception and not the rule.

Remember the animated cartoon "The Jetsons?" George Jetson had one skill that gave him job security, he knew how to operate a computer system named RUDI (short for Referential Universal Digital Indexer).

George's boss, Mr. Spacely, often threatened George with the prospect of automating George's job. What if a robot operated RUDI instead of George? We are not far from this reality. I recently participated in a hospitality technology panel discussion, and I shared a direct point of view on this topic – if your job is to create MS Excel spreadsheets or to analyze MS Excel spreadsheets, you may want to start looking for alternate career paths.

Following this train of thought, what does the future hold for traditional Revenue Management Systems (RMS)? Well, I imagine most of those systems will either significantly evolve or go extinct. Just look around. Who at your hotel logs into these systems on a daily basis? The future favors services over systems just as the future favors cloud computing over on-premise computing. Fewer Revenue Managers will likely lead to fewer Revenue Management Systems. Recall the index fund analogy. Index funds typically charge lower fees than actively managed funds. Just think how much money hotels could save if they could replace Revenue Managers and Revenue Management Systems with lower cost AI services?

As an IT leader I'm excited about what lies ahead. Hotels and hotel brands will need IT professionals to identify, procure, deploy, maintain, and secure these AI solutions. We have a critical role to play, not in operating systems like George Jetson, but rather in strategically applying technology where automation and AI make sense.

I, for one, can't wait to book my next vacation – traveling with my family, making memories, learning about new cultures, tasting new cuisine, and activating all of my human senses. Let's enjoy being humans, and let's leverage AI to enable better, more efficient travel experiences.

Matt Schwartz — Chief Technology Officer (CTO), Sage Hospitality Group
Matt Schwartz currently serves as Chief Technology Officer at Sage Hospitality Group. In this capacity, Matt has responsibility for all aspects of IT including applications, infrastructure, business intelligence, project management and security for the entire company. Matt spends most days thwarting cyber attacks, enhancing Sage's CRM database, and moving as much as possible to the Cloud. Prior to joining Sage, Matt served as the VP of Digital Solutions at Intrawest where he deployed a cloud-based Central Reservation System (CRS) to all of Intrawest's resort properties including Winter Park and Steamboat. Prior to Intrawest, Matt held various leadership positions in IT and Finance at PetSmart and Staples. Matt has a strong passion for technology, starting his career as a "coder" of HTML and SQL. Matt earned a B.S. with Honors from Cornell University and an M.B.A from MIT's Sloan School of Management.

Sage Hospitality Group — sagehospitalitygroup.com
Denver-based Sage Hospitality Group was founded in 1984 and continues to lead the hospitality industry in hotel and restaurant management as well as real estate investment. Sage is known for outstanding relationships with hotel brands and creating places that people want to go to, not through, including 10 unique restaurant concepts by Sage Restaurant Concepts and independent luxury properties by Sage Hotel Management.

A new shift in scale: The game-changing power of composable hospitality

Tech Stack

Martin Reichenbach
CEO & co-founder, Apaleo

Synopsis

The hospitality industry is on the brink of a massive digital disruption that could see half of the top 10 hotel companies being less than a decade old by 2030. Legacy hotel operators, often hampered by outdated software and operational inefficiencies, are being threatened by the advent of MACH (Microservices-based, API-first, Cloud-native, and Headless) architecture, which offers flexibility, cost-effectiveness, and futureproof technology. This new system allows operators to continuously evolve their services and stay competitive, regardless of their size. As a result, the hospitality industry could see an influx of smaller operators and new challengers, leading to market fragmentation and a shift towards personalization and automation, with companies like Limehome and Placemakr already leading the way. Ultimately, this digital revolution may transform every hospitality company into a tech company, delivering an unprecedented shake-up in the industry.

Digital disruption and transformation have had a huge impact on businesses over the past two decades. According to research by Innosight, most companies in the Fortune 500 (52%) have either gone bankrupt, been acquired or dissolved completely as a result of digital disruption since 2000.

But could this really happen in the hospitality space? I firmly believe it will and I think it's going to happen by the end of the decade.

Digital disruption always means getting more done quicker. But it can also mean lowering barriers to entry. I predict that, by 2030, half the top 10 hotel companies in the world will be less than 10 years old. That would be quite something in an industry where the household names are older than their average guest.

It may sound unlikely but we've seen this kind of disruption before. Remember how explosive the growth was for the iPhone, Dyson and social media? These battles were won and lost just as quickly. And for the hospitality industry, the historic advantage that's losing its stranglehold is 'scale'.

Legacy hotel operators sitting at the top table have long leveraged larger sites boasting hundreds of bedrooms. This was the ace they always held — they had a consistent offering, available all over the world at hotels trying to overcome high labour costs and of course the limiting nature of their property management software.

This software did the basics well enough but, when it came to rolling out new services or properties, it took weeks, if not months. It was cumbersome, expensive and it took time to train new staff, on whom these operators were (and still are) heavily reliant. Even if a hotelier thought it worth the investment, this software was very quickly out-of-date.

This is what is changing now with MACH architecture. It stands for Microservices-based, API-first, Cloud-native, and Headless. That's a bit of a mouthful but, essentially, it means you can plug in the best third-party tools available whenever you want from any vendor, or add your own. It's a way for operators to avoid being trapped with the same services and software partners forever. Some people call this 'composable hospitality'

— you get to shape what it looks like and what it can do, and it's much more powerful at scale than all-in-one systems. Traditional brands could easily switch over but frequently prioritise change management over service and cost, evidenced by the way some have instead been creating new subsidiary hospitality brands powered by more modern technology.

If you haven't already heard much about MACH architecture, it's only a matter of time. When adopted, it's going to give hospitality operators the freedom to constantly evolve. It renders the hotel stack futureproof and, crucially, it's a cost-effective way of creating an entirely new hotel, brand or guest experience that isn't dependent on a single technology company. In this way, it doesn't penalise smaller operators or new challengers. Once adopted, there will never be a good reason to go back to the static solutions of old. Consequently, procurement risk declines and the speed at which companies can arrive at a minimum viable product (MVP) is shortened.

The industry has been waiting for this for a long time. With these barriers removed, the field of play is wide open. We live in a world in which vast amounts of commercial space is being converted for residential use as people spend less time in the office, the short-term rental industry is facing pressure and regulation from policymakers all over the world and cost-conscious consumers are routinely looking for alternative accommodation. Authentic stays in the right location often now trump the gym and the pool (there are plenty of those around anyway).

This creates huge opportunities. It's never been easier to create a new hospitality brand and you don't need as much investment as you used to. Where once hotels might only have been viable at 100 bedrooms or more because of the need for staff and the high cost of property management technology, operators using mix-and-match tools that permit a high level of automation don't need that kind of headroom.

I expect this is going to lead to the fragmentation of the market in the short term, even if institutional interest brings consolidation behind the scenes in the long run. There will be a greater choice for consumers looking for the consistent quality of hotels as well as the alternative tech-led experience of the best short term rentals.

It will also mean operators can more easily jump on the next great trend — personalisation. AI is driving this at the moment, but operators are going to need flexibility right across the tech stack to create something truly bespoke and immersive. I think the look of the C-suite will change too, with it becoming the norm for hotel operators to have a Chief Technology Officer, whose job it will be to curate the latest iteration of their technology. They will build their own solutions to specific problems and incorporate tools that set themselves apart. That wasn't possible before but this is exactly what numa has done, bringing back office automation up to 90% with a fully digitised guest journey.

The MACH revolution is already underway with staffless hotels popping up all over the place — a sure sign that a powerful technology stack is at work behind the scenes.

Even this is exposing one of the hospitality industry's great fallacies. Many operators are already proving the point that most guests don't care as much about face-to-face customer service as traditional operators would have you believe. As long as it's quick and seamless, most guests on most trips seem happy self-serving on their mobile phones. Where there had been a generational divide on this front in the past, it is increasingly hard to find. Limehome and Placemakr are great examples of companies embracing a very high level of automation and proprietary technology, scaling fast as a result.

It's companies like these that are the ones to watch. Originally, scale provided an advantage which built a moat around large, traditional hotel brands. That's why, a decade ago, no one had even heard of these challengers. These days it's a different story, with technology having washed away the old world order where scale mattered most.

Anything is possible with a MACH future, and it's about to deliver the biggest shake-up for automation the industry has ever seen, led by a new band of CTOs determined to make every hospitality company a tech company.

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Martin Reichenbach — CEO & co-founder, Apaleo
Martin is the CEO and co-founder of Apaleo, the innovative Munich-based open property management platform. With years of experience consulting leading software companies including SAP, TeamViewer, and PayPal, Martin has an extensive background in the tech industry. Prior to his work at Apaleo, he co-founded the online marketplace becoacht and an incubator program called The Venture. Today, Martin is focused on disrupting the nature of hospitality software with Apaleo's progressive API-first solution.

Apaleo GmbH — apaleo.com
Apaleo is the open property management platform for hotel and serviced apartment groups, empowering accommodation providers to create the ultimate digital experience for guests and staff. The API-first property management platform powers brands across more than 15 countries, disrupting the nature of hospitality software with the transition from single-vendor suites to best-of-breed technology. Customers include Numa, Limehome, Mollie's, Vagabond Club, Raus and more. For more information, visit apaleo.com.

Hospitality and Web3 : Fad or true innovation for the guest experience?

Innovation

Timothée Semelin
Founder WEBTROIS, Asia Web3. Global Head of Brand partnerships Life Beyond (Animoca Brands)

Synopsis
In this article, former Global Head of digital at Rosewood Hotel Group explores the potential of Web3 technologies in the hospitality industry. The article suggests that embracing such technology, including Metaverse activations, AI, and NFT collections, can offer unique solutions to the sector's inherent complexity and provide revenue-generating opportunities. These technologies can attract a younger demographic, enable virtual representations of properties for cost-effective global sales, transform marketing and customer service, and revolutionize membership systems through token-based memberships. The article further highlights the potential of Web3 for better compliance with data regulations. The author encourages professionals to test and understand these emerging technologies to adapt to the rapid technological evolution and remain competitive.

Why would a Metaverse activation be useful to boost your revenue? Why would you use AI in your hotel? Why are hotels or private clubs launching NFT collections?

Many questions that if being asked to 10 different people will very likely lead to 10 different answers… and it's ok, but you can't just stand on the sideline much longer before you form a strong opinion and a clear strategy.

But as always, the key question we need to ask ourselves is: is there anything in the Web3 technology or trends that can benefit my customers, my guests, my B2B partners, and even maybe can it help me build my brands?

We all know that on the scale of digitalization of industries, hospitality has been, and remains at the bottom of the list. Not due to the lack of investment or willingness but mostly because of the complexity of dealing with scattered places around the world, owners havening their own agendas, and cost inequalities around the world. In my opinion, this is exactly why we can foresee more and more activations related to Web3 technology in the future as legacy technology have little impact on getting started, the costs of these activations are very limited, and on the contrary, it can become a direct revenue generating channel underused right now and it can put your brand, club, hotel into the innovative club of the future and really appeal to Gen Z and Gen A future customers!!

So many hotel brands and hotel programs are actually running very successfully without the need for technology or with an existing technology that took years/decades to build and master but in an industry where we talk about creating communities, empowering guests and employees to explore, experience and share value Web3 is a natural fit if you know where to look.

Hotels, Real estate companies will double down on Metaverse activations as building a digital twin of a hotel or a building prior to even building it at a fraction of the cost it is today. It will help them run a better global sales pipeline, limit travel costs and increase the presale of apartments, hotel rooms, and more.

On the marketing side, it should already be on the horizon but if you think ahead a few years from now our employees will be able to build themselves full immersive digital content or tours of the hotels, clubs, or events without having to work with very expensive production companies. The function of Butler will be revolutionized by things like AI and personalization which is also a key technology part of Web3 and the next iteration of our digital lives.

Not far from now, guests will be able to login to your website not only with an email but very likely with a digital wallet where their membership will be in the form of tokens and you will be able to invite them to experiences based on what they own and what they are willing to share with you.

In the luxury space, we have seen all the luxury brands already entering the NFT space with limited edition collections, and numerous hotels have already launched their own NFT programs like Le Bristol in Paris. I recently also met a Capsule hotel company founder in Indonesia about to introduce token rewards and NFTs to his 2000 hardcore fan community that he created on Discord a few months back.

There is no shortage of applications of what these tokens can do from helping sell more, engaging more, and offering value but the risks are also high of course like in any new technology.

Private clubs and loyalty programs will realize how easy it will be to create token-gated experiences, perks and benefits instead of pushing customers to provide their emails, personal details, and phone number that we don't want to give away anymore. You can already look at what the Mandala Club is doing in Singapore for example or Club3 recently launched in Los Angeles.

Beyond the fact all these will improve the customer experience drastically, the future of Web3 is also tightly tied to compliance with client data, GDPR, and other future regulatory requirements from all around the globe and let's be honest… Most companies have no idea if they are truly compliant with all the required laws in their home country, another area where Web3 will come to provide value thanks to decentralized and anonymous data protocols that will guarantee compliance and also respect from the customers with data management.

The future is hard to predict, but what won't be there in the future is easier to guess. Do you think we will still use cash ten years from now? Do you think Visual computing shown by Apple will be a thing? Do you think our phones will be more powerful and private? Do you think we'll still print papers at a check-in counter? Will all guests still have emails?

Even if unanswered, these questions show the paradigm shift of what Web3 is bringing to the table. The next two years are of crucial importance for all of us professionals in the Experience Economy to test, understand, and also push the boundaries of what we are used to because the technology leapfrogging that Web3 allows will definitely bring new players in the industry and the old ones need to pay attention.

Timothée Semelin — Founder WEBTROIS, Asia Web3. Global Head of Brand partnerships Life Beyond (Animoca Brands)
Timothee aka Tim Web3 has been working in a global capacity for media and luxury brands for the last 17 years between Beijing and Hong Kong. Companies like JCDecaux, Linkedin and Rosewood Hotel Group trusted him to lead teams and build multi-million dollar businesses for brands around the world. Passionate about Marketing and innovation, he discovered NFTs in the summer of 2021 and caught the bug as a trader first then quickly realized how Web3 was going to change the future of customer experience. He took the plunge in Spring 2022 to go full time into Web3 as an investor and with his new consulting agency WEBTROIS, Asia Web3 specialized in branding, go-to-market product and marketing strategy. He currently is also Head of Partnerships for Life Beyond (Animoca Brands). A native of France Noirmoutier island, Timothee started mandarin at 12 years old and it brought him naturally to Asia since 2004 (Beijing ten years, HK 8 years) to become a trilingual executive working across timezones (English, French, Mandarin). Today based between Bali, Beijing and Tokyo he is an active member of both the Web3 NFT community as well as industry wide communities. He is a member of the French Founders association, The Marketing Society, was a founding member of the HK NFT Association (left early 2023) and Community Strategy Lead for the newly formed Web3 Marketing Association.

WEBTROIS — linkedin.com/in/timsemelin
WEBTROIS, Asia Web3 is specialized in branding, go-to-market, product and marketing strategy for Web3 startups wanting to scale up as well as helping F500 enter Web3 and the Metaverse.

Tactics to Rev Up a Hotel's Human Stack

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Synopsis
This article delves into the complex interplay between human capital and technology in the hotel industry. Not to be mistaken for a mere IT department, the human stack comprises every key manager and executive who shapes and supervises the implementation and ongoing use of a hotel's technology systems. The book discusses the development of the Teams and Tech (TNT) Program, a consultancy initiative aimed at improving not just a hotel's tech stack, but also process innovation for faster decision-making and increased productivity. The text identifies common challenges like departmental silos, non-empowered teams, and inefficient meetings, and offers practical solutions to transform them. It provides a roadmap to optimize individual productivity and team efficiency, all with an eye toward maximizing the total revenue per guest (TRevPAR). The book emphasizes the crucial need for this 'human stack' to adapt and evolve swiftly in the face of global challenges like inflation, climate change, and labor shortages.

From the title, you may think it's a typo. Human stack…don't we mean tech stack? No, but as with everything else in hotel operations, it's complicated.

Every hotelier around the world already knows that this is a people-first industry. Not even a fancy, new generative pretrained transformer will change this. But we use the word 'stack' to infer the increasing degree of reliance on technology that hotels now need to stay competitive and maximize owner returns.

The human stack therefore represents the team that makes your technology a reality. Because the faster you can realize a tech-centric reality for your organization, the more efficiencies you will achieve and the more revenue streams you will fully activate. And then there's the perfunctory inclusion of the word 'automation', whereby more and more of this is constantly needed on this front to optimize staff efficiency and managers' productivity.

But don't make the mistake of labeling the human stack as simply another word for the IT department. Yes, they are instrumental but the human stack is far more than just IT because technology involves nearly every other department and thus requires their input at every step of the way, from initial discussions of current pain points and manual processes right through to new implementations and team training.

The human stack instead encompasses every key manager and executive who decide upon and supervise the ongoing usage of a hotel's technology systems. It comprises both the technical expertise to complete installations and interfaces (most likely the IT team and external, fractional resources), as well as the business acumen and organizational cadence that determine what the overall vision is, what's needed right now, what's being solved, what the budget is and what gets prioritized.

In this sense, the human stack is the core engine that spins the tech stack. And right now in the middle of 2023, this core engine needs to rev a lot faster in order to keep apace with all the various changes that are happening in the world. Inflation, climate change action, labor shortages – take your pick, there

are battles to be fought.

This present-day need for revving up the human stack was the inspiration for our development of our Teams and Tech (TNT) Program, wherein our consultancy not only advises on how to improve a hotel's tech stack but also looks at process innovation so that internal decision making is faster and so that teams make better use of their limited time to be more productive.

While every hotel is different, when we're talking about process innovation, there are some common threads. Departmental silos are still common, which lead to goal misalignment and a non-optimized total revenue per guest (TRevPAR). Not empowering teams can also lower morale and is a silent contributor to both quiet quitting and manager turnover. But really there are some quick ones that many hotels can attain by expediting only meetings and email cadence.

On the first of these two, what we've noticed is that when people have meetings all day, they have to time or energy in reserve for the real work – for creating something of value that will propel the organization's goals forward on a reasonable timeframe.

From this, we present the following tactics for you to consider:

- *Shorter Meetings*: asking first if an hour timeslot can be compressed into half an hour, then look at early adjournments (50 minutes versus an hour; 25 minutes versus half an hour) so attendees have time to reflect

- *Structured Meetings:* every gathering should have a detailed agenda that is followed sequentially, while every attendee should have a specific purpose for being present with specific tasks assigned to those attendees at the meeting's conclusion (if not, then they shouldn't be there) as well as a designated minute-take for others who couldn't attend to read in

- *Clustered Meetings:* an open calendar where meetings can be slotted in whenever isn't how you maximize individual productivity because people need dedicated blocks of time to attain a 'flow state', so instead bunch meetings on specific days of the week, don't schedule recurrent meetings unless they are absolutely critical and empower teams to send only one representative

- *Normalized Solo Time:* aside from letting teams divide and conquer, hotel cultures must work to change the act of declining invitations to something that's accepted to protect each manager's time, especially if these meetings interfere with this team member's 'flow blocks' or dedicated periods of deep, concentrated, creative work that should also be visible on a shared calendar

And next, for emails it's less so about the cognitive drain of meeting all the time but the interruptive nature of electronic communications. One email may only take five seconds to read and delete, but they come in intermittently and when combined with social media or text messages it's difficult for the modern knowledge worker within hotel organizations to reach a state of 'flow' whereby their sole focus on one given task increases the speed and caliber with which that one task is completed.

Alas, some solutions for the email crisis we all confront nowadays:

- *Deploy More Automation:* yes, you need more data connections via a customer data platform (CDP) or robotic process automation (RPA) to fill in the gaps so as to limit the bounty of interruptive busywork your teams are required to handle on a given day

- *Project Management Software:* lots of great cloud collaboration tools now exist to transfer task coordination away from the inbox and, significantly, compartmentalize information for faster employee recall

- *Calendar Sharing:* eliminate those long email threads where you are simply trying to decide on a time to meet by giving access to others to view your current availability and book on your behalf, as well as setting up an online calendar booking platform

- *No Carbon Copy Necessary:* as more of a cultural shift with greater trust amongst various team members, the act of CCing everyone on an email thread should be avoided, with policies put in place for when it is necessary

Ultimately, why we stress process innovation and perhaps conducting your own TNT audit is that things have to start moving faster. More efficiencies on all fronts enable teams to be simultaneously more creative and more guest-facing, and it is these two qualities that will allow a hotel to continue to grow within any economic environment.

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Larry Mogelonsky — Partner at Hotel Mogel Consulting Ltd.
Larry is managing partner of a hotel consultancy that assists independent luxury hotels meet their goals and helps technology companies understand how their solutions work in the hospitality filed. Together with his son, Adam, they are the world's most published author in the field of hospitality, with weekly columns in many leading industry publications, as well as seven, 400+ page books on hotel management. He has been recognized by Hotel Sales and Marketing International (HSMAI) as "One of the 25 Most Extraordinary Minds in Hospitality" and by TravelClick as "Worldwide e-Marketer of the Year." He is also much sought after as a public speaker.

Adam Mogelonsky — Partner at Hotel Mogel Consulting Ltd.
As one of two principals at Hotel Mogel Consulting Ltd., Adam Mogelonsky is a strategic advisor primarily for independent properties, small hotel groups and technology vendors for the industry, specializing in helping brands determine the best path to increased profitability whatever that direction requires. As a thought leader, he has coauthored seven books on hotel management and over 1,200 articles over the past decade across a variety of trade publications, in addition to regular podcast and conference panel appearances. Lately, the focus for Hotel Mogel has been on automation, tech stack auditing, labor efficiencies, employee retention programs, heightening managerial productivity and upselling practices to maximize total revenue per guest.

Hotel Mogel Consulting Limited — hotelmogel.com
Hotel Mogel Consulting Limited works exclusively with investors/owners/operators to help solve critical investment, management and marketing issues in the luxury segment. We also undertake public speaking at corporate and association events, where an independent point of view is desired.

Will Tech touch every part of the hotel guest journey?

Guest Journey

Prince Thampi
Founder & CEO, Hudini

Synopsis
It's not just a hotel's tech stack that needs to change, it's the innate processes in the guest journey that need to be future-proofed to drive true innovation in hospitality

The hospitality industry continues to embrace technological advancements to enhance the guest experience and streamline hotel operations. We saw adoption accelerate during the global pandemic with the inherent need for contactless solutions. However, looking at other sectors such as retail, banking and e-commerce, it seems hotels still lag when it comes to digital transformation. The signs of apprehension, whether fueled by societal beliefs that hospitality is about service delivered by people not Tech, or hindered by the complexity of the existing hotel tech stack, hamper true innovation.

Looking at emerging technologies and solutions like AI, biometrics, IoT devices and cloud computing, it's evident that technology has the potential to touch every part of the hotel guest journey. The question is, what can, and should future hotel technology look like to allow our industry to be more agile, to drive innovation, respond to consumer behavior and operate more sustainably?

From my perspective and experience as a tech entrepreneur that has more recently come into the hospitality sector, I see the future of hotel technology influenced by three key drivers: guests, sustainability, and commerce.

GUESTS ARE READY, BUT ARE THE HOTELS?

Hotel guest expectations are ever evolving and are partly driven by consumers' experiences in other parts of their lives such as the way they shop, dine and bank. Over the years, I have had many conversations with hoteliers around the world who worry about guest adoption of new technology in their hotels. They express concerns about travelers not being ready; not wanting to embrace technology as part of their hotel stay or the tech being too complex to navigate. Truth is, the technology that hotel guests use today to research, book, travel, and arrive at the property is likely more complex than the Tech offered on premise in the hotel during their stay. From biometric-enabled immigration gates at airports and mobile wallets and payments to voice assistants and mobile apps, a typical traveler will have used a lot of tech on their journey before they've even arrived at the hotel's doorstep. So, guests are ready, but are the hotels?

Given the accessibility of emerging technologies, hoteliers have a great opportunity to build further intelligence into their hotel to anticipate and personalize the guest experience. Examples of this include immersive rooms with features like intelligent bedding to enhance sleep as well as smart privacy mirrors and digital walls to optimize ambience. In a hotel's public areas, the use of interactive surfaces (i.e., tables) can support smarter concierge services through digital itinerary development and aided sales of hotel services and amenities, which brings me to the next key driver of hotel tech, commerce.

DRIVING COMMERCE

For hotels to remain competitive in a rapidly changing industry, the adoption of technology is critical. Technology has the potential to elevate the guest experience and to drive ancillary revenue, cost optimization and profitability. Hotels have a unique opportunity to curate hotel-inspired storefronts and to create new channels of engagement with guests that will drive business. There is a plethora of opportunities out there for hoteliers to explore, one of which is the creation of digital marketplaces and in-room showrooms that allow guests to buy bed linen, furniture items, art and amenities directly by scanning the items on their phone and to possibly integrate this with the hotel's mobile App. Another way to increase hotel commerce is through the set-up of pop-up stores in hotel lobbies that display merchandise, whether from the hotel directly or from community artisans. To power these services, we will see contactless payments such as mobile wallets and digital payment platforms become the norm in the future.

Personalization, including the increased use of AI-powered and biometrics-based technologies, will continue to play a significant role in hotel commerce. Hotels can leverage guest data, including preferences, past behaviors, and demographics, to deliver tailored experiences and offers. This could involve personalized promotions, room preferences, curated amenities, and customized service recommendations that can lead to better share of wallet for hotels.

Also, Augmented Reality (AR) and Virtual Reality (VR) technologies can enhance the guest experience and engagement, and influence purchasing decisions by providing virtual tours of hotel rooms, allowing guests to visualize amenities, explore destinations, and even customize their room settings before arrival.

GOING GREEN(ER)

The role of IT in realizing an organization's ESG strategy and sustainability goals is growing. A hotel's operating systems need to be agile enough to adopt new technologies that not just enable guests to travel more sustainably and for hotels to attain certain operating standards, but as an integral driver of an organization's sustainability strategy.

Guest Room Management Systems (GRMS) will continue to have a significant role in this space to support hotels to operate more sustainably. With the Internet of Things (IoT) enabling connectivity between smart devices including thermostats, lighting, and entertainment systems, energy consumption can be reduced while simultaneously enhancing guest comfort. IoT sensors provide valuable data to drive eco-friendly operations in hotels, and by integrating room controls in a hotel's mobile App, this technology is at the fingertips of environmentally conscious guests, allowing them to minimize the impact of their stay.

Guest awareness and engagement with green technologies is important here too. Through in-room displays or a hotel's mobile application, hoteliers can provide guests with energy consumption information and tips on sustainable practices throughout their stay to promote eco-friendly travel and encourage guests to participate in sustainability efforts.

Besides energy management, there are many other ways in which hotel technology can help achieve sustainability goals. This includes the deployment of digital and paperless solutions for key processes in a hotel, such as check-in and check-out including digital guest folios, e-invoicing, and digital guest

communication. These solutions reduce paper consumption and streamline operations to improve efficiency and decrease a property's environmental impact.

TECH AS A TOOL, NOT AN END SOLUTION

Having looked at the guest, commerce and sustainability as key drivers of the future of the hotel tech stack, it's clear that the opportunities to advance our industry are plentiful. What's important to consider is that the successful implementation of new technologies often requires changes in processes, workflows and roles.

In my view this is the key in driving true innovation in our industry. Too often we see hotels automating existing processes as opposed to rethinking workflows and employee roles as part of the digital guest journey. To do so effectively, it's important that hoteliers clearly define the goals and objectives they want to achieve through the implementation of technology, whether it's to increase revenue, reduce environmental impact or enhance the guest experience.

Before technology decisions are made, it's important to do a review of existing processes and identify the pain points, bottlenecks and inefficiencies that can be addressed through automation and involve key stakeholders, including your tech vendors. We would love for hoteliers to call on us more often to help in this process to ensure the technology solutions align with their needs and can effectively support the workflows.

I mentioned earlier in my article that I believe hotels guests are ready to adopt new technology, but it's equally - or even more- important that your employees are ready too. Make sure to engage staff in the process by highlighting the benefits of technology and address any concerns they may have. Build and foster a culture of innovation within the hotel and encourage employees to explore new technologies, share ideas, and experiment with process enhancements. Once new tech solutions are implemented regularly monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of both the technology and the associated processes. Gather feedback from staff and guests, analyze performance metrics, and identify areas for improvement. Use this information to refine processes, provide additional training if necessary, and adjust the tech stack as needed. Embracing innovation is an ongoing practice with technology as a tool, not the end solution.

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Prince Thampi — Founder & CEO, Hudini
Prince Thampi is a serial entrepreneur with over 30 years experience in business leadership. With his broad knowledge of business formation and operations, Prince has successfully incubated numerous technology start-ups, raised capital, and nurtured them to growth stage. Prince is Co-founder and CEO of Hudini, a technology company at the forefront of digital transformation in the hospitality industry. Prior to founding Hudini in 2019, Prince was the Founder CEO of Arowana Consulting, an IT services and consulting company. Under Prince's leadership, Hudini's customer base has grown to over 400 hotels across 25 countries.

Hudini — hudini.io
Hudini is the leading digital transformation platform for the hotel industry. Powered by a proprietary middleware and an omnichannel (App, Web, TV) guest interface, Hudini leverages data + AI to increase guest engagement, hotel revenues and enhance guest experience. Through its 100+ pre-built integrations across all functionalities, Hudini delivers personalised, immersive guest experiences that enable guests to communicate, control and interact with hotels closer than ever before. With over 400 hotels across 25 countries, Hudini is fast becoming the industry benchmark for digital transformation in the hospitality industry.

HYB

A New Cast of Characters at the Hotel Show: Service Robots

Michael O'Donnell
Chairman & CEO, Relay Robotics

Synopsis
Amid labor shortages and public health challenges, hotels are increasingly turning to robots to support their operations. These AI-powered service providers fill crucial roles, especially in housekeeping and customer service, where human resources are limited. They provide round-the-clock service, maintain high cleanliness standards, and help enhance the overall guest experience. Robots have not only become an essential workforce but also a novel attraction that adds a futuristic luxury touch to the hospitality industry, delivering a unique and memorable guest experience.

A hotel is like a theater, where each guest is the star of their own show and the hotel staff is the supporting cast, working tirelessly behind the scenes to ensure that every moment is a memorable one. However, making sure that everything goes off without a hitch is increasingly difficult for hotels in the face of lingering labor shortages and public health and safety concerns. To make sure the show goes on, hotels are writing robots into the script to fill talent gaps, rev up revenue, inspire rave reviews, and enhance operations.

ROBOTS ENSURE "THE SHOW GOES ON" AT HOTELS.

Hotels deploy service robots for different reasons, sometimes novelty and sometimes necessity. For luxury hotels, robots provide high-end guests with an elite experience. But, for limited- and select-service hotels where convenience must remain king, robots have become mission critical.

According to McKinsey & Company, a recent survey of 200 hotels conducted by the American Hotel & Lodging Association (AHLA) found that 87 percent of hotels in the United States lack sufficient staff, and 36 percent of the respondents claimed severe staff shortages. Specifically, sourcing housekeeping talent is the industry's most vexing challenge.

Often only one employee is available to staff the front desk at hotels. If a guest needs something, the front desk must be left unattended to make the delivery. Robert Rauch, CEO of RAR Hospitality, said, "If you have a 11:00 p.m.-7:00 a.m. shift where you have one employee in the hotel because it's a limited-service hotel, you have better security because the delivery is made by the robot."

If it wasn't for service robots, some hotels might have had to lower their curtains during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic. Instead of closing their doors when guests were demanding hospital-like conditions, Hilton deployed sanitation robots "to ensure guest-and-team-member health and safety remains the top priority." And hotels, like the Marriott Westin Houston Medical Center hotel in Texas, use disinfection robots to blast bacteria and viruses with broad-spectrum UV light.

In addition to deploying sanitation robots, during the pandemic, hotels also scaled back automatic daily room cleanings to quell guests' safety concerns, which they have maintained today, largely due to the shortage of housekeeping talent. But to take the stress off strained housekeepers, hotels are arming housekeepers with Roomba-like robots to vacuum the floors.

Dialing down housekeeping services has also increased the industry's reliance on service robots in a different way. In lieu of daily room cleanings, more and more hotel guests are requesting more and more towels and toiletries. And more and more hotels are relying on robots to make these deliveries.

ROBOTS DELIVER RAZZLE DAZZLE TO SURPRISE AND DELIGHT GUESTS.

Like ChatGPT that has transfixed the world with its capacity to create content like a human, service delivery robots employ artificial intelligence (AI) to "learn" the layout of each hotel. Not only can service delivery robots bob and weave to avoid people, but they also operate the elevators, open automated doors, and call your hotel room phone, making them the first ever autonomous amenity.

To lighten the load on strained staff and to surprise and delight guests, hotels use these robots to deliver everything from traditional room service and marketplace pantry items to linens, towels, and toiletries to food deliveries from DoorDash and Uber Eats.

Jason Ransom, General Manager, of the Aloft Silicon Valley, said about their robot "Botlr," "When I started in Housekeeping in 2000, I learned that you have 15 minutes to get a food order, a toothbrush, or toilet paper to a guest's room. Botlr helps us compress that delivery window down from 21 to 2 minutes, giving us more time for guests. Botlr is not just a novelty. He cuts room service time by 80%, makes it easy to do our jobs, and he doesn't accept tips."

Ransom is correct that service delivery robots don't accept tips, but they do receive rave reviews. Search Hotel EMC2 in Chicago on TripAdvisor and you'll find dozens of positive reviews that mention the hotel's robots. At this Marriott Autograph Collection property, guests can even use Alexa to have robots "Cleo" or "Leo" deliver directly to their rooms from the hotel's "BOT 24.7 All Day" menu. As evidenced by many social media posts, guests delight at the sight of these robots. In fact, management reports that guests make repeat orders from the menu just as an excuse to experience the robot again.

ROBOTS KEEP THE DRINKS FLOWING.

Besides delivering drinks, service robots are being used to make them. Royal Caribbean uses bionic bartenders to serve up a truly unique drinking experience. Engineered in Italy, drink-slinging robots can muddle, stir, shake and strain to make countless cocktails from a wide selection of 30 spirits and 21 mixers, according to the company's blog.

And spirits aren't the only drinks to be had by robots at hotels. At the Henn Na Hotel in Japan, also known as the "Robot Hotel," the hotel's robot barista keeps the lattes, espressos, and teas flowing. Another example of a hotel employing robots to impress guests is M Social Singapore's AUSCA. The "robotic egg chef" whips up egg dishes during the hotel's breakfast service, much to the delight of guests and the increased efficiency of staff.

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THE BOTTOM LINE: ROBOTS ARE THE STAR OF THE HOTEL SHOW.
At more and more hotels, service robots are helping to ensure the show goes on, saving strained staff from menial tasks, generating 5-star reviews that help increase RevPAR, and improving operations to help guests feel safer. Sometimes robots grab the spotlight with a showstopping dance to delight children, and other times robots play a more supporting role. Regardless of where they appear in the script, robots have become a reoccurring character in the daily hotel show and their ultimate job is to make guests feel like they are getting the red-carpet treatment.

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Michael O'Donnell — Chairman & CEO, Relay Robotics
Michael joined award-winning robotics company, Relay Robotics, Inc., in May 2022 as Chairman & CEO to rapidly grow Relay's presence in Hospitality and Healthcare and address the worldwide labor shortage with technology. Michael is an experienced C-Level global executive with a proven record of growing startups, mid-tier and larger, publicly-traded companies in Internet-based businesses (AI/robotics, healthcare, media, entertainment, video games, software). He successfully completed a NASDAQ IPO and sold four VC-backed companies to Cisco Systems, Inc. (CSCO), Citrix Systems, Inc. (CTXS), Gamefly, Inc., and GoodRx (GDRX), respectively. He also designed one of the Internet's first subscription business models, sold digital advertising to major Pharma, Financial Services, Automotive and CPG customers. His success has been buoyed by a global network of professional relationships at leading digital transformation companies such as Google, Amazon, Facebook, LinkedIn, ZOOM, Salesforce.com, Cisco, Adobe, Nvidia, Oracle, Comcast, and others. He also boasts extensive international experience operating companies and/or establishing commercial relationships in Israel, Europe, AsiaPac and Australia. He currently serves as Board Member of the Silicon Valley Executive Network (SVEN) and was the founding board member of the Online Publisher's Association (OPA). A highly sought-after thought leader, Michael speaks at major industry events such as Digital Pharma East and SXSW.

Relay Robotics, Inc. — relayrobotics.com
Relay Robotics, Inc. is a leading supplier of simple, sophisticated, autonomous service robots that work with humans safely, securely, reliably, and contact-free. Relay Robotics and its affiliates have been technology leaders in robotics since 2013 and hold 10 U.S. patents. Relay's robots supplement staff across hospitality, healthcare, and commercial real estate settings. They have completed more than 1,000,000 deliveries worldwide.

HYB

Stay the same or finally become guest centric!

Data & Security

Michael Toedt
CEO and Founder, dailypoint

Synopsis

Hotels lag behind successful data companies like Alphabet, Booking, or Airbnb because they haven't fully leveraged customer data in their IT strategies. To increase their value, hotel companies need to focus on creating a central "Golden Record" of their guests, similar to data-driven companies. This requires shifting to a central data management (CDM) or central data platform (CDP) system instead of the traditional, siloed approach, which involves separate profiles in different systems. This guest-centric approach not only ensures compliance with privacy laws but also improves sales, marketing, customer service, and budget allocation, thereby driving success.

IT IS ALL ABOUT DATA!

When we look at the value of successful data companies like Alphabet, Booking or Airbnb, we must realize that no hotel company is part of the list. But why? Hotel tech covers the full customer journey but obviously hotels are not able to drive value out of their existing IT-stack and the massive amount of available customer data.

The answer is not hard to give when you compare the IT-strategy of data driven companies and hotels, no matter if we look on group or an individual level. Data driven companies' key element is the central profile, the so-called golden record. They know everything about their customers and can use this centrally available knowledge for their own success by providing individualized services and products at all touchpoints along the customer journey.

Hotel companies IT-strategy is built around their loyalty programs, their CRS or PMS, but no one really focusses on the guest! CEO's must understand that to increase the value of a company, the guest must be the key element of their doing. "The Golden Record", managed centrally above all systems along the customer journey is the key to success. What is needed is a project of change in which neither the PMS, nor the CRS, nor loyalty is the key element. All these pre-mentioned systems have existed for decades and have one thing in common: they are not able to solve the challenges of our big data world and cannot manage a Central Profile.

A revolution is necessary, like 40 years ago when the PMS replaced pinboards to manage reservations. The solution is a CDM (Central Data Management) or CDP (Central Data Platform) or in other words a "real CRM" (Customer Relationship Management) application. Talking about CRM, I don't mean marketing. This is one of the biggest mistakes of our industry. CRM is NOT a marketing application, marketing is just a part of a real CRM solution, besides the much bigger aspects of CRO (operations) and CRA (analytics).

To create and maintain a central profile with data from multiple sources in real-time, a CDM / CDP must offer complex DQM (Data Quality Management) processes. But it is important to understand, that the new system cannot be yet another new data silo. The CDM must be able to push back all-important information to all connected and relevant systems.

A guest-centric IT stack is a completely different approach to what hotels have in place today.

Instead of fixing problems in the different departments like Sales, Marketing, F&B, Finance or Housekeeping with more-or-less unconnected silo systems, the question now is, how to connect a new system to a guest-centric IT-stack?

Another question is, where to start? I recommend starting with the creation of the Central Profile. The CDM solution must be the key element and all other systems must have a good connection. Good today means, 2-way interfaces which work in real-time. Does this sound normal? Not in our industry. So be cautious when building your new IT-stack and take a close look at the details. Everything stays and falls with the data flows. Data must flow in your new IT-stack like the blood which circulates in a healthy body. It is not good to have dead ends, like a blood congestion, or amorism in your IT environment. Connectivity with state-of-the art interfaces is key and an open-API strategy should be standard as well. This means, that third party vendors get easy access to the centrally managed data, which gives the highest level of flexibility and the option to build integrations at low cost.

It must be clear that systems connecting to the CDM should not manage separate guest profiles. They should act like a sub-system using the crucial information. The fewer profiles you have in different systems, the better. Best case scenario is that connected systems do not create separate profiles at all. Why should a booking engine or a hotel app create extra guest profiles? Such systems should use the central CDM profile instead.

An important side effect of acting that way is that it is much easier for companies to cover the different privacy laws and become technically compliant. Only if all systems are part of a connected eco-system with a central profile as its key element, companies can manage consumer requests adequately. Deletion, transfer, or information requests, the fundamental consumer rights in all privacy laws, can only be managed correctly in a CDM environment. Looking at the status of hotel IT-environment with the PMS or CRS as the key element, I conclude that about 99.9% of all hotel companies are not able to even process such requests. This is not a problem if the authorities or the press further on closes their eyes and consumers do not start to sue hotels. But it is not a question that more likely sooner than later, this situation will change. And please don't say, I was not aware of the data mess I had in my company. Every manager should be aware of it!

But why should a company become guest centric, beside the legal aspects? The answer is simple because everything just works better. Your sales and marketing become more individualized the more you know about your customers, your guest recognition and service levels go up significantly, when you know who is staying in front of you and what this specific guest likes or dislikes. Your budget allocation and decision-making processes benefit from a CDM approach as well since you can invest in areas which are important for your key target groups. Forget about TripAdvisor or ORM tools to make budget decisions, use high quality analysis which need the link to a central profile. Without it, it is all about gut feeling, experience but not science.

And think about innovative technologies. Even if AI is not new, but also AI generates better results the cleaner data is available. The existence of a high volume of training data reduces the risk of wrong or questionable results.

Let's summarize: Hotel managers must decide to proceed with their current IT-stack or start a complex change management process to become guest centric. The answer should be clear if I want to stay successful in the future.

A modern IT-stack consists of three key systems, the CDM / CDP at the core, which manages the Golden Record, the CRS to manage distribution and the PMS for transaction purposes. The integration between those three systems is extremely important for the success and therefore, take care of the details. Forget about your IT decisions from the past, start from scratch and you might be able to keep some of your current systems working as part of a new and healthy IT-environment.

Michael Toedt — CEO and Founder, dailypoint
Dr. Michael Toedt is CEO and Founder at dailypoint. He is a renowned expert in the field of Big Data and CRM. Michael started his career in his parents' hotel business and the Michelin Star gastronomy. He started his second career in the field of CRM, and in 2005 founded Toedt, Dr. Selk & Coll. GmbH (TS&C). TS&C, today known as dailypoint, is recognized as a premiere software company and think tank for data-driven management. In addition to his work at dailypoint, Michael Toedt is, among other things, a lecturer at the University of Applied Sciences in Munich, Germany on the topic of "CRM in Tourism" as well as a lecturer at Hotellerie Suisse. He publishes books and professional articles in the field of CRM, Big Data and digitalization regularly. Michael wrote his doctorate on the influence of communication on sales figures in the luxury hotel industry.

dailypoint™ — dailypoint.com
dailypoint™ is the leading Data Management and CRM platform for demanding individual hotels and hotel groups. dailypoint™ collects data from all relevant sources such as PMS, POS, website, newsletter or WiFi and automatically creates a central and consolidated guest profile. In 350 steps, the data is processed and enriched by means of artificial intelligence (AI) to create a guest profile never seen before. The cloud-based SAAS solution consists of 16 modules and is complemented by the dailypoint™ Marketplace with almost 200 solution partners. dailypoint™ not only offers measurable marketing but also covers the entire customer journey and thus supports all departments within a hotel. The integrated Privacy Dashboard is also the central element for the technical implementation of the GDPR. dailypoint™ is headquartered in Munich, Germany, and is sold and supported worldwide directly or through its distribution partners D-EDGE and XNProtel.dailypoint™ consists of three interrelated areas: the dailypoint™ Data Management Platform, the CRM & E-Marketing Suite, and Loyalty. Within these three areas dailypoint™ offers 16 modules:Data LaundryProfile EngineWebsite ConnectPrivacy Dashboard (GDPR)Campaign Manager (CRM)Voucher SystemLoyalty ProgramEvent CalendarOnline Reputation ManagementWalletBooking ManagerMessage CenterAnalyticsSmartWirelessBasic SalesSmart Lists

Charting a Digital Odyssey: An EHL Student's Journey into the Future of Hospitality Tech

Human Stack

Daniela Tornoe
EHL Graduate

Interviewed by **Ian Millar**
Manager of Institute of Business Creativity & Senior Lecturer at EHL Hospitality Business School

To bring a new angle to the hotel yearbook technology edition, senior lecturer EHL Ian Millar sat down with one of his final year EHL students Daniela Tornoe to discuss her thoughts on a future career in hospitality technology after graduating from EHL in the summer of 2023. For context, with the talent crisis hitting all hospitality sectors more than ever, we need to inspire young hospitality talent to remain in this great industry.

HI DANIELA, MAYBE TO GET THIS INTERVIEW GOING, COULD YOU TELL ME A BIT ABOUT YOURSELF?

Hello Mr. M, first thank you so much for this fantastic opportunity to be with you today for this interview. To tell you a little about me, I was born and raised in Guatemala in the capital city. From a very early age, my parents supported me in many different activities; I started developing my artistic side first. I danced ballet and flamenco and played the national instrument, Marimba, with my school's crew. During my last years of Elementary School, I discovered my passion for volleyball. I started practising in my school, and soon after, I decided to improve and play on a more competitive level. After much practice in the national sports centre, I was selected for the U18 and U20 national teams and competed across Central America and the Caribbean. I committed to all these facets without neglecting my school responsibilities.

I would say the diversity in the things I enjoyed outside the classroom was also present in the courses I preferred; I liked everything. Therefore, during my last year of high school, I was puzzled when choosing one field to specialise in. I always dreamed of having a study abroad experience, and I thought I would fulfil this by playing in Division One for a school in the US. Unfortunately, I suffered a big knee injury and had to stop competing. This made my career decision purely academic rather than based on the volleyball team. I like numbers and enjoy the human connection; therefore, when I came across a career in hospitality, it made sense to me.

Furthermore, I was exposed to the idea of hospitality my entire childhood. My grandmother would always open the doors for people to stay at her home, be splendid on the meals, and attention to her guests. I started studying one semester in Guatemala, and I loved it, and something that wouldn't leave my mind was the idea of "If this is great here, just imagine how great it can be somewhere else?" That was when I came across EHL; I was mesmerised in the first few minutes of the video and knew it would be a dream to complete an education there. I applied for the school and confirmed my decision when I received a Tuition Waiver Scholarship for the first year. In a matter of a few months, my life did a 360° turn. I moved to the other side of the world to join thousands of international students that share my passion.

¶WHAT MADE YOU FINALLY DECIDE THAT A FUTURE CAREER IN HOSPITALITY TECHNOLOGY IS RIGHT FOR YOU?

As you know, EHL allows us to do two internships within our study program. I did my first internship in Disneyland, Paris. During the first months, I was trained in their internal property management system and realised how obsolete these programs were. The lost time and the ancient interface made me wonder why we still use this. Back then, I thought maybe there was not something better, but why. Back in EHL, I joined the IT Service Desk as a student assistant throughout my bachelor's. The team is excellent, and they took their time to teach me and explain different elements of providing tech support for a big organisation. I supported the installation of some programs for the staff and students, became very good at solving some technical glitches, and contributed to the tech move of some new offices outside of campus. During my third year, for my second internship, I went outside hospitality to gain insight into the luxury world. I worked for the Travel Retail division of Puig, a cosmetics and fashion house.

During my internship, we used a very old system to track sales, and once again, I wondered why we were still using these systems that took ages to load and would make us lose a lot of time. Fortunately, someone that had just joined the company on the Data Analytics team had the same thought and started putting together a new dashboard for the region. My boss invited me to participate in this dashboard's brainstorming sessions. Those were my favourite meetings, talking about the different elements that would make the analysis easier, the different graphs that could help visualise the data, and the filters that should be ingrained in the system.

At this point, I realised I wanted to pursue a career with this orientation. Therefore, for my last semester at EHL, I chose Programming Skills for Business and Hospitality Technology Strategy courses. Well, that was where I had the chance to meet you and decide this is where I want to build a career. All the speakers brought into the class, Nick Price, Floor Bleeker, and Andrew Evers, were so unique to hear from them and their insights. I remember thinking to myself, I want to be like them; how do I get there?

DO YOU THINK THAT TECHNOLOGY CAREER PATHS ARE PROMOTED ENOUGH IN HOTEL SCHOOLS?

Not at all. I made my decision until the very last semester, and I am incredibly thankful for choosing your elective. But before, we had never been exposed to the importance of hospitality tech, which does not make sense to me. In a world that depends on technology and where things are advancing daily, hospitality should lead rather than follow with a significant delay. Hospitality schools should be the principal advocates of this idea.

WHO HAS SIGNIFICANTLY INFLUENCED YOUR DECISION TO TAKE THIS CAREER DIRECTION?

Well, first of all, I would like to thank you. Your course was a defining point for my career choice. In every lecture, I learned so many new things. I felt like so much was left to learn, and I loved that feeling. Furthermore, I discovered how fascinating a hospitality tech career could be through the guest speakers you brought into our class. When I first heard Nick Price about how decentralised technology could change the future of hospitality and guarantee a seamless experience for guests, I was mesmerised; I got out of the class and looked at my friends and said, "Can we please talk about what just happened?" And afterward, we had the chance to have Floor and how he explained a 1-day implementation, app functionality and GDPR Regulations. It was just fascinating! Truly everyone we had for class enjoyed what they were doing; for me, that has been key; I want to enjoy what I am working on and feel like I am always learning.

Currently, I am being mentored by Floor; we meet once every two weeks, and he has helped me discover where I would like to start my career. We also take time to discuss some news updates, and I enjoy every time he talks about the projects he is working on, he is so insightful.

WHAT COULD HOTEL SCHOOLS AND INDUSTRY DO MORE AND BETTER TO PROMOTE THE TECHNOLOGY PATH?
I think schools should partner with associations like HFTP to bring more guest lecturers and start mentoring programs. Also, we have this career fair twice a year; the school should try to get more tech-oriented hospitality groups or technology vendors. At the same time, invite alumni succeeding in the hospitality tech industry. I had the chance to speak to Florian Montag, EHL Alumni working in Apaleo, and it's so inspiring to see what he is doing and how motivated he is about the product they are creating to change the industry. We already have the technology mindset, so make us feel heard, allow us to talk with the tenured professionals and share our ideas. Create spaces where we can network and share our points of view on things. I believe big hospitality groups should engage in more student challenges; if you want to improve the guest journey, bring a case study to EHL, take all the input, and build on it.

WHERE DO YOU SEE YOURSELF IN 5, 10 AND 20 YEARS?
Wow, that's a great question. I am unsure about the next few months, let alone the next 5, 10, and 20 years. I am in the process of applying to different companies, and all opportunities are super exciting. I know I want to make an impact. I have many ideas and am so excited to get out there and start sharing and building on them. So I don't know where I will be, but I look forward to being surrounded by knowledgeable people, high-achievers who will encourage me to grow and keep learning. I see myself achieving great things, I am not sure where but I am confident I can make significant contributions. I want to change the industry to improve the holistic hospitality experience. So in 20 years, when I look back, I will feel accomplished, passionate about what I am doing, and always optimistic and excited about the future.

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Daniela Tornoe — EHL Graduate
Daniela recently completed her bachelor's degree at EHL Hospitality Business School. Born and raised in Guatemala, Daniela moved to Switzerland to pursue the career of her dreams. Throughout her studies, she contributed to supporting herself by working at the School's IT Service Desk as a student assistant. She has also gained experience in the hospitality industry through an internship in Disneyland Paris and other restaurants in Switzerland. Additionally, Daniela has a background in brand management and data analysis after working on the EMEA Travel Retail brand management team at Puig. Throughout all these experiences Daniela has developed a thorough understanding of the importance of cognitive systems, effective data collection, storytelling, and guest journey. Today, she is ready to continue learning and expanding her horizons as she prepares for a career in hospitality tech.

Ian Millar — Manager of Institute of Business Creativity & Senior Lecturer at EHL Hospitality Business School
Ian Millar is Manager of Institute of Business Creativity & Senior Lecturer at EHL Hospitality Business School working on the Student Business Projects and delivering hospitality technology courses. His double expertise in the areas of hospitality and information technology sets him at the forefront of new developments in the international hospitality industry. He is Certified Hospitality Technology Professional and a frequent presenter at international IT conferences as well as the author of numerous hospitality technology articles. Ian serves as an advisor to various hospitality technology companies and was a Member of the Hotel Industry Expert Panel for the Singapore Tourism Board advising hotels in the region on best practice technology usage. He is also a mentor for the Metro Accelerator program, advising various hospitality technology start-up companies. He is currently on the HITEC Amsterdam advisory council, organizing Europe's largest hospitality technology conference.

EHL Hospitality Business School — www.ehl.edu
EHL Hospitality Business School (Lausanne) is an ambassador for traditional Swiss hospitality and has been a pioneer in hospitality education since 1893 with over 25,000 alumni worldwide and over 120 nationalities. EHL is the world's first hospitality management school that provides university-level programs at its campuses in Lausanne and Chur-Passugg, as well as online learning solutions. The School is ranked n°1 by QS World University Rankings by subject and CEOWorld Magazine, and its gastronomic restaurant is the world's only educational establishment to hold a Michelin Star.

HYB

User disengagement: the future of hospitality technology

Richard Valtr
Founder, Mews

Synopsis
The future of hospitality technology lies in user disengagement, a philosophy that prioritizes unobtrusive, background technology to enhance human-to-human interaction. While it may seem counterintuitive for a technology company to advocate for less use of their products, the hospitality industry thrives on unique experiences that take people away from the expected. The key is creating technology that works silently in the background, freeing hotel staff from screens and keyboards and allowing guests to focus on enjoying their stay rather than engaging with administrative tasks.

Less is more. It's a phrase we're all familiar with, but one that most of us probably don't abide by – as anyone who's ever listened to me speak can attest to… Nevertheless, it's a powerful concept, perhaps because it can be surprisingly difficult to attain.

So, how can we apply this principle to hospitality in a way that will benefit not only guests but hoteliers too? Simple: through user disengagement. User disengagement is the philosophy and practice of freeing people from technology or processes that don't add value to their experience.

We started talking about it at Mews when we were trying to explain why hospitality was an industry where technology should be "silent" - ubiquitous, encompassing, and yet unobtrusive. And used to foster the thing we think is central to hospitality – human to human interaction.

You might think it's a little counterintuitive for someone at a technology company to say we want people to use our technology less. It goes against the prevalent mindset propagated by social media, gaming and other tech, whose primary motivation is *more*. More views, more engagement, more hours logged.

But hospitality is different. Our industry provides unique experiences that should take people away from the expected. We've used words like seamless and frictionless for a long time, but this is going one step further with the goal of making the technology invisible. However, in hospitality, the application is obvious. For hotel staff, it means less time using key software like their CRS, PMS or RMS. It means not looking into a screen

or a keyboard when a guest is standing in front of you. It means not spending your time locked up in an office, when your job is to help book and manage groups and corporations. The technology recedes to its rightful place: in the background, as a silent and reliable partner.

Disengagement also applies to hotel guests. No one books a stay at a hotel because they enjoy the various administrative tasks throughout their trip, or even the idea of having to "engage" with a phone in order to order something. The less time they spend interacting with a process, hardware or any other technology, the more time they'll have to enjoy their stay and to create those memorable experiences that truly create human value.

We believe that a modern hotel brand should embrace technology that works silently in the background, so that the human work of human engagement can be maximised. This is even more obvious in the age of AI. Why look through fields on a guest profile when ChatGPT can give you a script for the interaction? Why not let it answer and submit your RFPs and confirm reservations?

There are big gains to be had for your bottom line as well as for the guest experience. Why stare at a report on a screen when a Large Language Model will tell you which modifications need to be looked at in order to hit the monthly budget? Why worry about what rate your competitor is selling at when a machine learning-enabled pricing engine can process a thousand signals to deliver and distribute the best price to the right customer profile?

A few years ago, much of this felt farfetched – or at the very least, still in an embryonic stage. But technology moves quickly – it's up to us as an industry to move at the same speed.

There's a great quote from Le Petit Prince: 'What is essential is invisible to the eye.' Obviously, smart and powerful hotel tech is essential to streamlining operations and maximizing revenue. But again, we come back to the idea of invisibility; the principle that what technology provides is not the end, but the means. In our case, the means to delivering remarkable guest experiences. That's why user disengagement is the future of hospitality technology.

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Richard Valtr — Founder, Mews
Richard Valtr made his start in the hotel sector on the ground, during the creation of Prague's Emblem Hotel. It was while he was leading the concept development, design, procurement and project management for the property that he realised hotel management systems had failed to keep pace with hotels or their guests. Richard believes that the hotel sector is capable of great innovation, of breaking free of its traditional boxes. "I believe that now, more than ever, we have the tools and the mindset to drive our own transformations, across hospitality and beyond." In 10 years of Mews, Richard has pushed for hoteliers to rethink everything in their properties, from payments, to pricing to realising the full potential of your property, square inch by square inch. Richard studied at UCL, lives in Brooklyn and thinks Twitter is a "loveable hellscape".

Mews — mews.com/en
Mews is a leading platform for the new era of hospitality. Over 3,000 properties in 70 countries are powered by Mews. The Mews Hospitality Cloud is designed to streamline operations for modern hoteliers, transform the guest experience and create more profitable businesses. Customers include Accor, Generator-Freehand, Nordic Choice Hotels, The Social Hub, Life House and Les Airelles. Mews has been named the World's Best Independent Hotel PMS Provider by World Travel Tech Awards (2022) and won Best Place to Work in Hotel Tech (2021, 2022) from Hotel Tech Report. The company has offices in Europe, the United States and Australia.

HYB

Revenue Management Trends and ROE takeaways to Watch for 2024

Distribution & Revenue

Frank Pitsikalis
Vice President, Product Strategy, Hotels, Agilysys

Chris Crowley
Chief Revenue Officer, Duetto

Synopsis
The hospitality industry in 2022 experienced a major shift towards cloud-based technologies due to staffing pressures and market variability. The coming year will see hotels further adopting technology to drive efficiency and adapt to various revenue management trends. These include adapting to variable demand and short-term booking windows, dynamic pricing, using real-time and predictive data, promoting data transparency across departments, and offering profitable personalization to guests. The investment in technology has become a crucial priority for the sector in 2023 to keep up with modern customer demands, deliver exceptional experiences, and retain top talent.

2022 was a year when we saw a significant move to cloud-based technology. Staffing pressures and market variability meant that hotels needed to implement systems that could harness and process extraordinary amounts of data without having to hire large teams of specialists or increase workloads for existing staff.

The interoperability of HTNG-spec, cloud-based technology has meant that tech stacks have evolved rapidly across a range of areas of critical importance to hotels.

Looking at the results of Duetto's recent Trends & Predictions survey, 2023 is a year of increased tech adoption, as hotels look for ways to drive efficiency, boost profitability, and adapt to the challenges of the year ahead. Here are six revenue management trends to watch for in the year ahead:

1. VARIABLE DEMAND
Demand will continue to be variable because we will continue to experience multiple overlapping market crises on a recurring basis - from pandemics to wars to recession - as such hotels will need to adopt very flexible pricing models, especially in the high-volume hub city destinations.

However, there are opportunities here. This variable demand should drive hotels to focus more on the repeat customer, using personalization and emotional trust appeal to build closer connections and loyalty with the individual guest. These connections lead to guests who stay longer, spend more money on-site, and leave stronger reviews.

Return on Experience (ROE) takeaway: By defining the different guest loyalty types needed, such as individual, family, group, or corporate account, properties can control their loyalty programs and define the right program parameters for each.

2. SHORT-TERM BOOKINGS WINDOWS
The short-term booking window will continue to challenge hotel teams operationally and from a revenue perspective. However, a short-term booking window represents an opportunity to connect with a more mobile, more astute, and engaged traveler, switching seamlessly between business and leisure profiles. Hotels are learning to integrate customer data and loyalty profiles across the entire spend onsite to curate personalized offers for a more discerning guest. This is a guest that is used to shopping in a short-term booking window and making direct decisions with their hotel supplier.

ROE takeaway: A booking engine should move guests effortlessly through the booking process while providing real-time room availability to sell every last room, seamless confirmations to avoid confusion that may stem from multiple confirmations, and instant PMS data access which removes the need to needlessly configure systems.

3. DYNAMIC OPTIMIZATION
Hotels can no longer rely on fixed pricing models to deliver consistent and reliable volumes across their hotel real estate. Dynamic pricing and rate flexibility have become essential, not just for the hotel, but also to attract the new breed of engaged traveler. Real-time dynamic optimization enables hotels to react instantly to changes in demand, accelerating go-to-market strategies and promotions. In a world where everything is in an instant, a lack of speed can kill profit. Be ready for agile pricing - what we may come to refer to as 'situational pricing' - as this assists hotels in driving advantage in short-term windows or limited seasonality by using flexible data models based on forward-looking predictive models.

ROE takeaway: The right integration between systems enables a property's PMS to share the rate, availability, and inventory details with the RMS – allowing it to modify rates based on availability, market demand, competitor pricing, and historical pricing, before sending them back to the PMS.

4. REAL-TIME FORWARD-LOOKING DATA
Historic data is no longer sufficient to build a hotel revenue strategy. Moving forward, hotels need to look beyond the booking engine and start considering wider demand intelligence, such as how upcoming events (sports, concerts, conventions, etc.) may boost demand, and on the flip side, be aware of how other external factors, such as severe weather, may change the demand curve. If you measure it, you can manage it.

A great example is Virgin Hotels Edinburgh, which opened in the middle of the summer season of 2022 and just ahead of the busy festival period. The hotel needed to enter the market competitively on price without underselling. However, as a new property, the hotel had no historical data. Therefore, the revenue team used short lead market demand data and pick up data to be able to price and forecast more accurately. Having access to forward-looking demand data, was important in enabling the hotel team to identify small market trends, making sure they didn't miss out on any opportunities.

ROE takeaway: When systems are integrated across a property, this data can be used to help ensure inventory levels will meet forecasted demand and staffing levels are sufficient to delight guests. Being able to tap into the data provided by this type of demand intelligence will help reduce stress on staff and ensure guest expectations are met, leading to a higher ROE for both.

5. DATA TRANSPARENCY AND CO-OPERATION
Forward-looking data, such as web traffic data, provides hoteliers with a vital heads-up on what is to come in terms of bookings and consumer demand, and this is even more important while that booking window remains truncated.

Sharing this data with the relevant teams and making sure that all departments have access to the same data, in real-time, means that operations teams can better schedule staff and order perishables, while revenue, sales, and marketing can work together to fill any gaps in demand through tailored packages and personalized pricing.

ROE takeaway: A sizable portion of operating cost is tied up in the items a property purchases. The right inventory management tool ensures properties maximize every dollar by having all the ingredients for food & retail management success while reducing waste, spoilage, theft, and overstock.

6. MAKING PERSONALIZATION PROFITABLE

Expectations have evolved and guests that provide their data to properties expect bespoke, personalized experiences to be provided in return. Personalized pricing and packages can be assigned to guests based on upsell demand or loyalty profile directly from the inventory through revenue management. We will see hotels working in a more fluid and more targeted way with their individual guests and business partners in 2023. The more personalized your offers, the higher your conversion rate. The best way to drive this is to link personalization directly to revenue. Hotels will see this trend continue through loyalty and profile-based offers targeted directly to individual guests in the shopping and confirmation process.

ROE takeaway: Personalized experiences are a must. To personalize, properties must digitize. Systems that help properties retain staff, as well as delight guests, are essential. Guests and customers are in charge.

Some want digital interactions, some want in-person ones, and some want both, depending on circumstances. Knowing and acting on these differences sets hospitality leaders apart from the rest.

WHY MAKE TECH INVESTMENT A PRIORITY IN 2023?

Still unsure about the need for a technology upgrade? Ask yourself, are your customers still carrying around a Nokia 3310 out of loyalty? The phone was great in its day, but the world has moved on. Technology has advanced. The customer has advanced. And hotel businesses that don't keep up with this change will slip behind at a rapid pace.

When your current technology is limiting your options, the replacement cost must be compared to the revenue lost from not implementing technology in the first place.

In addition, modern solutions help attract and retain the brightest staff, who don't want to have to perform mundane tasks such as data entry. They want a system that offers the efficiencies of controlled automation so that they can work to influence the direction of business and strategy of a hotel business and help deliver exceptional experiences to guests.

- Trends by Chris Crowley, Duetto
- ROE takeaways by Frank Pitsikalis, Agilysys

Discover more trends & predictions from hotel industry leaders in Duetto's eBook: **Targeting Greater Profitability In 2023.** *Download a FREE copy here.*

Frank Pitsikalis — Vice President, Product Strategy, Hotels, Agilysys

Frank brings a wealth of professional and personal experience to his role as Vice President, Product Strategy, Hotels at Agilysys. Previously the Founder & CEO of ResortSuite, he has advised Fortune 1000 companies regarding the strategic use of technology to help achieve organizational objectives and worked at top consulting firms including, Ernst & Young, USoft (Unisys), and MERANT. Combining his knowledge of the hospitality field with his background in enterprise technology, Frank founded ResortSuite, establishing it as a leading provider of integrated, guest-centric, hospitality technologies. Frank has served 13 years on the ISPA Board of Directors and serves as Chairman of the ISPA Foundation.

Chris Crowley — Chief Revenue Officer, Duetto

Chris Crowley joined Duetto in April 2021 as Senior VP of Sales and was promoted to Chief Revenue Officer in April 2022. Chris leads the global sales organization, which operates offices in the US, Argentina, London, Germany, and Singapore. Before Duetto, Chris established his Nina & Pinta business travel consultancy in late 2017, working with a wide array of clients, including hotel technology specialist HRS Group. An experienced travel industry professional, Chris also worked as Senior Vice President at BCD Travel. And he enjoyed hospitality tenures with Accor, Radisson, Concorde Hotels, Grange Hotels, and 47 Park Street Hotel in London.

Agilysys, Inc. — agilysys.com

Agilysys is well known for its long heritage of hospitality-focused technology innovation. The Company delivers modular and integrated software solutions and expertise to businesses seeking to maximize Return on Experience (ROE) through hospitality encounters that are both personal and profitable. Over time, customers achieve High Return Hospitality by consistently delighting guests, retaining staff and growing margins. Customers around the world include: branded and independent hotels; multi-amenity resort properties; casinos; property, hotel and resort management companies; cruise lines; corporate dining providers; higher education campus dining providers; food service management companies; hospitals; lifestyle communities; senior living facilities; stadiums; and theme parks. The Agilysys Hospitality Cloud™ combines core operational systems for property management (PMS), point-of-sale (POS) and Inventory and Procurement (I&P) with Experience Enhancers™ that meaningfully improve interactions for guests and for employees across dimensions such as digital access, mobile convenience, self-service control, personal choice, payment options, service coverage and real-time insights to improve decisions. Core solutions and Experience Enhancers are selectively combined in Hospitality Solution Studios™ tailored to specific hospitality settings and business needs. Agilysys operates across the Americas, Europe, the Middle East, Africa, Asia-Pacific, and India with headquarters located in Alpharetta, GA.

Where did they come from? Where did they go? Mobile Data Insights could very well show

Data & Security

James Savier

Vice President | Hotel Brokerage & Investment Sales, CBRE

Synopsis
Advancements in location intelligence tools can help hoteliers better understand guest travel patterns and anticipate guest needs.

Last month, I was in a car with my father-in-law. We were backing out of the garage and down the driveway, a routine endeavor for suburban commuters. The vehicle had no rearview camera, which served as a shocking realization for a millennial who had grown accustomed to technology. I found this blind reversing maneuver to be a rather anxiety-inducing exercise. Thankfully, my father-in-law navigated safely to the road, and we went on our way.

Even small advancements in technology can have sweeping changes to our daily lives. In this article, we will explore how hotels can leverage location-based technology, such as tracking cellphone pings, to enhance guest experiences and streamline operations.

CELLPHONES – THEY RING, THEY PING, BUT THEY ALSO DO OTHER THINGS

The first handheld cellular phone call was made on April 3rd, 1973, and cellular technology has come quite a long way since then. There are approximately 298 million[1] smartphone users in the United States as of 2021, and roughly 6.92 billion[2] users globally as of 2023. Cellphones work by communication with cell towers, generating "pings" to mobile devices that can be used to track cellphone location, which is utilized to find lost phones, for emergency services, and more. Global Positioning Systems (GPS), on the other hand, use satellites to track the location of devices. Cellphone pings are not quite as reliable as GPS, but they can help hoteliers leverage data to better understand the travel patterns of their guests.

REAL-TIME EXAMPLE & APPLICATION FOR HOTELIERS

Our team is currently marketing a hotel on the southside of the airport in Atlanta, GA. We leveraged data from CBRE's Location Intelligence team to understand visitor movement within the geofence (a virtual perimeter around a specific geographical area) of the hotel. Hotels can leverage this technology to better understand where guests are traveling to and from after arriving on property.

The chart below lists the top metro areas where guests traveled from in 2019 (left) and 2022 (right). From this data, a hotel operator could decide to increase direct marketing and advertising spend in these regions.

COMPARISON

Top Visiting CBSAs

Tracking customers to home and day locations allows us to identify the top originating CBSAs for visitors to this site.

Hoteliers can also leverage mobile insights data to better understand guest interactions in the local community.

In 2022, the top destination for guests at the hotel was the Piccadilly Restaurant, a cafeteria-style restaurant serving Southern American cuisine. The restaurant is located 8.6 miles away from the hotel, about a 15-minute drive without the notorious Atlanta rush hour traffic. The hotel could use this information to collaborate with Piccadilly, potentially by incorporating elements of their menu into the hotel so that guests can enjoy local cuisine without leaving the comfort of the property. Additionally, the hotel could leverage joint promotional strategies for nearby attractions (such as Six Flags, #11 on the list) and receive commissions for on-site sales at the hotel.

Customer Affinity

1	Piccadilly Restaurants	16	QuikTrip
2	Taco Mac	17	Westin
3	Embassy Suites	18	Howard Johnson
4	Cook Out	19	Waffle House
5	Texaco	20	Chevron
6	Hilton Garden Inn	21	Aloft
7	Home2 Suites	22	Zaxby's
8	Hilton	23	Goodyear Auto Service
9	Homewood Suites	24	Center
10	Krystal Burger	25	Renaissance Hotels
11	Six Flags Entertainment	26	Hampton Inn
12	Corp	27	Racetrac
13	DoubleTree	28	Mellow Mushroom
14	SunTrust Bank	29	Citgo
15	RaceWay	30	Captain D's

Where people who entered the geofence attended after they left the geofence.

HIGH-FREQUENCY DATA: FINDING THE RIGHT WAVELENGTHS

In the hotel industry, we benefit from unbelievable data including daily occupancy and rate statistics. Even with the increasing capabilities of high-frequency data and forward-looking information, it's natural for many hoteliers to revert back to low-frequency, historical data.

Using low-frequency data is like reading a map; it's useful for telling you where to go and how to get there. High-frequency data is like using GPS; it can show you real-time traffic patterns and inform you of the optimal routes. The utilization of Mobile Insights tools available through services like Placer.ai is becoming more common in other sectors like retail.

HANDLE WITH CARE: WITH GREAT POWER COMES GREAT RESPONSIBILITY

As technology continues to advance further into the digital realm, new tiers of data will emerge. Hoteliers capture sensitive consumer data but must treat this data with the same care that is administered to the guests themselves. The degrees of privacy laws varies between jurisdictions, so it is best practice to adhere to the highest standards. If we can keep respect and guest service as our true north guiding principles, the industry can find practical ways to leverage this data to create win-win opportunities for guests, operators and brands.

Footnotes

1. U.S. smartphone market – Statistics & Facts | Statista
2. 20 Vital Smartphone Usage Statistics [2023] | Zippia

James Savier — Vice President | Hotel Brokerage & Investment Sales, CBRE
James Savier serves as Vice President at CBRE Hotels. Based in Atlanta, James focuses on full-service hotel and resort investment sales in the United States. Prior to joining CBRE, James was Vice President at JLL where he was involved in the sale of more than 20,000 hotel rooms totaling over $5 billion. Previously, he worked at Deloitte Consulting as a consultant with a core focus in financial modeling. During his tenure, James served clients in several industries including banking, aerospace and defense, technology, and telecommunications.

CBRE Hotels — pip.cbrehotels.com
CBRE Hotels is a specialized advisory group within CBRE providing brokerage, valuation, consulting, research and capital markets services to companies in the hotel sector. CBRE Hotels is comprised of over 375 dedicated hospitality professionals located in 60 offices across the globe.

3 Ways the Labor Shortage Will Push Innovation

Human Stack

Richard Castle
Co-Founder and COO, Cloudbeds

Synopsis

In this article, Cloudbeds' Co-Founder Richard Castle expresses concern over the current labor shortage plaguing the global hospitality industry and the potential impact this could have on the quality of guest experiences. The author argues that innovation is needed to address this issue, suggesting several areas where modernization could help offset labor shortages and maintain high-quality guest experiences. These include the acceleration of virtual front desks, the development of more self-guided staff training, and the fostering of increased role flexibility within the industry. The author also provides examples of how these innovative shifts are already making a positive impact, and predicts that these changes, if widely adopted, could significantly alter the hospitality landscape for the better, allowing the industry to overcome labor shortages while still delivering excellent service. The article concludes with a tribute to hospitality workers, and a call to technology developers to focus their attention on this vital industry.

I've had a lot of incredible travel experiences. But the ones I loved the most would never have happened if not for the meaningful connections I made with hospitality professionals who guided me during my stay. Whether that was the owner of a posada in Brazil or a ryokan in Japan, their passion and talents elevated my trip from average to extraordinary.

I'm not the first to worry that global hospitality staff shortages put remarkable guest experiences like mine at risk. In the US alone, the numbers are worrying. 82% of hotels don't have enough staff and 26% cited severe shortages according to the AHLA. Leisure and Hospitality is still short 400k employees, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics presented by the Cleveland Research Company. Our industry is indeed recovering, but that doesn't mask the fact that there's a permanent shift in where workers want to spend their time. When higher wages can be earned in other flexible, customer-service-based roles, that are less seasonal with shorter hours, many people are turning away from hospitality for good.

The hospitality labor shortage demands innovation. Standard ways of operating will need to quickly change in an effort to recruit and retain hospitality workers that maintain guest experience and thereby the business. We're already seeing a glimpse of these innovative shifts. Here are the key areas that we expect rapid modernization to deal with the changing labor market in our industry:

THE VIRTUAL FRONT DESK WILL ACCELERATE

I'd venture to say that checking in to a hotel is only marginally quicker than it was 50 years ago, despite gradual progress since the days of registration cards and key racks. I don't believe digitalization has resulted in significantly less guest friction industry-wide just yet, but that's about to change. Innovation makes a virtual front desk possible – a front desk with no queue, a former receptionist now a guest experience manager, and immediate access to a room in the space of a few taps on a cellphone. Using resources more efficiently can replace the front desk and minimize the need for reception work.

We just spoke to a Cloudbeds customer who raved about the results of switching to virtual check-in, which has saved her about 16 hours a week in staff time and caused an increase in positive ratings. This was one of those cases where a receptionist became a guest experience manager, thanks to innovation. There's no doubt in my mind that personal job satisfaction is higher for someone curating local experiences than for someone punching in passport data in the majority of cases. That's how you retain staff and delight guests all at once. Redesigning one role, thanks to automation, can allow one person to accomplish the work of two or three, and be happier doing it.

MORE SELF-GUIDED STAFF TRAINING

We'll see the modernization of staff training accelerate, especially given how much turnover we experience in hospitality. Where most industries experience a 10-15% turnover rate, recent data puts the hospitality industry's rate closer to 70-80% in the U.S. When that much attrition is experienced by an already short-staffed team, property owners will be looking for ways to lower the training costs of staff, many who will inevitably leave. Yes, some of the biggest, luxury brands may still offer high-touch onboarding and orientation. At independents and smaller brands, however, we'll start to see online training quickly and efficiently get new team members up to speed.

Hospitality technology vendors, for example, increasingly provide self-guided online training and videos, going beyond lessons on how to use their platforms by providing valuable courses on everything from Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) to revenue management basics. When property-specific training needs arise, technologies like AI video creators provide the solution. With the click of a few buttons and a typed script, a compelling human avatar can perfectly deliver the details of your training manual on video, with a shot of your property in the background. This will save resources, allow trainees to come up to speed quickly, and help curb staff shortages. Properties no longer need someone in the backroom training all day. Their energy can be focused in other places, like giving the current staff the development they need to create outstanding guest experiences.

HOSPITALITY ROLES WILL BECOME INCREASINGLY FLEXIBLE

Flexibility is key in today's workforce. While many industries have pushed toward more remote work, there's no way around the fact a property still needs positions that show up on-site. Innovation that enables staff flexibility between these two options will be paramount. We've seen how messaging platforms improve guest communication. We can expect this kind of tech to improve communication between staff and management so that critical information like schedule changes aren't only available onsite. The schedule is key. Innovative operational technology will make it so that staff can be easily managed without having to demand very long hours, assigned with only a week's advance notice. Innovation has already enabled how workers are paid, too, like same-day pay and digital tipping.

We expect to see more of this, just as I expect that more work will be done remotely in hospitality than ever before. Cloud-based systems will allow certain responsibilities to be done from anywhere, like reporting, scheduling, handling future guests' needs, communicating with current guests and arranging to help them in real-time. Technology, driven by staffing preferences for flexibility, will eventually shift the hospitality mindset. It will prove that there are plenty of areas of work that can be done remotely with new and innovative systems and tools.

Staff shortages are nothing new for hospitality. It might look like staff shortage is here to stay, in our post-pandemic world. Candidly, that's an incorrect assumption. Smart properties will see how innovative technology can change the way they operate. These will be the trendsetters who overcome staff shortage while simultaneously improving guest experience. Others will race to catch up.

One thing's for certain, hospitality workers are the real heroes and deserve the attention of every Next-Gen technologist out there. Without them, our world would be a far less-connected and culturally immersive place.

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Richard Castle — Co-Founder and COO, Cloudbeds
Richard Castle is the co-founder and COO of Cloudbeds, the hospitality management platform powering more reservations and happier guests for lodging businesses worldwide. Under his purpose-driven leadership, Cloudbeds has grown into a company that has generated billions of dollars in revenue for thousands of properties alongside a fully-remote, distributed workforce of 700+ people in more than 40 countries. Together with his co-founder, Adam Harris, they have amassed awards for culture, product, and innovation including Forbes' America's Best Startup Employers, Inc's Best Workplaces, and EY Entrepreneur of the Year.

Cloudbeds — cloudbeds.com
Cloudbeds is the platform that powers hospitality, enabling tens of thousands of lodging businesses in more than 150 countries worldwide to grow and thrive. The award-winning Cloudbeds Platform brings together technology solutions to increase revenue, delight guests, and streamline operations into a single unified system, enhanced by a curated marketplace of third-party integrations. Founded in 2012, Cloudbeds was named No. 1 PMS, No. 1 Hotel Management System, and No. 1 Guest Messaging Software by Hotel Tech Report in 2023 and was recognized as a major player in the 2022 IDC Marketscape Report. For more information, visit www.cloudbeds.com.

Hotel vs. Machine: Looking beyond the Hype to find true value

Tech Stack

Andrew Metcalfe
Chief Technical Officer, Guestline

Synopsis
Guestline CTO and hotelier, Andrew Metcalfe asserts that technology in the hospitality industry should prioritize ease of use, reliability, and hotelier-focused innovations. Metcalfe advocates for intelligent technology that improves guest experiences and optimizes operations, highlighting the promise of pre-payment systems for smoother check-ins and direct bookings for more control and better guest experiences. He envisions a more integrated, user-friendly approach to technology that allows hoteliers to focus on core hospitality tasks. He underscores that the future of the hospitality industry lies in the hands of hoteliers themselves.

As a CTO and a hotelier, myself. I strongly believe that hoteliers are the only ones who can change the hospitality industry. While the benefits of technology in the hotel industry are undeniable, hoteliers often lack the technical expertise (which in fairness isn't their fault, they went to school to become hoteliers not tech wizards!) required to navigate the rapidly evolving landscape of hospitality technology. Many, with no IT department, simply want technology that works, even if it's not the best in the market. As technology continues to evolve, it's becoming more critical for technology companies to do more for hoteliers, ensuring that they have the right tools and resources to stay competitive in a fast-paced industry. Ultimately, it's a battle between the hotel and the machine and it's my job as CTO to be at the forefront of driving innovation to help hotels win. To win in guest experiences, to win at optimising operations and to win at driving business growth.

It's not particularly favourable to say this but I think hoteliers are being let down by providers. What we need to be focusing on is how we have fewer consolidated vendors who do things well and are really well connected, rather than open chaos which hospitality thinks is right, right now. Everyone seems to be starting a start-up and expecting it to just grow and being grumpy with PMS's for not integrating to the hundreds and hundreds of products available now. That isn't hotelier focused. It is unrealistic to assume that hoteliers possess the necessary technological expertise to assess the superiority of any of the 30+ available Guest Experience apps. Moreover, their time is limited due to ongoing staffing difficulties, making it impractical for them to undertake such evaluations. Another reason of hesitancy from hoteliers to switch their existing legacy systems could be lack of trust in the vendor market. Even if the 'promised' gains of a new solution sound really tempting, in first instance they fear to compromise on the functionality they already have and need. It's hard to believe that in 2023, hoteliers still think going cloud means compromising on quality and functionality, however, this is not the case. As the CTO for a pioneering cloud PMS vendor, we proudly assert that our cloud solution offers unparalleled performance and functionality without any compromises.

In 2023, hoteliers are demanding more intelligent technology that can remove frustrations and deliver a seamless experience for guests. But for me, it's about helping hoteliers to understand what truly is valuable and necessary, it's not about following the latest trends in digital marketing or revenue management systems, it's about looking beyond the hype. I walk into hotels and say, 'You don't need to hire an IT Director' and they say 'Fantastic!' However, you can sense their fear of 'But, how do we compete with the big guys?'.

It's about having less stress as possible through tech integrations and hosting, moving to the cloud, ease of use and above all it's about being able to phone someone up outside the company and asking, 'Please can you fix this problem, and I don't want any excuses.'

Hoteliers are smart, most hoteliers know what they really need to get on with and do because they feel it on the ground. The key for me is to try and be one step ahead, looking on the horizon as to what hoteliers are likely to want and to need. As technology suppliers, there is a requirement for us to be flexible to changing demands, to architect our systems in a way that can create new solutions, to train our developers with a hotelier focused mindset, to interview our customers about their needs and above all to be innovative. However, we need to make it as easy as possible for hoteliers and if that means we need to decide whether we prioritise adoption and ease of use over functionality, we will take that approach and in time we can build on that. A standard platform feature is often enough, and the real value is about how all these pieces start to join together.

I understand that technology is not the top thing hoteliers worry about when they walk into their hotel, so it is likely that change or transformation is going to take slightly longer than anyone likes in this industry but as long as it is happening and is discernible, they'll get there in the end. If Ryanair can switch from being one of the worst perceived airlines to being one of the most popular, as a case study, there is hope for hoteliers! When Ryanair revolutionised airline travel, the public were outraged. With online check-in, a limited-service airport journey, priority boarding, hand luggage only, first come first served seating and extortionate 'at-gate' fees, the list goes on. However, when our attitudes changed and we embraced this new way of travel, we adopted a faster, more seamless, affordable and a better organised approach to short distance travel. While in the past personal service was standard and digital experiences were "special", today, we live in digital world, and it seems that personal service is becoming somewhat "premium".

In my opinion, technology should support digitisation in areas where it reflects reality. However, staff are still necessary where technology cannot fully replace their tasks, such as preparing rooms for guests. The Covid 19 pandemic and staff shortages have changed the perception of technology such as online check-ins and kiosks, which were previously seen as a budget option or a way to avoid interacting with receptionists. Now, people have grown accustomed to the convenience of online services, but they still value quality (rather than just transactional interactions) conversations with human staff.

One area that is going to see huge growth in the sector is the wider adoption of pre-payment for hotels, it's becoming increasingly important, particularly for corporate deals where check-in and checkout times need to be adhered to. Queues often build up due to balance errors or staff needing to make changes to reservations. With airlines, because everything is prepaid, it's automated, so they don't care if you turn up or not. If a guest has prepaid for their room, it reduces the stress of no shows and now the conversation between the hotel and the guest is 'trust', it's all dealt with before the guest arrives, people trust the 'machine' a lot more, prepayments for me is a

massive step forward for the industry and has proven to be successful.

If pre-payment details are accurate and reflected on balance information, it reduces the workload for reception staff and leads to a faster, smoother check-in process. This allows for value-added conversations with guests and potential upselling opportunities. Its why PMS companies are working on products like virtual credit cards, and other aspects to make the guests perspective on the reservation accurate and understandable, not just to the hotel staff etc. The ultimate goal is to have a flawless check-in process where guests feel valued and satisfied.

If you think back, we did find it difficult, and it didn't always work when airlines went digital. With Ryanair as an example, you don't book through a third party, you book direct meaning Ryanair are in control of everything from start to finish. You as the booker, use their website, you use their app, their kiosks at the airports, you have been interacting with Ryanair as a business throughout the entire journey. One of the challenges hotels have is with OTA's, it makes a hotel's tech stack less efficient as it has to work around it and the payment challenges etc, however with a direct booking, it goes straight into the PMS so the system immediately gets the details and knows the balance and we, the tech, has the control and the guest who books direct automatically starts to get the better experience. One of the goals I'd like to see more of in the industry is that the hoteliers offer the better price and makes more money by getting people to book direct. It's not new but hotels are getting punished for not solving that problem themselves.

WHAT DOES THE FUTURE HOLD?

The number of PMS companies will consolidate down because the economies of scale of technology are as such, people who don't have enough customers can't invest enough, there is a reason there aren't as many different word processors anymore, there are a few good ones, because that's the only way you can achieve the technical depth and breadth of product at a price that people can afford, that's inevitable.

I think within that you'll see platforms emerge, integration will still exist for sure, but it will be a lot more intelligent and a lot less spasmodic, much more targeted with first class partnerships, like Microsoft have with salesforce and amazon have with ERP systems.

It will come down to making the guest experience and the hotel user experience much less of a separate thing and more part of the journey, it will be like having a pen, you'll have a PMS, the processes will start to drift away leaving the hotelier to focus on the stuff that matters and it will be much more joined up.

Technology should be taking a backseat not the forefront really, it should be your key to more revenue, more control, more automation, more satisfaction and more of what you wish for your hotel. The only people who are going to change hospitality are the hoteliers. Because I am a hotelier too, I fully appreciate how difficult it is to run a hotel across revenues, tax, staffing as one of the biggest and hardest challenges. Hotel software needs to help hoteliers in an incredible difficult industry.

You don't want to be the Pan Ams that didn't want to adapt. Ryanair left them on the runway...

Hoteliers can be a lot nimbler if they look beyond the hype to find true value.

■

Andrew Metcalfe — Chief Technical Officer, Guestline
Andrew Metcalfe was appointed the first ever Chief Technical Officer (CTO) of global hospitality software business, Guestline, in June 2017. He is responsible for ensuring the business maintains its position as one of the hospitality industry's innovative driving forces and leads product management, development, infrastructure, technical support and IT functions. In particular, the Guestline Labs function has been implemented under Metcalfe's tenure to drive the company's innovation through daily code releases and ongoing customer engagement. Metcalfe owns a boutique 5-bedroom B&B, restaurant and event venue in Essex, Downham Hall. He holds a degree in Mathematics from the University of Bath.

Guestline Ltd — guestline.com
Established in the UK, Guestline provide innovative property management and distribution software to the hospitality industry. Founded on cloud-based technology, Guestline's revenue generating solutions enable hotel groups and independents of all sizes to achieve maximum occupancy at the most profitable rate. Fully integrated into the Guestline distribution and central reservation platforms, the property management software is currently growing revenues in businesses in ten countries across four continents. The range of products include Rezlynx PMS, online booking manager, CRS, channel distribution manager, PCI compliance and EPoS systems.

Navigating the Digital Frontier: Activities to Future-proof Your Hotel's Online Prese

Distribution & Revenue

Stephanie Sparks Smith

CEO & Digital Matriarch, Cogwheel Marketing

Synopsis

In a rapidly evolving digital world, the hospitality industry is leveraging data and analytics tools to create highly personalized guest experiences and drive bookings. The integration of digital marketing has become crucial in understanding and influencing the booking journey of potential guests. As the granularity of guest data improves, all hotel departments must work in unison to stay ahead of trends, innovate, and keep their online presence updated. The key lies in fostering collaboration across sales, marketing, and revenue management, enabling hotels to strategically position themselves online and consistently engage their target audience. It's essential to maintain a consistent narrative across all digital channels, thereby increasing visibility and influencing booking decisions. Preparing for the future requires identifying current needs and devising a strategy to amplify the hotel's total online presence.

It's an exciting time for all of us in the hospitality industry and our guests! Digital marketing has become an indispensable tool for hotels to analyze data, strategize, create a more personalized journey for our target audiences and drive bookings.

As we look toward the future and the data available to us becomes more granular toward understanding our guests' booking journey, it's integral for all hotel departments to work together toward keeping up with trends, utilize data and analytics tools, and continuously keep your total online presence up to date.

Hotel departments must take the time to embrace innovation and agility toward making digital marketing an integral part of the potential guest's and in-house guests' experience, leveraging data analytics for personalized targeting to meet them where they are in their booking journey. Personalized targeting is just one example of proactive measures hotels can take toward gaining exposure, influencing booking decisions and engaging with their guests.

Continuously staying proactive, analyzing the data, adapting to trends, and fostering collaboration across sales, marketing and revenue management, hotels can strategically position online presence. Potential guests need to see you multiple times before your hotel is a part of their consideration set. Your hotel needs both exposure to the right target audience as well as a consistent presence to get them to check rates, then book. Are you telling a consistent story across all your digital channels?

To prepare for the future and build your online foundation you need to identify where your needs are, so you can begin working out a strategy to increase your hotel's total online presence.

1. Do you have a balanced commercial strategy between sales, marketing and revenue management?

2. When did my hotel complete its last TOTAL online presence audit to identify the opportunities below?

MARKET TRENDS

Visit Trends.Google.com (free) to search for "hotels in [Insert hotel city]" to view the search volume for your area.

UNIQUE SELLING PROPOSITIONS (USPS)

Define what makes your hotel unique against the competitive set as well as other hotels in your name brand. Remember, not all guests know your "brand standards" and most guests need to have information repeated to them. Unique Selling Propositions in the content of your hotel website, your on-page search engine optimization strategy, imagery, copy in your ads, social media and prominent throughout your entire online presence.

CONTENT

Content is relevant and up to date, ensure amenities are accurate across all channels, including OTAs and local listings like Google Business Profile. Ensure all fields and characters are maximized in your hotel Content Management System. Room descriptions should showcase the differences in room type offerings. Highlight uniqueness in the room name, including balcony, sofa bed or views.

IMAGERY

Imagery is a type of content and is the number one conversion metric and should be done every 3 to 5 years. Ensure your imagery meets or exceeds brand standards as well as respective OTA image standards to maximize your content score. Imagery should accurately represent your hotel, including any unique amenities. Consider images to represent pet-friendly, views, and in-room amenities as well as images that show the depth and size of the guest rooms and bathroom.

Bonus Tip: Find a way to incorporate video onto your website. Video improves two important SEO metrics, time spent on your page and the number of backlinks referring guests to your website. A virtual tour of the property curated for your audience's needs strategically placed on your site for social events, corporate meetings, leisure travelers etc.

DEMAND GENERATORS

Ensure hotel demand generators are represented in content and on-page and off-page search engine optimization opportunities.

ROOM TYPES

All your room types should be represented and sold on your hotel website and OTAs. Highlight content that showcases differences between room types. Room type amenities should be accurate on all channels, including OTAs and your hotel website.

HOTEL PACKAGES

Ensure local packages display any hotel partnerships and showcase proximity to popular demand generators. Ensure your website and sell strategy for packages are aligned. Determine if it makes sense to push packages to OTA sites if ADR increases can be achieved.

ON-PAGE SEARCH ENGINE OPTIMIZATION

Conduct thorough keyword research and target with on-page search engine optimization via title tags, headers, and meta descriptions. Your meta description should include unique selling propositions and highlight proximity to major demand generators.

Your unique on-page search engine optimization strategy represents your individual hotel identity separate from the brand.

EXPEDIA

Conduct a variety of searches to determine your organic ranking on Expedia.com when searching for your hotel's city. You can also view your sort order in Expedia Partner Central, but we find it to be inaccurate. Respond to all your reviews and note that walking of any Expedia guest or any forced refunds may cause your ranking to drop. Ensure hotel and room type amenities are up to date and try to achieve a 100% content score. This includes making sure each image accurately represents each room type and old images are removed. Also confirm the primary image is the right one for each room type. Check the points of interest to ensure they are relevant, and the closest ones are listed. Utilize the pre-arrival email functionality to convey the information you want the guest to know prior to arrival.

BOOKING.COM

Wash and repeat everything mentioned with Expedia. Auditing these 2 players will cover approximately 90% of your OTA presence. The only difference with Booking.com is you can suggest changes to the content on the home page and it is easier to see access levels and change contacts for different scenarios.

OTHER OTAS

Outside of Expedia and Booking.com, we recommend spot-checking other OTAs like Agoda, Ctrip, and for luxury hotels and resorts check tablet hotels, Prestigia, and Magellan Luxury Hotels. Additionally, if your hotel participates in Hotel Tonite or Hopper, those should be reviewed.

METASEARCH

Unlike your OTA partners, MetaSearch sites generally do not have their own rates and inventory, nor do they generally have their own extranet to update images or amenities. Example MetaSearch sites include Google Hotel Ads, TripAdvisor, Kayak & Trivago. While shopping your hotel on MetaSearch sites, it is a good way to ensure you are in rate parity. Additionally, you want to see your own website with the Official marker and preferably very visible as an option to transact.

UNAP (URL, NAME, ADDRESS, PHONE)

UNAP stands for URL, Name, Address, and Phone number. You want this to be consistent across all your online profiles, especially your name. If your hotel has ever gone through a name change or rebranded, your UNAP is likely a bit messy. While brand feeds may fix some errors in transition, they certainly do not cover them all. It is very confusing for guests (and Google!) to come across these variations and wonder which is accurate. Do searches for your old name to look for out-of-date sites and ensure EXACT consistency (even down to the dash or slash) on Google Business Profile, Bing, Yext, Expedia, Booking.com, Agoda, TripAdvisor, Yelp.

TRIPADVISOR

Your basic TripAdvisor listing is free and should be claimed. Check your hotel's ranking for various searches, including Best Value, Traveler Ranked, Price and Distance to City Center.

Ensure you are in the proper category, ie hotel or bed and breakfast. Some larger markets are divided into submarkets so ensure you are in the want you want to be listed. Update your amenities, images, and map PIN. Respond to all reviews, both positive and negative.

GOOGLE BUSINESS PROFILE

IF YOU DO NOTHING ELSE, GET ACCESS TO YOUR FREE GOOGLE BUSINESS PROFILE LISTING.

If you do not have access, contact your brand as they likely have created one for your hotel. It is easiest to gain access via a Gmail account and some corporate emails are hard to connect. Audit your listing to ensure The description and amenities accurately reflect your hotel. In the backend, you can review and edit "owner" images. If you search for your hotel on Google and click on the images in the Knowledge panel, you might find Google has pulled old images from old sites. In this case, you should 1) see if you can gain access to that site and remove them or 2) flag them. Also, request and respond to all positive and negative Google reviews.

BING

Bing has a business profile similar to Google Business Profile. You can even gain access to your Bing listing (sometimes) if you have the right access to Google Business Profile. Attempt to complete your profile to the fullest, including tagging images appropriately. Review your hotel descriptions and amenities for accuracy. You also have the option to display an offer, just don't forget about it!

GPS

If you ever have guests tell you they have trouble finding you or the Door Dash driver got incorrect directions, you might have an issue with your hotel's GPS location on one or more sites. First, check the map on your brand site to ensure accuracy. If that is right, check turn-by-turn directions on Google from various locations, ie North, South, East, and West. Submit turn by turn direction changes to Google.

REPUTATION MANAGEMENT

We have touched upon responding to reviews on Expedia, Booking.com, TripAdvisor, and Google Business Profile. But, while the data shows that 97% of potential guests read review responses, it is also important to learn from your guest reviews. Use your brand tools to aggregate if you are getting multiple complaints about your property or a specific team member. While you cannot incentivize guests to leave reviews, you should incentivize your team to solicit reviews.

PUBLIC RELATIONS

While there are varying degrees of public relations depending on your goals, a press release is the most basic. Common platforms like Cision help get your press release found by Google and hopefully picked up by additional outlets. At the hotel and market level, the hotel team should be asking local partners like chambers and convention visitors bureau to share these press releases.

OFF-PAGE SEARCH ENGINE OPTIMIZATION AND COMPETITOR BACKLINKS

Even more important than on-page search engine optimization is your backlink profile against your competitors. There is no magic number when it comes to getting your hotel website listed on other relevant websites, you should strive to achieve more than your competitive set. Tools like Moz, SEMrush and Ahrefs allow you to dissect where your competitor is being promoted that you are not. Look for partners with universities, hospitals, museums, and other demand generators to see if getting listed will not only increase your rankings on Google, but also drive traffic and exposure to your hotel.

SOCIAL MEDIA

Extensive social media is not right for every hotel. To do it properly you need both human and financial resources. Start with a Facebook page and ensure it is set up on parent/child relationship with its brand. Do a search on Facebook to see if there is more than 1 page that might need remedy. Once you have access, audit the profile information, including images/albums and header and thumbnail images. Set up a "Book now" button to redirect to your proper website. Check for any reviews, respond as needed, and check for any negative comments that can be removed from the page. Leverage paid social media to get in front of new guests that have a propensity to visit your market.

Once you have mastered Facebook posting, you may consider an Instagram account. While channels like TikTok and Snapchat may help with brand equity, you may have issues monetizing them.

BRAND TOOLS

Each brand offers different opportunities to increase your online presence. This could be website enhancements, loyalty promotions, email marketing, on-page search engine optimization, GDS promotions, package builds, exclusive agency partnerships, approved photographers, and more. Contact your brand and take advantage of these before venturing to create your own strategy.

PAID MEDIA

There are many channels where a hotel can put their marketing dollars. Once there is a firm understanding of timing, gaps in the above, and what market and type of travelers you want to go to after, then you can determine a budget to help fill those gaps.

Most brands partner with Koddi to allow hotels to run paid advertising via a single platform.

Depending on the hotel's goals and targets, additional advertising above and beyond Koddi could entail social media advertising, Google Ads search engine marketing, display, and programmatic advertising, and more.

COLLATERAL

Your sales collateral should reflect the same story as your online story. Ensure your unique selling propositions are present, with the correct amenities and the best hotel-specific imagery you have. Upload your collateral represented on your hotel website where applicable. Additionally, your collateral should be ADA compliant and meet brand standards.

CHANNEL MIX

It is likely that your channel mix has shifted over the past few years. This is different from segmentation as channel mix looks at the profitability of each channel and where the guests transact, not the rate code in which this happens. Most hotels are good at some things, and not so good at others. The same goes for your hotel's online presence. You are likely to get good exposure from some channels and websites and be represented poorly on others.

Let the analytics and findings dictate where you need to close the gap. Only then can you determine where and when to spend your marketing dollars.

CONCLUSION

I think the future success of your hotel's online exposure is not only the off-property digital journey but their on-property digital journey as well. Use digital tech tools to engage the guest, personalize their experience and keep them interested in staying on property while increasing per guest stay revenue. Utilize digital tech tools to showcase ancillary revenue opportunities through the use of AI chat concierge services for local recommendations, property service bookings like Spa, dining, activities and alert guests to special offers all while they are on property to anticipate their needs and elevate their experience.

As the tools available to us optimize rapidly, we should always be learning every day! The foundational activities listed above will help you prepare for the future toward integrating new technology into digital marketing best practices. When sales, marketing and revenue management are consistently using the data to strategize together the momentum of a hotel's exposure can thrive. Cheers to new frontiers in the hotel digital marketing space!

Stephanie Sparks Smith — CEO & Digital Matriarch, Cogwheel Marketing
Stephanie Sparks Smith is the founder and digital matriarch of Cogwheel Marketing and partner at Cayuga Hospitality Consultants. She is the former VP of eCommerce and Technology at a large management company of over 100 hotels. She has served as a board member for both IHG and Marriott brands.

Cogwheel Marketing — cogwheelmarketing.com
Helping hotel owners drive incremental revenue to their website through digital marketing.

HYB
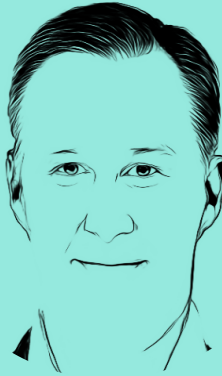
5 Reasons Passpoint (Hotspot 2.0) is an Essential Piece of the Hospitality Tech Stack

Tech Stack

Hauke Lenthe

Managing Director, EMEA & APAC, Nomadix

Synopsis
This article highlights the new WiFi Certified Passpoint® protocol that was introduced as a solution that offers automatic authentication at every access point, delivering a seamless and convenient digital experience for guests. The article explains Passpoint benefits for both hoteliers and guests, including efficiency, convenience, security, and engagement. Passpoint®is recognized as a proven technology used in various travel applications and can be integrated into the hospitality industry to enhance connectivity, drive brand loyalty, and differentiate hotels in a competitive landscape.

The moment your plane hits the runway and you turn off Airplane Mode, you're immediately connected to a cellular signal. Similarly, when you walk in the door at home, your device instantly connects to your home Wi-Fi network. In either case, there's no log-in or re-authentication required. Your device remembers, and it's a seamless, hassle-free process that we all take for granted.

Yet when it comes to hospitality Wi-Fi, it's a million little islands. Every connection requires re-authentication (sometimes every 24 hours) that creates friction for the guest, not to mention the disappointment that they're not remembered as a valued customer. Plus, there's the persistent risk of cybersecurity threats—bad actors can easily broadcast fake SSID names, baiting guests into accidentally connecting to an insecure network.

FROM "BASIC" SERVICE TO COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE

It's been well-established that fast, reliable Wi-Fi service is as essential as hot water for today's modern traveler. But it actually goes much deeper than that—guests not only demand a connection, but they also expect a seamless, convenient, secure and personalized digital experience at every brand touchpoint. As a matter of fact, the network is in many cases the first touchpoint between a guest and the brand.

The WiFi Certified Passpoint® protocol from the Wi-Fi Alliance delivers that seamless experience through automatic authentication at every access point, and it's already been adopted in many other travel applications like planes, trains, coffee shops and more. But beyond just sheer convenience, Passpoint (originally known as Hotspot 2.0) offers a number of benefits for both hoteliers and guests that make it an essential part of the future-ready hospitality tech stack, as well as a competitive differentiator for brands.

Better User Journey
Passpoint improves the guest experience by making connection more efficient. After completing the initial authentication process, their device will automatically connect to the network on every subsequent visit, eliminating the need to find, choose and log-in to the network each time. It also eliminates calls to the front desk for help connecting to the Wi-Fi, which frees up precious staff time.

Users simply download the Passpoint profile and are connected. There is no need for confusing SSID searches, starting at a landing page and remembering the username and password. After the initial authentication, it works just like connecting to your Wi-Fi at home.

Guest Engagement
Because of its automatic authentication, Passpoint is often the first touchpoint guests have with the property, and it can be integrated with a branded app if available, providing an opportunity for hoteliers to offer better services to their loyal guests. That means hoteliers can engage with guests at various steps in the guest journey because they know who and where a person is connecting, starting with automated check-in greetings as soon as they walk through the door.

From there, property managers can connect guest user data to personalization and preference data to deliver helpful suggestions and opportunities to guests. For example, if it's clear from a guest's connection patterns that they're frequent patrons at the bar, the hotelier can send notifications about Happy Hour specials. Or if they connect near the on-site buffet every morning, the hotelier can send the menu each morning. Passpoint is the solution to connect networks with PMS and CRM guest profiles.

Roaming and Partnerships
The convenience of automatic authentication through Passpoint extends throughout the property and across any location within the brand with seamless connectivity at every access point. As guests move from their room to the lobby, the pool, conference center or fitness center, they remain connected with automatic handoff between hotspots. This feature is even more valuable in locations with on-site or adjacent conference center facilities, allowing guests to move between the hotel and the event space with continuous connectivity.

This is not only convenient for the guest, but also provides valuable user data to the hotelier. By tracking where guests connect to the Wi-Fi, brands can understand their behavior and tailor services and amenities to their needs. For example, hotel brands could partner with other travel companies to offer Passpoint Wi-Fi in other locations, such as keeping guests connected at an airport lounge.

Data Security
Unfortunately, scammers are a fact of the modern digital life, and hotels are no exception with thieves using all manner of trickery to lure guests into their schemes. Aside from the reputation damage, due to recent Federal Trade Commission orders, CEOs and CTOs could be held personally responsible for shortfalls in cybersecurity, so hoteliers now have an urgent mandate to ensure secure computing for their guests.

Passpoint provides a much more secure user environment compared to conventional Wi-Fi, alleviating security concerns with enhanced, built-in WPA3™ protocols. And because it offers automatic connection and authentication, guests avoid the risk of being duped by fake SSIDs that could siphon off their personal information.

Revenue generation
It's well-known that, across every industry, repeat customers are more likely to buy and spend more compared to new customers. And even a modest increase in customer retention by just 5% can drive at least 25% increase in profitability.

Passpoint's guest engagement opportunities allow hoteliers to capitalize on repeat business to drive additional revenue through upsell and cross-sell deals. Because these can be personalized for each guest, it enhances the guest experience by giving these offers an exclusive feel. Properties can promote spa services with a discounted or complimentary service or up-sell food and beverage service with a digital free appetizer coupon if user data shows they're frequent patrons of these amenities.

A MODERN SOLUTION READY FOR FULL-SCALE DEPLOYMENT

Passpoint provides clear advantages for both hospitality guests and hoteliers with greater efficiency, convenience, security and engagement that drives new revenue. It's also a proven technology that's already being used by hotels, retail, stadiums, and transport applications including rail/metro, airlines, airports, and maritime vessels, seamlessly handling billions of guest connections annually.

With purpose-built solutions designed specifically for the hospitality industry, Passpoint providers are capable of handling deployments across any size property and offer brand-app integration. As guests demand more—and more reliable—connectivity, Passpoint's established standard makes it a vital part of the new hospitality tech stack for keeping guests connected and driving brand affinity and loyalty.

Hauke Lenthe — Managing Director, EMEA & APAC, Nomadix
Hauke Lenthe is the Managing Director, Europe, Middle East, Africa and Asia Pacific at Nomadix, Inc., which provides secure networking and connectivity solutions purpose-built for hospitality. He has more than 25 years of hospitality and international hotel technology experience, spanning from managed internet services to operational PMS and guest-facing software.

Nomadix, Inc. — nomadix.com/home.html
Nomadix brings connected experiences to life. For over 25 years, Nomadix has been a trusted vendor to the world's largest brands, delivering powerful and personalized connectivity and digital engagement solutions designed with real people in mind. Providing the backbone of visitor-based networks and managed Wi-Fi to properties and venues of any size in over 150 countries, Nomadix enables companies to connect, manage and engage in ways that redefine their digital customer experiences, help them make better business decisions and increase customer lifetime value.

HYB

Meet the Hotel Guest of 2030

Jitendra Jain (JJ)

Hotelier, Tech Enthusiast and Founder of Hotelemarketer.com

Synopsis

In a futuristic 2030 scenario, amidst global upheaval, the hotel guest experience evolves into an amalgamation of advanced technology, sustainability, and authentic human connection. Travel motivations focus on transformative experiences, personal growth, and cultural understanding. Advanced AI streamlines the booking process, offering personalized suggestions based on users' preferences and travel history. Blockchain technology secures transactions, fostering trust among guests and service providers. Accommodations morph into eco-friendly, personalized smart spaces, enhanced by immersive AR and VR technologies. Human staff are supplemented by AI-powered chatbots and robotics, with the highest levels of personal touch retained in luxury properties. Experiences such as farm-to-table dining and AR/VR explorations of local attractions become integral to the travel experience. The travel and hospitality industry adapts and evolves in response to global changes, leveraging technology and sustainability to craft unforgettable guest experiences.

It is the year 2030. The past seven and half years have been a rollercoaster, filled with giddy highs and depressing lows. Repercussions of the global pandemic and war have made the world feel just a little more wary and disconnected. A new world order is emerging, with the rift between East and West continuing to widen. Financial bubbles have burst as they do and new reserve and digital currencies are starting to take hold. However, humanity has proven its resilience and adaptability, finding new ways to connect, innovate, and overcome these obstacles. One constant remains – our innate desire to travel, explore, and experience new cultures. In this article, we take a journey into the hotel guest experience of 2030, where technology, sustainability, and human connection come together to create unforgettable moments.
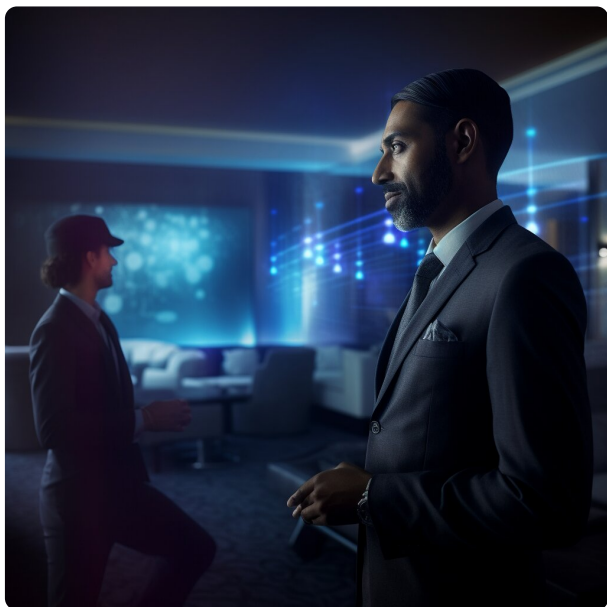
HELP ME REDISCOVER WHAT CONNECTS US. NOURISH MY SOUL.

I know there's a lot to worry about these days. With increasing polarization at home and regional splintering around the globe, will we be able to move past political brinkmanship and avoid more devastating wars?

How long will our favorite travel getaways survive the onslaught of climate change and social media fueled over-tourism? Will economic shocks keep getting steeper and quicker...and divisions between the haves and have-nots wider? What sort of world are we leaving behind for our kids and what sort of fulfilling work will AI leave us with? It sounds pretty dystopian...but one thing still restores my faith in humanity – travel. Seeing new places, experiencing different cultures and meeting like-minded people really helps me believe that we'll survive (and thrive) as a species.

Leisure travel motivations in 2030 will likely center around unique, transformative experiences that foster personal growth and cultural understanding. As remote work becomes more embedded for certain professions, longer-term stays and 'workations' will gain popularity. Experiences focusing on well-being, sustainability, and authentic connections with local communities will be highly sought after.

REMEMBER ME. CRAFT MY IDEAL TRAVEL EXPERIENCE.

I love how frictionless and personalized my favorite AI assistant has made my travel. It knows my needs, preferences and behaviors by trip type and is an invaluable muse when I'm dreaming about my next getaway. All I need to do is challenge it to find me amazing options based on a few key parameters, and it does the rest...from recommending destinations that fit the bill, curating an itinerary and even making bookings, ensuring I'm getting the best deal for my money and maximizing my loyalty benefits.

By 2030, hotel booking becomes a seamless, highly personalized process facilitated by advanced AI and data analysis. Virtual assistants, integrated into various platforms, understand user preferences and suggest suitable accommodations based on their needs, budget, and travel history. Guests can virtually tour the hotel and their room using augmented or virtual reality before confirming the booking. Blockchain technology enables secure, decentralized and instantaneous transactions, streamlining the booking process and increasing trust among guests and connected service providers.

SUSTAINABLE LUXURY IN MOTION.

I arrive at my eco-friendly hotel, seamlessly blending with the local environment, and my smart room instantly adjusts to my preferences. I experience a customizable space with smart lighting, temperature controls, and immersive entertainment using augmented and virtual reality technologies. My room even offers adjustable layouts and the ability to connect with my colleagues for virtual meetings or brainstorming sessions.

This personalized experience has been made possible by advancements in AI, data analysis, and sustainable design practices. Hotels that have been newly built and renovated in the past few years have learned to harness these technologies to deliver a unique and immersive experience while prioritizing environmental responsibility and cultural preservation.

CONNECTED, YET CARED FOR.

I interact with AI-powered chatbots and virtual concierges to get personalized recommendations and assistance. Advanced robotics help with various tasks, but human staff remain vital in providing personal, high-touch experiences. I can instantly share my feedback, and the hotel management takes prompt action to address my concerns or celebrate their successes.

The integration of robotics, and emotional AI ensures empathetic interactions and efficient service. Some hotels have adopted instant feedback systems, capturing moments of truth in realtime and using these insights to improve guest satisfaction and overall hotel performance. There is also increasing polarization in terms of the human/automation ratio across hotel types. Budget, Midscale and Premium hotels have started to increase their reliance on automation to keep labor costs down while still offering a degree of personalization and convenience. High touch human interaction and even tech-free bubbles have increasingly become the domain of luxury properties.
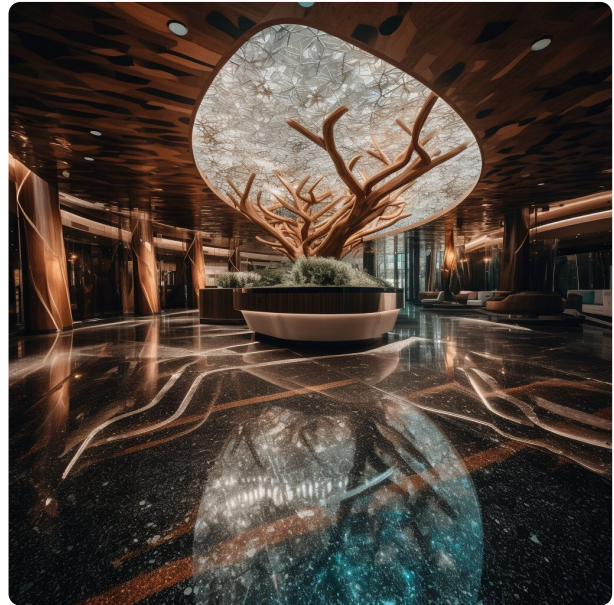
EXPLORING THE WORLD THROUGH MY SENSES.

I indulge in farm-to-table dining experiences with personalized menus catering to my dietary needs. The spa offers a blend of traditional therapies and cutting-edge treatments, like neurofeedback and virtual reality-guided meditation. The hotel even has immersive AR and VR experiences for exploring popular local attractions, so actual outing time can be saved for experiences off the beaten path. My AI assistant and AR help me discover the destination in a truly memorable and personalized way, even helping me communicate in realtime with locals without having to learn the language.

Where fresh produce is hard to come by, forward-looking hotels are increasingly relying on hydroponics and vertical farms to offer organic food with a reduced carbon-footprint. The rise of hyper-local and immersive experiences has been driven by consumers' desire for unique, transformative, and authentic connections. AI assistants, combined with the power of advanced mapping and augmented reality allow travelers to personalize how they discover new locales, while helping them translate, shop and get around conveniently.

BACK TO THE PAST.

In the year 2023, with the world still reeling from the worst pandemic in a hundred years, war escalating and generative AI just making a breakthrough, no one would have imagined just how much the world would change in the coming 7 and half years.

In a world where change is the only constant, the hotel and travel industry really stepped up and demonstrated its ability to adapt, evolve, and thrive.

Thanks to industry thought leaders and owners who embraced new technologies and prioritized sustainability, the hotel guest experience of 2030 offers a vision of hope and unity, proving that even in the face of adversity, we can come together to create a brighter future for all.

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Jitendra Jain (JJ) — Hotelier, Tech Enthusiast and Founder of Hotelemarketer.com
Jitendra Jain (JJ) is the founder of hotelemarketer.com, a blog focused on the world of travel and hotel technology, marketing strategy and loyalty. JJ has a passion for all things tech, loyalty, marketing and future related. His day job involves leading loyalty and partnerships for an amazing portfolio of hotels…at play he enjoys blogging, reading, experimenting with technology and learning new things.

hotelemarketer.com — hotelemarketer.com
Hotelemarketer.com is a blog focused on the world of travel and hotel technology, marketing strategy and loyalty. Hotelemarketer.com was originally launched in 2008 as a platform for sharing hotel marketing strategies, digital marketing knowledge, best practices, case studies, resources, thoughts, ideas, research and stories. Topics include hospitality, travel and restaurant marketing, branding, loyalty programs, online distribution, partnerships, digital and social media, advertising and more. Hotelemarketer.com is targeted at everyone who wants ideas and insights into the world of hotel marketing.

The Rise of Holograms in Hospitality: Unlocking Limitless Opportunities for Hotels

Innovation

Andre Smith
*Co-Founder & CEO, Holoconnects*

Marnix Lock
Co-Founder & COO, Holoconnects

Synopsis
This HYB-contributed article explores the emerging trend of hologram technology in the hospitality industry. It highlights how holograms can be used to deliver ultra-personalized experiences and create memorable moments for guests. The technology enables hotels to streamline operations, optimize resources, and reduce labor demand, ultimately cutting costs and maximizing efficiency. Holograms can serve as virtual concierges, providing multilingual support and assisting guests with check-ins and information about services and local attractions. They can also enhance marketing efforts by showcasing unique experiences and attracting guests with live performances or famous figures. In addition, holograms offer exciting opportunities for groups and events, allowing remote participation and expanding networking possibilities. The synopsis emphasizes that hologram technology is bridging the gap between physical and digital spaces, revolutionizing service in the hospitality industry and bringing futuristic innovation to today's hotels.

How would you feel if the next time you checked into a hotel, you were welcomed by a smiling front desk associate or concierge – only, not in real life? Instead, imagine that the figure before you was projected via state-of-the-art, two-way holographic technology designed to deliver an ultra-personalized experience. Fortunately, you don't have to rely solely on your imagination to conjure up this scenario because hologram technology for hospitality is, in fact, already here, and some hotels around the globe are already making waves as early adopters.

For years, hoteliers have worked tirelessly to define – and then achieve in a scalable manner – the perfect balance of high-touch service and high-tech connectivity. After all, modern guests aren't always easy to please. They want convenience, but not at the expense of personalization. They want self-service, but not without the option to engage with staff in person. They want high-tech touch-points they're accustomed to at home, but not without the more traditional aspects of hospitality service that feel nostalgic and familiar.
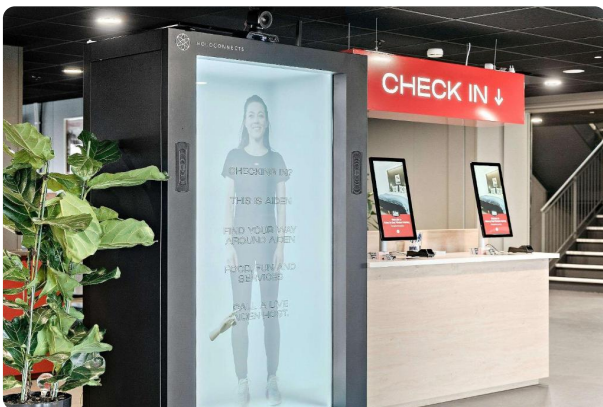
While hologram technology has been around for some time, its application within the world of hospitality is relatively new – and exciting. Holograms enable hotels to create memorable and unique experiences. Whether it's projecting holographic entertainment during events, hosting virtual meetings and conferences, or offering holographic music performances,

these technological advancements can set hotels apart and leave a lasting impression on guests. Additionally, holograms can create lifelike representations of staff members, enhancing service and offering personalized interactions. Furthermore, AI algorithms can analyze guest data to anticipate preferences and tailor services accordingly.

With so much innovation happening right now including the Artificial Intelligence revolution, holograms are positioned to transform the hospitality landscape in the very near future.

A GUEST SERVICE REVOLUTION

The primary differentiator between hotels, beyond amenities and location, is the level of service they provide. A hotel guest may forget the exact details of a hotel's guest room furnishings or the layout of its sprawling lobby, but they are unlikely to forget how a hotel made them feel during their trip. However, providing exceptional guest service to every guest, every time, is a standard too often thwarted by logistical challenges and operational limitations. The hospitality industry notoriously struggles with high staff turnover, and in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, the sector finds itself amid a labor crisis.

More often than not, hotels don't have the staffing required to ensure every guest receives the level of service their brand standards indicate, despite their best efforts to maximize every touch-point. If staff members' efforts are split across administrative tasks and guest requests, at least one service area may suffer during peak times. Moreover, when hotel staff is buried under the weight of administrative duties, they may miss out on the opportunity to truly connect with guests in a meaningful, memorable way.

With the help of hologram technology, hotel brands can better streamline and automate manual tasks in a way that empowers employees to focus their attention and efforts where it matters most: guest interactions. At the same time, using holograms enables hotels to optimize the unique skill set of each staff member. For example, suppose a guest arrives at a hotel and only speaks a language in which hotel staff members aren't fluent.

In that case, the Holobox can act as a conduit or connect that guest with a staff member (remotely) who knows that language.

Holoconnects is at the helm of an emerging trend centered around the use of hologram technology in hotels involving a hologram box (Holobox) that stands over 6 feet tall and 3 feet wide. Within the box lies a transparent LCD screen, and behind that screen lies a lightbox that creates a life-like holographic illusion. The hologram can then either present guests with options and prerecorded hotel information on the touchscreen, or guests can indicate their desire to speak with a live person. In this scenario, hotels can use the hologram box to 'beam in' qualified staff from anywhere worldwide to help with self-check-in or provide extra support during high-traffic times when traditional hotel teams would otherwise be stretched thin.

What's better than a 24/7 self-service kiosk that is always on time, never goes on vacation, and works 24/7? A hologram box that provides the convenience of self-service with real human engagement.

CUT COSTS AND MAXIMIZE RESOURCES

Unlike self-service kiosks, the Holobox provides a unique level of human engagement that cannot be replicated. It allows users to appear virtually from anywhere in the world, making it a valuable addition to self-check-in systems or a helpful resource during busy periods when hotel staff is overwhelmed with guest interactions.

Holograms can streamline operations and improve efficiency. Virtual concierge holograms can assist guests with check-ins, provide information about services and local attractions, and even offer multilingual support. This reduces the workload on hotel staff and allows them to focus on more complex or personalized guest interactions.

At a time when resources (such as labor) are limited, hotels must analyze their operations with a critical lens to identify cost-saving opportunities. With Holoconnects, for example, just one employee could serve between 30–60 hotels (with an average of 45 rooms) during the night shift.

While new technology presents an upfront acquisition cost, it's essential to recognize the cost-saving benefits and ROI of Holoboxes. Nine hotels are currently implementing Holobox, with another 50+ properties (across several chains) planning to adopt the technology over the three years. Holoconnects predicts that beyond a rapid expansion into 7,000-10,000 hotel properties over the next five years.

Hologram technology enables hotels to centralize and save costs by reducing labor demand. With front desk and concierge services championed by holograms across multiple properties, hotels can better maximize their talent pool and reduce operational costs.

ELEVATE MARKETING AND EXPERIENCES

If a picture is worth a thousand words, an experience is worth a million. Now, more than ever, hotel guests exhibit an appetite for unique experiences when traveling abroad. Travelers are eager to see the world, interact with local culture, and create lasting memories not easily replicated elsewhere. This sentiment rings especially true in the wake of the pandemic; after all, for almost two years, in-person experiences and trips were taken off the tables.

Hotels are now expected to differentiate themselves from competitor properties by curating personalized, relevant, and exciting experiences for their guests, and, as you might have guessed, hologram technology can help to achieve this.

Hotels can use a hologram box to welcome their guests in a way that is convenient and creative. They can even stream live performances indoors or across the property to showcase the talent of a remote live performer (or famous figure). Holograph-headlined concerts may be familiar, but implementing them across hotels to enhance the guest experience certainly is.

Moreover, hotels can use holograms to take their marketing efforts to the next level. Holograms can elevate and promote unique, insta-worthy experiences, upsell on-property amenities and activities, attract celebrities or influencers, and so much more.

AN EXCITING NEW USE CASE FOR GROUPS AND EVENTS

As hotels look to drive more revenue from groups and events, it's time to consider ways their current offering might be improved upon to attract more business. The demand for next-generation innovations continues to grow as the world becomes increasingly tech-driven and digitized.

Holograms enable remote participation, allowing individuals to virtually attend and engage in events from anywhere in the world. This expands the reach of conferences and meetings, connecting a global audience and fostering collaboration on an unprecedented scale. Holograms can also enhance presentations by providing visually captivating and immersive content.

Moreover, this technology can offer unique networking opportunities. Attendees can interact with virtual representations of industry experts, engage in virtual meet-and-greets, or even participate in virtual panel discussions. This expands networking possibilities, accommodates busy schedules, and reduces travel costs.

Hotels are already enhancing existing audio-visual paid services by enabling event and meeting planners to rent Holoboxes for CEOs, keynote speakers, or other special guests in attendance to join via a hologram. The revenue opportunities and potential are endless.

By leveraging holograms, hotels can revolutionize their service across all use cases – from entertainment to front desk operations and beyond. Holograms bridge the gap between physical and digital spaces, offering unique benefits and engaging experiences that were previously unimaginable and bringing futuristic innovation to today's hospitality industry.

The pioneering team at Holoconnects is committed to continued innovation, introducing the latest advancements in hologram technology to hotels worldwide and opening up a world of possibilities.

Andre Smith — Co-Founder & CEO, Holoconnects
With the Holobox hologram technology it is now possible to realize digital check-ins with personal contact. With the advanced software, the box can be deployed at multiple locations at the same time. This allows you to efficiently use your available FTEs and maximize the commitment of your employee with a unique experience for the guests.

Marnix Lock — Co-Founder & COO, Holoconnects
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Holoconnects — holoconnects.com
Andre Smith and Marnix Lock are the visionary founders of Holoconnects, a company that creates an immersive digital reality through engaging, life-like 3D hologram technology for hotels, entertainment, retail, technology gaming, business, and more. They are talented entrepreneurs with a proven track record of success, having held leadership roles in technology, marketing, finance, and the media. The team is now focused on building companies driven by a passion for creating a smaller, more sustainable, and fossil-free world with cutting-edge techniques. Since launching Holoconnects, they have worked with companies including CIC Hospitality Group, Deloitte, TMobile, Deloitte, Playstation, Corner33, Vodafone, Olaf, Kathy Ireland, and more. Andre and Marix currently live in the Netherlands, where they continue to grow the company. Visit www.holoconnects.com.

Harnessing Technology in the Hotel Industry: A Strategic Approach

Tech Stack

Ryan King
Senior Vice President for the Americas, Shiji Group

Synopsis
This contributed article addresses the complexity of the rapidly evolving hotel industry, influenced by the continuous advancement of technology. The article examines the myriad of tech options available to hoteliers, acknowledging the potential for these choices to either revolutionize operations or create additional complexity. Highlighting successful tech adoption in numerous hotels, it encourages a strategic approach that focuses on the unique needs and offerings of each hotel, rather than simply following the latest trends. The article asserts that technology must be tailored to guests' needs, serve operational efficiency, and integrate smoothly with existing processes—goals best achieved through the early involvement of various departments. It concludes by stressing the importance of exceptional vendor support for successful technology projects and underscores the transformational potential of strategically chosen and implemented technology for hotels in a digital age.

The hotel industry is undergoing a significant transformation due to the rapid advancement of technology. As new technology solutions keep being created, hoteliers are faced with both challenges and opportunities. Namely, they are surrounded by a huge choice that can either elevate their business or, without careful consideration, add to their complexities.

THE OVERWHELMING CHOICE IN HOTEL TECHNOLOGY

Technology options for hotels have grown, not just in alternatives to existing solutions but also the number of applications available. With a mix of solutions offered by start-ups and incumbent providers alike, this choice often results in a dilemma for hoteliers - which technology is the best fit for their specific needs? Decision-makers need to carefully evaluate each technology's potential benefits, asking crucial questions like, "How can this tool enhance our operations, guest experiences, or overall profitability?"

The all-in-one solution is easier to manage but often doesn't scale well. The best-of-breed route is often considered the better way but maintaining so many solutions is a lot of work and many of the vendors don't play nice with each other or refer the problem to the next vendor. Resulting in inefficient or incompatible solutions.

So how does one select the right technology for one's hotel?

SUCCESS IN TECHNOLOGY ADOPTION

Numerous hotels have successfully navigated the technology adoption maze. Their success lies in their strategic approach: they don't simply jump onto the latest tech trend but carefully consider how it will enhance their unique offerings. For example, a hotel may adopt AI-powered customer service if they identify a need to provide 24/7 guest support, or they might implement self-ordering system for their restaurants that their business travelers find practical.

The technology needs to be tailored to guests' needs. With the overwhelming choice of applications one could easily jump on taking whichever solution can easily be implemented, but is that what will make the stay better for guests?

Self-check-in kiosks are great – but they're not the solution for every hotel. Despite the large post-covid trend of touchless

everything – some hotels are designed around personal welcome. Don't just be jumping after the latest technology trend. Just because a tech solution provides multiple uses doesn't mean you need to deploy all the uses at your property. Kiosks are a great example where you may select how they are deployed – In full-service hotels kiosks are seeing far more success when used for check-outs or key pick up (from mobile check-in) rather than utilized for check-in

TECHNOLOGY FOR MAXIMIZING OPERATIONAL EFFICIENCY

A question you need to ask yourself is how your hotel can leverage technology to maximize operational efficiency. Is your hotel's housekeeping using technology to make attendants' jobs easier? Predicting the supplies they'll need, ensuring that there is enough of everything, so they don't get stopped in their work.

Yes, self-check-in is definitely up there as part of the solutions, if it is right for your hotel. But there's plenty more options. How can you automate back-of-house tasks? Little things such as automating the reconciliation of the shift with a more modern PMS or robotics process automations (RPA).

So, while there are trends in our industry, you need to look at what is right for your hotel and how your staff and guests can do more in less time. Because if your operations staff can spend more time with the guests, your hotel wins on so many levels.

THE IMPORTANCE OF INVOLVING OPERATIONS IN DESIGN STAGE

While the excitement of new technology can be enticing, successful implementation is not guaranteed without the active involvement of those who will ultimately use it - the operations team. We've all experienced new technology projects that end up consuming more time than they generate. True the data is more easily read, but now operations staff who should be with the guest are also data control staff, which wasn't the idea.

To avoid falling into that trap, we've found that involving various departments early in the process of technology selection and design can significantly smoothen execution. Input from the front desk team, housekeeping, and other operational departments can provide valuable insights to ensure the technology fits seamlessly into the existing processes, rather than creating additional challenges.

This means the vendors need to provide additional demonstrations, answer additional questions, or give operations references that you can call to check. Challenge your vendors to help you answer the problems that your operations team are having. When you do this, you see which vendors may become better partners if you choose to execute an implementation.

And don't forget that a big part of frustration from a technology project can be the vendor support. If your teams are getting great support most problems can be solved.

CONCLUSION

In the rapidly evolving landscape of the hotel industry, technology holds the promise of transformative growth and efficiency. However, success lies not in simply purchasing the latest and greatest tech, but in a strategic approach: consider the specific needs of the hotel, align technology with operational goals, and involve the right people from the start. This approach not only maximizes the benefits of technology but also positions hotels to provide exceptional service in a digital age.

Ryan King — Senior Vice President for the Americas, Shiji Group
Ryan King is a former hotelier with 20 years of experience that has spanned just about every department through the course of his hotel career. He made the leap into technology with TravelClick where he spent a good amount of time consulting with individual properties and large management groups helping them find technology to improve RevPAR and increase profitability. In his current role at Shiji he works with major global brands to help define ways technology can help overcome the business challenges presented by the 21st century traveler. He has a love of technology that helps him discover new methods enabling hoteliers to better engage their guests and thereby increase efficiencies, fulfill a brand promise through digital means and drive revenues through a more thoughtful digital guest engagement.

Shiji Group — shijigroup.com
Shiji is a multi-national technology company that provides software solutions and services for enterprise companies in the hospitality, food service, retail and entertainment industries, ranging from hospitality technology platform, hotel management solutions, food and beverage and retail systems, payment gateways, data management, online distribution and more. Founded in 1998 as a network solutions provider for hotels, Shiji Group today comprises over 5,000 employees in 80+ subsidiaries and brands in over 23 countries, serving more than 91,000 hotels internationally, 200,000 restaurants and 600,000 retail outlets.

The next wave of revenue: How retailing is impacting hospitality

Distribution & Revenue

Frank Trampert
SVP, Global Managing Director, Sabre Hospitality

Synopsis
This article provides guidance for hoteliers, advocating for a shift from a room-centric model to personalized guest experiences and ancillary services as revenue streams. It encourages a mindset change to focus on Total Revenue per Available Room (TRevPar) instead of the traditional room-only metrics. This retailing model aims to increase revenue, enhance guest experience, and future-proof the hospitality industry with technology integrating retailing solutions with booking, voice applications, and task management tools.

What if you could create personalized guest experiences by selling anything?

EXPAND GROWTH THROUGH NEW LEVERS

Imagine a world where you can inspire someone with a targeted offer such as a cabana. When they enter the booking path, they are presented with options that help them personalize their stay such as an ocean-front room, the cabana that enticed them, spa appointments, and a late check-out. As they build out their experience, their mental picture becomes more vivid, driving greater conversions with users being twice as successful in booking ancillaries, and you have confidence that you can bring it to fruition with fulfillment tracking.

ENABLE CHOICE BY SELLING ANYTHING AND ACCELERATING REVENUE

We understand the challenges put in front of hoteliers in an ever-changing landscape. So how do we get them to confidently create, distribute, and deliver tailored experiences to meet guest expectations? The future of hospitality retailing extends from attribute-based selling to beyond the room - it's about selling anything so you can delight everyone by enabling choice, and ultimately driving more revenue.

With the right tools, we can empower hoteliers to manage, distribute, and fulfill unlimited non-room and room offers through any point of sale along the traveler's journey. Thus, enabling hoteliers to drive brand differentiation, maximize revenue opportunities, and personalize the customer experience. Because when everything is an attribute, the possibilities are endless.

SELLING ANCILLARIES AS AMENITIES

This can be as simple as allowing guests to choose extra housekeeping services for a fee, or to decline housekeeping in return for a reduced room rate or another incentive. These incentives could take the form of additional room services that are of value to them, including butler service, babysitting, and pet sitting, as well as extra amenities like luxury sheets or upscale toiletries.

Several basic hotel services can be monetized under a retailing model for both staying and non-staying guests, including dry cleaning, airport transfers, and transportation to local events and attractions. This is also true of hotel facilities including the spa, gym, golf, and pool area.

CHANGING YOUR MINDSET TO DEFINE A RETAILING STRATEGY

Developing and implementing a holistic retailing strategy starts with a change in mindset. The mindset of most hoteliers currently is, 'I sell a room first and foremost and everything else I sell is in service of that room.' The typical measurements of success for this model are average occupancy or average daily rate. This mindset needs to change so hoteliers are no longer focused on selling rooms and what comes with them, but they start looking beyond the room. This change needs to be reflected in the metrics hoteliers use to measure revenue and success.

Hoteliers need to shift their thinking to be about total revenue per room, so anything else they can sell in the hotel becomes part of the equation to reassess the KPIs for their success. This change doesn't happen without a lot of hard work. A holistic retail strategy will also require hoteliers to make changes to policy, data collection, analysis, website design and positioning, staff training and incentives, marketing initiatives, and distribution.

The vision is that the offer can be anything, and a transaction on your booking engine does not have to include a room reservation. Perhaps a local would like to pay for a massage and wine tasting at your property. Or maybe a guest already booked a room and now wants to add an airport transfer and champagne. It gives you and consumers ultimate flexibility.

Today's hoteliers consider revenue per available room (RevPar) as the main metric in measuring their success, but this measurement is limited to occupancy and rates. RevPar is insufficient as a success metric because it only has a few levers to pull (occupancy and rates). To generate greater revenue and increase guest satisfaction, hoteliers will need to focus on total revenue (TRevPAR).

This means that success relies heavily on volume and throughput. However, recent years have shown us that resiliency requires many levers – we must re-evaluate the path to success. By calculating TRevPar, you take into account the total income obtained by the guest including the room, on-property restaurant, additional services, and ancillaries. It focuses on the guest's general expenditure outside of the room and allows hoteliers to compare themselves with competing hotels regardless of the services offered.

Hoteliers who are implementing new retailing technology are seeing 2x unit transaction growth, an average of $225 USD of ancillary purchases per room booking, and +34% growth in their average monthly ancillary revenue overall. These properties, even with a few live ancillary offers are still seeing a revenue increase.

A commonality we've seen with early adopters is that they are cautious when it came to building their virtual storefronts. Most of them began by keeping offers they previously had on dynamic packaging and simply moved them into a new retailing model. This presents offers in a more convenient way for the customer as part of their same booking experience, encouraging engagement and driving additional revenue and a more valuable guest experience.

THE FUTURE OF RETAIL FULFILLMENT

And the industry won't just stop there… Today's retailing solutions are PMS-centric, driving on-property ancillaries, but soon these solutions will integrate with booking engines, voice applications, and task management solutions. With technology that is accessible anywhere, providing you with greater flexibility and scalability, you too can step into the future of retailing. Open an endless array of additional revenue and service opportunities. Provide tailored choices, create memorable stays, and deliver the personal experience guests have come to expect.

Frank Trampert — SVP, Global Managing Director, Sabre Hospitality
Frank Trampert is senior vice president, global managing director of community sales for Sabre Hospitality Solutions. Within his role, Frank is responsible for leading global sales, customer engagement, account management, and marketing for all of Sabre's community partners worldwide. Frank has well over two decades of experience within the hospitality industry, having held a variety of roles of increasing responsibility across multiple hoteliers worldwide. Most recently, he served as managing director and chief commercial officer, EMEA and APAC, at Sabre. Prior to that, Frank held the roles of CEO and chief operating officer at Tune Hotels Group. He also held senior roles at Wyndham Hotels and Resorts and Brand Karma. Additionally, Frank spent 13 years at Carlson Rezidor Hotel Group, where he ultimately held the role of EVP, revenue generation for APAC.

Sabre Hospitality Solutions — sabrehospitality.com
Sabre Hospitality Solutions enables hoteliers to enhance the guest experience, identify cost savings, and increase revenue. The cloud-based, SaaS solutions powered by the SynXis Enterprise Platform, used by more than 39,000 hotels, resorts and chains, provides unlimited scalability to manage all distribution, operations and retailing needs across every touch-point of the guest's journey.

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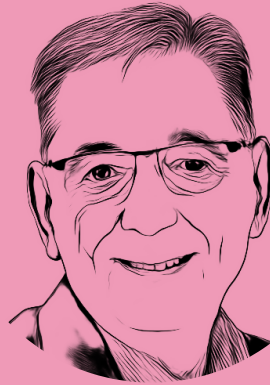
Data Streaming for the Hospitality Industry – 7 Benefits to Drive Your Business

Data & Security

David Purcell
VP, Global Products, Infor Hospitality

Synopsis

In his article, David Purcell highlights the transformative potential of data streaming in the hospitality sector. The technology allows real-time, continuous integration and analysis of data, leading to immediate insights, personalized guest experiences, efficient operations, revenue optimization, enhanced safety, proactive guest service, and a significant competitive advantage. By employing data streaming, the hospitality industry can efficiently manage and react to changes, offering a standard of service that fosters unforgettable guest experiences and paves the way for future success.

In the dynamic, rapidly-evolving landscape of today's world, technology has seamlessly intertwined itself with the hospitality industry, becoming a cornerstone for progress and innovation. From chic city hotels to sprawling luxury resorts, hospitality entities of all kinds are increasingly harnessing the power of technology to supercharge their operations, elevate guest experiences, and amplify overall efficiency.

At the heart of this technological metamorphosis lies the strategic dichotomy of operational and analytical data. By delineating these two critical dimensions, the hospitality industry can unravel a plethora of opportunities, uphold peak operational performance, and harvest a wealth of advantages.

One such strategic manoeuvre that materializes this vision is the implementation of data streaming to an isolated database dedicated solely for analytical purposes. This approach not only enables continuous, real-time data integration but also opens a new realm of possibilities for data-driven decision making, leading the hospitality industry towards an era of unparalleled progress and prosperity.

Data streaming in the hospitality industry offers several benefits that can enhance operations, customer experience, and overall business performance. Data streaming involves the continuous flow of data from various sources to a target destination in real-time or near real-time. It enables organizations to process and analyze data as it is generated, allowing for timely insights and actionable information. When it comes to separating operational and analytical data in the hospitality industry, data streaming can be employed in the following ways:

1. Real-time insights: Data streaming enables hospitality businesses to capture and analyze data in real-time. This allows them to gain immediate insights into guest behavior, preferences, and trends. By monitoring data streams, hotels and resorts can make timely decisions to optimize operations, improve service delivery, and personalize guest experiences.

2. Personalized guest experiences: With data streaming, hotels can collect and analyze guest data, including past preferences, booking history, and social media interactions. This information can be used to create personalized offers, recommendations, and tailored experiences. For example, hotels can send targeted promotions, provide customized room amenities, or suggest relevant activities based on individual preferences.

3. Operational efficiency: Data streaming enables hospitality businesses to monitor and manage various operational aspects in real-time. For instance, by collecting and analyzing data from IoT sensors and devices, hotels can optimize energy consumption, manage room inventory more effectively, and proactively address maintenance issues. Real-time data also helps in predicting and managing peak demand periods, staffing levels, and supply chain logistics.

4. Revenue optimization: Through data streaming, hospitality businesses can gain insights into revenue optimization opportunities. By analyzing pricing trends, demand patterns, and market conditions in real-time, hotels can dynamically adjust room rates, manage yield, and optimize revenue strategies. This can result in increased revenue per available room (RevPAR) and profitability.

5. Enhanced security and safety: Data streaming allows for the continuous monitoring of security and safety systems within hospitality establishments. Real-time analysis of security cameras, access control systems, and IoT devices can help identify potential risks or incidents and trigger immediate responses. This improves guest safety, reduces security threats, and enhances overall security management.

6. Proactive guest service: By leveraging data streaming, hospitality businesses can anticipate guest needs and deliver proactive service. For instance, by monitoring data from guest surveys, social media, and online reviews, hotels can identify and address guest concerns or complaints promptly. Additionally, real-time guest feedback can enable staff to take immediate actions to resolve issues and enhance guest satisfaction.

7. Competitive advantage: Embracing data streaming in the hospitality industry can provide a competitive edge. By harnessing the power of data, hotels can differentiate themselves by offering personalized experiences, optimizing operations, and exceeding guest expectations. This can lead to increased customer loyalty, positive word-of-mouth, and a stronger market position.

In essence, data streaming serves as a catalyst, empowering the hospitality industry to tap into the immense potential of real-time data. This process equips enterprises with the ability to make decisions that are not just informed, but are shaped by the immediate pulse of their operations. It enables them to personalize experiences with a precision that makes each guest feel uniquely valued, and streamlines operations to a level of efficiency that previously seemed unattainable.

Most importantly, it amplifies the delivery of guest service, transforming it from merely exceptional to truly unforgettable. By leveraging data streaming, the hospitality industry isn't just responding to change - it's pioneering a new standard of service, setting the stage for a future where every guest experience is nothing short of extraordinary.

David Purcell — VP, Global Products, Infor Hospitality
After completing a business and hospitality management degree at the University of South Florida, he entered the hospitality business and spent 12 years working for Fairmont Hotels and Resorts primarily in hotel operations and project management. He then transitioned to product management and joined Infor Hospitality in 2004. Here he oversees the strategic software requirements for their suite of products including property management, food and beverages services, sales, and event management along with revenue management systems. Working with the product managers in each of these areas, he drives the overall vision and product direction of the Infor Hospitality products into the global hospitality marketplace.

Infor — infor.com/industries/hospitality
Infor Hospitality is dedicated to helping industry leaders create a scalable technology platform to unite locations and empower their teams, developing powerful multi-tenant cloud software for hotels, casinos, and restaurant organizations. We work with customers and integration partners in over 135 countries to help them achieve strategic clarity, operational efficiency, consistently superior guest experiences, and maximized revenues. In a constantly evolving industry, our customers are empowered to meet today's challenges and be ready for future ones.

HYB

The Importance of Hotel Connectivity for an Outstanding Guest Experience

Tech Stack

Simon I'Anson
SVP Global Hospitality Accounts, Planet

Synopsis
In a world where technological expectations are rapidly evolving, hotels are turning to cloud-based solutions to enhance guest experiences, protect their data, and stay competitive. In this article, Planet discusses the increasing demands of connectivity in hotels, stretching beyond free Wi-Fi to a complete, connected experience for guests, regardless of their location on the property. The article also delves into the rising demand for seamless in-room entertainment, the importance of data security, and the advantages of harnessing cloud technology for efficient hotel operations. Despite the challenges presented by the expectation of high-quality connectivity at no cost, cloud technology offers an effective, cost-efficient solution that caters to both guest expectations and operational needs. The ability to remember past guests and personalize their experiences fosters a sense of loyalty, making it a valuable investment for hotels. The future of the hospitality industry lies in technology that unifies fragmented systems and prioritizes guest experience.

Hotels across the world are beginning to notice something: Connectivity is integral to the guest experience. And as technology evolves in leaps and bounds, so do guest expectations. What I'm seeing now, as Planet's President of Hospitality, are hotels turning to cloud-based solutions to keep up with guest demands, protect guest data, and stay competitive.

HOTEL CONNECTIVITY MEANS MORE THAN WI-FI

I remember a time when free Wi-Fi at a hotel was a luxury. Today, it's non-negotiable – and that's not all: Seventy-three percent of guests, according to a recent study by Hotel Technology, say they are likely to return to a hotel that meets their technological needs. But how far do these needs stretch? Well–further than free Wi-Fi, that's for sure. Hotels must now provide a complete, connected experience for guests, no matter the device or where they are on the property. Connectivity keeps a hotel business growing and thriving. Without it, things would fall apart.

Recent surveys have shown that connectivity is the number one ranked amenity for guests. Today's guests want an almost at-home-like experience and expect seamless network coverage, no matter what. Their habits are tech-driven and often involve smartphones, tablets, wearables, and laptops. That's why hotels must provide an uninterrupted, user-friendly experience for guests.

BEYOND THE HOTEL ROOM

This need for extensive connection goes a lot further than the hotel room, though. Guests expect a seamless, connected experience whether they're in a hotel's restaurant, lobby, gym, or spa. And connectivity doesn't only impact guest devices. Poor Wi-Fi also creates frustrating payment experiences for guests and staff alike.

THE CHALLENGE OF PROVIDING COMPLETE CONNECTIVITY

Contactless solutions like virtual meetings, digital menus, and smartphone payments have led to an increase in Wi-Fi and mobile device usage, according to Skift. And while guests want lightning-fast connectivity, cast-to-technology, and smart TVs and speakers, they're not always willing to pay for it.

This presents a growing problem for hotels feeling the pressure to upgrade.

Hotel connectivity was once a paid service. Now, not only is it expected for free, guests want high quality. This creates a dichotomy where guests want more but are willing to pay less or nothing at all. Although some hotels attempt to offer tiered services, the truth is that most people expect a decent level of connectivity without cost.

Hotels also face a growing need for capacity and system updates. Internet infrastructure requires updates every four years on average and many hotels find themselves falling behind. While wired connections remain in use for conference spaces and certain situations, wireless technology keeps getting better with enhanced security, speed, and capacity. This means hotels must update their systems frequently to stay current with the latest developments.

THE IMPORTANCE OF IN-ROOM ENTERTAINMENT

Netflix, Hulu, Amazon Prime, Disney+, and Now TV. There are endless options for guests when it comes to entertainment in their homes. And now they expect hotels to facilitate them no matter the device or streaming platform. Whether it's a leisure traveller seeking relaxation and fun or a business traveller looking for a way to unwind after a long day, in-room entertainment fosters positive guest reviews, word-of-mouth recommendations, and increased customer loyalty.

But there's a caveat. While in-room entertainment is all well and good, guests need to be able to suss it out quickly. Imagine investing in and implementing new technology to enhance the guest experience – only for it to make it worse. Hotels must provide intuitive navigation so guests can access all features easily.

Some hotels I've been to provide Smart TVs in their rooms, allowing me to log into any platform I want and stream. But my favourite feature by far was the ability to cast-to-TV. Instead of having to log into each account – many of which I've forgotten the passwords for – I could now send anything from a Netflix show to a Youtube video from my phone to the TV with a click of a button.

DATA SECURITY AND TRUSTWORTHINESS

With increasing concerns about data privacy and cybersecurity, guests expect hotels to protect their personal information and provide secure networks. Today, the risks – and penalties – of falling outside of PCI DSS (Payment Card Industry Data Security Standard) compliance are too great for hotels. And that means finding trustworthy solution providers that not only offer an elevated guest experience but also protect your guests' personal information matters.

HARNESSING CLOUD TECHNOLOGY FOR EFFICIENT HOTEL OPERATIONS

So, why cloud technology? What's so great about it? It's simple: Cloud technology allows hotels to scale faster, more efficiently, and provides a level of flexibility on-site infrastructure lacks. In fact, almost 87 percent of surveyed travel executives, according to Skift, said they were using cloud computing to help improve the customer experience and optimise operations.

During the pandemic, I saw more and more hotels switching to cloud-based technologies as a result of changing investment strategies. Hotels began migrating certain elements like content processing and distribution to the cloud and utilising cloud backends to enable scalability and better-managed services. It's cost-effective, secure, and presents a much easier user experience.

One of the great things about cloud-based platforms is the ability to remember past guests and welcome them back into the hotel digitally as well as personally. Guests don't want the rigamarole of logging back in, forgetting their password, and resetting it via email. Instead, cloud-based technology gives hotels the ability to recognise guests and log them back in immediately. It's a subtle touch, but that at-home experience helps create a sense of loyalty.

So what can hotels do now? Invest in technology and solution providers that put your guest experience front and centre, unify fragmented systems, and keep everyone happy. The best providers will give you ways to analyse networking trends within your hotel, monitor consumption, review service tickets, and allow you to do all of this from one location.

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Simon's main focus today is ensuring Planet's suite of advanced software and payment solutions find their rightful home in hotels of all shapes and sizes across the world. He is responsible for the Key Accounts program, delivering great products & services to iconic global hotels. He is also the General Manager of Planet's Networking business unit. Simon has 20+ years experience in the hospitality technology space, and leverages this network and knowledge to ensure Planet is best positioned to take advantage of market opportunities. He previously held several key senior roles at Hoist Group and Swisscom. Simon is also an enthusiastic music and sports fan, and especially passionate about Rugby and Tennis.

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