



HOTEL
MANAGEMENT



How Hotels Can Embrace Technology
On The Road To Recovery

INTRODUCTION

Leveraging technology to streamline hotel operations and elevate the guest experience is not a new trend, but it has gained serious momentum in the past decade and has been accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic.

As hotels embark on the road to recovery and begin to navigate towards a post-pandemic world, technology will play a crucial role in rebuilding consumer confidence and trust in travel, affirming staff loyalty, and assisting properties in getting back on track to high occupancy levels and profitability. **This road to recovery will usher in a game-changing shift from high-touch to high-tech, and being ready for it is essential.**

To prepare for fierce competitiveness when business returns, strategic-minded hoteliers are using this time to evaluate gaps in their property's technology offerings, plan for future needs, and implement new platforms or amenities to help secure success. **Hoteliers who proactively leverage technology in both small and innovative ways are more likely to stay ahead of the curve, recover in swifter fashion, and more quickly generate lost revenue.**

Sponsored by Spectrum Enterprise, this white paper offers six areas for hoteliers to focus on to help manage the effects of the pandemic and beyond.

#1 MEET THE NEED FOR CONTACTLESS ENGAGEMENT

To touch or not to touch? Contactless technology was already starting to increase in popularity before the pandemic, but COVID-19 has fast-tracked this trend due to an amplified awareness of the risks associated with physical touch-points. **Nice-to-haves like mobile key, mobile check-in and check-out, digital menus accessed via QR codes, and other digital guest services have quickly become must-haves, which is driving the need for advanced technology across all property segments.**

Successfully going contactless rests on the foundation of a strong network that provides seamless, property-wide connectivity. Hotels that began their digital transformation pre-pandemic have been well-positioned to quickly transition to increased contactless interactions, and now many other properties are following suit.

"It was evident pre-COVID that our industry was behind in technology, but the pandemic has catapulted us to take action, to speed up adoption of touchless technology by moving from beta to reality," said Kerry Ranson, Chief Development Officer for HP Hotels.

Contactless interactions give guests a distinct sense of control and safety, a powerful combination that breeds confidence in a property. When guests are able to easily, and safely, access services and customize their own experiences, hoteliers are more likely to see increased guest loyalty and bookings.

"Contactless is a cornerstone to cultivating bookings and trust, so you have to give the guests the tools to make this happen," said Steven Hiersche, Vice President of Information Technology for The Davenport Companies, which operates Red Jacket Resorts in Cape Cod and New Hampshire. "And, we've already gotten great feedback from our guests about the new measures implemented."

Hiersche outlined that his properties offer mobile check-out, QR codes for ordering food, accessing on-property resort guides, and an online registration platform linked to the Maestro property management system. This lets guests register in advance of arrival, leave their credit card on file, make special requests in advance, and access property information.

As a Hilton Curio Collection property, the Gale South Beach in Miami Beach, FL, had already introduced digital key and Google Nest in guest accommodations. Since COVID-19, the 87-room boutique-style hotel has expanded its contactless offerings, including QR codes for dining placed on pool chairs and tables, outdoor couches near the pool, and by the in-room nightstand.

"Consumers are now more conscious of the surrounding environments and what they're touching, so the more contactless technology we give them, the more we can raise guest confidence for traveling," shared Kevin Waldstein, the hotel's General Manager.

"Technology that allows for personalized, contactless experiences is no longer just a trend in high-end hotels.



Digital transformation has become a necessity in order to maintain safety and guest satisfaction regardless of type, size and location. This need will certainly outlast the pandemic,” noted Rajat Mukherji, Vice President of Vertical Market Sales at Spectrum Enterprise.

John Edwards, Chief Information Officer for Red Lion Hotels Corporation, has observed this within the company’s portfolio. “Technology has always been important to how we operate, and now with COVID-19, we’ve seen technology proliferation across all of our segments, including contactless offerings at our economy brands. A goal is to get guests through the lobby as quickly as possible, and the digital groundwork we already implemented, along with our vendor relationships, helped make this happen. We have six PMS solutions, and we were fortunate that two of the companies built, free of charge, a contactless check-in solution for our hotels to use, and the consumer response has been extremely positive.”

Touch-less interactions join elevated hygiene standards and social distancing measures as a new trio of consumer travel expectations. “As travel trends continue to slowly normalize, new guest and brand behaviors are emerging and will shape what travel experiences will look like well into the future,” noted Mukherji. “Contactless interaction is not just a temporary tech trend. Contactless is here to stay.”

Investing in technologies that enable contactless interactions and then effectively communicating these measures to consumers is vital to fueling guest bookings and revenues on the road to recovery. While there is an understandable emphasis on contactless when it comes to the guest experience, the same contactless processes that minimize in-person contact without diluting quality are

appreciated by hotel staff because they speak volumes about the concern management has for their valued team players.

#2 LEVERAGE TECH TO DRIVE TRAVEL CONFIDENCE & EFFICIENCY

A shift to reducing face-to-face interactions doesn’t necessarily mean sacrificing on exceptional customer experiences. Smart, innovative technology solutions key into consumer wants, and, when effectively executed, they encourage all-important loyalty, resulting in bolstered occupancy levels and profitability.

Many hotels are utilizing text communication platforms to engage with customers while still celebrating the core of hospitality – unequivocally meeting guests’ needs. “It’s important to make sure guests understand that behind the technology is the hard work of dedicated staff who are using high-tech to develop a personal, high-touch feel through continuous, relevant communication that elevates their experience with us,” explained Waldstein, whose Gale South Beach property uses the Kipsu texting platform for two-way communication between guests and staff.

Two-way communication helps build trust and loyalty even before travelers get to a property, and, since COVID-19, guests are much more open to using technology to reach out to hotels before arriving. “SMS [short message service] is ubiquitous across smartphones and works well with the unique technical skill sets across the multiple demographics and segments that make up Red Lion’s guests,” said Edwards. “We see hotels that used to get 100 text messages a week jump to 1,000 text messages a week. This is quite telling because we have less guests at a hotel, but exponentially more messages.



4 |

Guests have more questions than ever before about procedures for airport-hotel transfers upon arrival in a destination, how many people are allowed in a transfer vehicle, hygiene protocols that have been implemented on-site, and the like, so being responsive is critical.”

Hiersche concurred about the value of being responsive, noting that Red Jacket Resorts introduced text communication integrated into their PMS system so guests can text from anywhere on-property. Staff can then see the communication and promptly handle the request or concern.

In addition to using technology to enhance guest relationships, hoteliers are sourcing it to enrich operating efficiency, and while there are obvious benefits impacting guest satisfaction, benefits to the staff are equally important. In the housekeeping department, technology is being used to boost on-site productivity with cleaning apps to ensure superior cleaning in accommodations and all public spaces. Since technology like the Moviebeam video integration platform

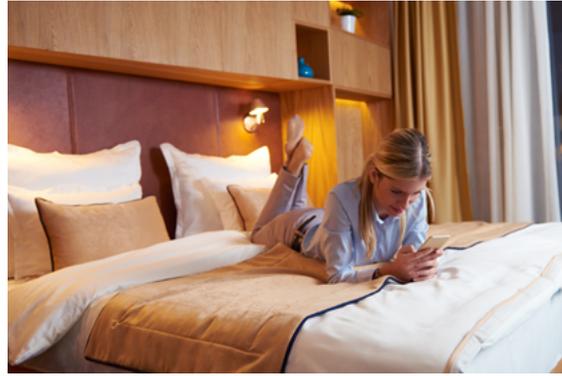
allows guests to request housekeeping services through the in-room TV, it’s easier to track work to be done and allows for better staff allocation. With the intensive hygiene protocols, many hotel employees are overworked now, so smart technology can lessen the strain by streamlining routine processes, automating tracking, and increasing efficiency. At Red Jacket Resorts, housekeeping and maintenance staff scan QR codes around the property to see how long it took to clean specific areas, identify any extra measures taken to optimize cleanliness efforts, and even note designated areas to be cleaned.

“When guests book with us, we want them to feel they’ve made the right decision,” said Waldstein. “Guest confidence is delivered through superior cleanliness protocols, heightened efficiency and advanced technology. This encourages loyalty, which drives good reviews that creates more demand.”

Interacting with guests has always been a hallmark and strength of the hospitality industry. Moving forward, hoteliers will need to learn how to augment this

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personal touch while keeping both guests and staff safe.

#3 MEET THE NEW “HOME AWAY FROM HOME” CONNECTIVITY EXPECTATION

Enriching hotel accommodations to the level of “sanctuary status” requires more than comfortable bedding, plush towels, a flat screen television, and conveniently placed outlets. **Consumers expect the technology they use in their day-to-day lives to be available and easily accessed in their hotel accommodations to create a true “home away from home” whether they are on the road for business or leisure.**

Added to this is that guests may spend more time in their rooms due to social distancing measures and their individual level of comfort, which highlights how imperative it is for hotels to provide the best-possible in-room experience and make guests feel safe in the space. Plus, consumers travel with multiple devices and expect to use them with ease in their rooms.

Meeting and exceeding guest expectations in the hotel room through the implementation of high-tech

solutions leads to increased guest satisfaction and that high-touch, personalized aspect while maintaining safety.

“Now more than ever, guests expect their travel experience to match their home experience,” commented Brian Kirkland, Chief Technology Officer, Choice Hotels. “They want their digital lives to travel with them. They expect a strong and fast Wi-Fi connection, access to their own shows and digital libraries, and they want to use the computer they brought with them in their own pockets – their mobile devices.”

In-room casting has become synonymous with in-room comfort, and delivering that comfort requires a seamless technology platform. “We make sure to communicate with guests pre-arrival about the technology they can expect at our hotel because we want them to use it,” said Waldstein, noting that guests of The Gale can cast their own content to the in-room television through Google Chromecast.

Ranson concurred. “What’s nice is once a guest is logged on, we can meet more of their needs and cultivate loyalty. Room requests can be recognized through a

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loyalty app and experienced across multiple properties in a brand.”

Beyond in-room casting, creating a personalized, safe and comfortable space in a hotel room means extensive live TV offerings and enhanced digital services from the in-room TV. Solutions like interactive HDTV services that provide guests with a customized welcome, digital guest and concierge services, and a real-time means of communication with hotel staff are key to ensuring positive experiences.

“With Moviebeam, guests can book spa appointments or tee times, request housekeeping and other hotel services, order from in-room dining or local restaurant menus, and access information about the hotel and local attractions – all from their in-room TV while also aligning to new social distancing and safety requirements,”



explained Peter Agnvall, Vice President of Enterprise Video at Spectrum Enterprise.

Complementing casting and other digital services via the TV, hotel rooms are incorporating touch-less, voice-based room controls for lighting, the thermostat and the blinds. This showcases high-tech action in a guest’s “home away from home,” which gives customers enhanced control in their private space.

#4 PLAN AHEAD FOR THE RETURN OF GROUP BUSINESS

While leisure business is expected to rebound first, groups remain an important contributor to a property’s financial success, from multi-generational family getaways, bachelor/bachelorette parties and weddings to incentive trips, events and conferences.

Welcoming back this business will take time and patience and require an increased use of technology for all the same touch-less experiences that leisure guests are seeking, seamless audio-visual needs, introduction

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John Edwards, Chief Information Officer, Red Lion Hotels Corporation



of live streams and virtual class components for events, elevated hygiene protocols for groups of varied size, and heightened use of technology in rooms for work and leisure pursuits. And, while hotels might not have many group travelers at this point in time, putting the technology in place now will allow them to scale effectively and swiftly adapt once occupancy levels rise.

Welcoming back groups means thinking about meeting planners' new requirements and having the capacity to handle added strains on bandwidth. For example, 20 people used to be placed in one salon, but now that same number of people needs at least two salons to spread out properly. To further meet group needs, Edwards suggested a focus on pre-arrival communication to ensure an effective, socially distanced check-in, adding improved connectivity, and working closely with food and beverage to design safe experiences.

A mix of technology and non-tech measures will help this segment book and travel with confidence. "COVID-19 has changed the way planners evaluate venues and the way venues support planners," said Kirkland. "At Choice

Hotels' thousands of independently owned and operated locations, guest well-being is top of mind. Event planners can rest assured that whether they're planning a meeting or a milestone the enhanced cleanliness and physical distancing best practices at Choice-branded hotels are designed to help groups share those moments safely."

#5 REVIEW CURRENT STRATEGIES & PLAN FOR TOMORROW

No matter how innovative and game-changing the technology, if it's accompanied by an inferior infrastructure, the technology won't be able to optimize hotel operations or elevate the guest experience.

Shifting from high-touch to high-tech requires a strong, secure, reliable framework to ensure all operations run smoothly. Preparing for a new tomorrow means putting in place today the right network to handle

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the eventual rebound of the hospitality industry. “You can’t be cheap with technology because you’ll be far behind,” cautioned Waldstein. “Having a reliable, powerful network and back-up network allows you to confidently make promises to guests and successfully satisfy their expectations.”

Understanding what makes a network powerful is essential. **For seamless property-wide usage, a network should be capable of supporting high speeds and data-intensive applications, provide flexible bandwidth, and avoid outages or interruptions.** In building a network that supports the increase of new technologies used to expand the number of contactless interactions and efficiencies, hotels should consider investing in a dedicated fiber network to ensure peak performance.

“Reliable fiber is key,” affirmed Hiersche. “We upgraded our networking infrastructure three years ago so that we could scale with the fiber and provide our guests with a unified, vastly improved approach to technology delivery. In IT, you always have to be prepared to pivot.”

While reviewing and re-imaging their technology strategy, hoteliers are encouraged to be nimble,



adaptable and flexible as they recognize the infrastructure needed to support new technology demands. “As hoteliers begin to prepare for a sustainable recovery, an important factor to consider is the network,” said Mukherji. “All of these new technologies, applications and devices require a high-performance network providing significant bandwidth to support reliable connections. Imagine if a guest was trying to get into their room with their digital room key and the internet connection was faulty. They wouldn’t be able to access their room, which is incredibly dilutive to guest satisfaction. A fiber-connected

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Peter Agnvall, Vice President of Enterprise Video at Spectrum Enterprise

network and Wi-Fi with high-bandwidth capability ensures consistent, property-wide connectivity. This investment supports the technology innovation required for recovery and long-term success.”

Networks must support the constantly evolving technology that guests bring with them. “Our properties need to be able to handle the increased demands on our networks and infrastructure that comes with those guest devices so they can have the at-home experience they want,” said Kirkland. “Making sure our properties are ready for advancements like 5G is obviously a key factor.”

“My advice would be not to wait for tomorrow,” he continued. “The digital transformation necessary to compete today is not something that just happens overnight. It takes years of investment, like Choice has done, that make today possible. The investments we’ve made in years past have enabled us to stay ahead of the game, move faster than our competition, and react real-time to the changing world brought on by COVID-19 and to the ever-changing expectations of guests and hotel owners.”

Supporting new technology requires a reputable partner – one that has consistently been a part of the hospitality community – to minimize any difficulties in transitioning to a high-tech approach. **Seek out a partner offering a holistic mindset, who will help evaluate current solutions, adapt and scale solutions as necessary, and set a long-term strategy.**

When seeking a technology partner, connect with one that matches your business strategy and invests in helping you achieve your long-term business objectives. “The customer for our Hotel RL brand is very tech-focused and connected, but that’s different from the profile of the guest

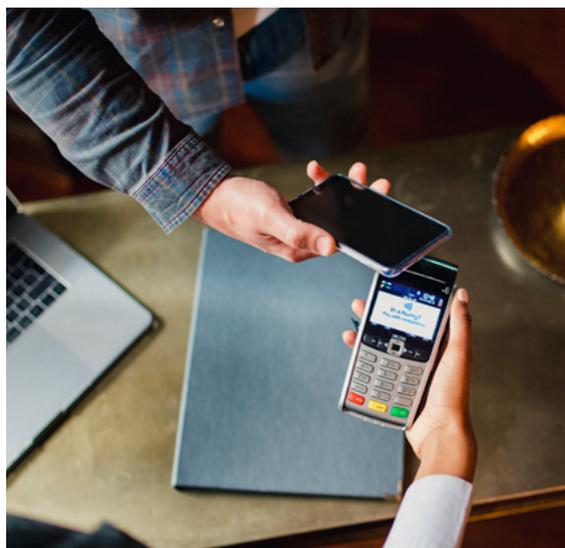


staying at our economy properties, so we’re trying to fulfill different needs within the portfolio,” shared Edwards.

Developing the right technology demands a forward-thinking perspective. “We need to find partner experts to acquire accurate information to make smart decisions, not just quick decisions, as we factor in the long-term impact,” said Ranson. “It’s important to embrace the ‘what if’ to be prepared for the next challenge by getting in front of potential issues and making staff and guests feel safe and confident, but we do have to be cautious about jumping ‘all in’ because consumer demands may switch back.”

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Kevin Waldstein, General Manager, Gale South Beach in Miami Beach, FL



With a strong network in place, hotels can strengthen their technology strategies by re-imagining opportunities for new revenue streams that optimize cash flow. Moviebeam from Spectrum Enterprise, for example, allows hotels to charge local businesses for on-screen real estate, which yields multiple benefits. Guests are provided with easy access to information on local businesses and attractions, and hotels not only capitalize on the additional revenue stream, but can increase revenues by promoting spa services, food and beverage offerings, and other in-house services from the in-room TV.

#6 EVALUATE OPPORTUNITIES TO INCREASE EFFICIENCY & REDUCE COSTS

Ensuring long-term success, especially as the industry

navigates toward recovery, is a top-of-mind concern. **Not only does adopting advanced technology set hotels on the path to higher occupancy and guest satisfaction levels, it can help bolster efficiency by automating daily operations, streamlining intensive processes, reducing long-term operating costs, and extending the value of technology investments.**

Advanced, interactive HDTV solutions present a significant opportunity for hotels to make operational processes more streamlined and automated, leading to efficiency gains and reduced costs. “With seamless integration between the in-room TV solution and the PMS, Moviebeam enables hotels to automate and streamline routine operations – improving efficiency and productivity. Automating these time-intensive tasks helps staff optimize use of limited resources and invest more time in providing the individualized attention guests crave,” detailed Agnvall.

Utilizing a single technology solution to address numerous challenges is another key way to achieve optimized efficiency and spending.

“As hoteliers evaluate their needs and assess solutions that can help mitigate the business risks associated with COVID-19, they must focus on investing in technologies that can provide a multitude of benefits, rather than focusing on solving one individual challenge,” said Agnvall. “For example, advanced entertainment solutions like Moviebeam provide guests an exceptional experience, maintain physical safety of guests and staff by enabling contactless interactions, streamline operations, reduce staff requirements to deliver services, and much more – helping hoteliers address several challenges with just one solution.”

Consolidating solutions so hotels acquire services

“ALL OF THESE NEW TECHNOLOGIES, APPLICATIONS AND DEVICES REQUIRE A HIGH-PERFORMANCE NETWORK PROVIDING SIGNIFICANT BANDWIDTH TO SUPPORT RELIABLE CONNECTIONS.”

Rajat Mukherji, Vice President of Vertical Market Sales at Spectrum Enterprise

from a single provider can lead to a reduction in long-term costs while achieving maximum efficiency.

The benefits are manifold, from simplified payment and consolidated billing to the ease of communicating with one vendor as opposed to multiple contracts. Single vendors understand the entire scope of the situation, which makes it easier for them to help hotels examine all variables and effectively partner with hotel management to implement long-term technology strategies to realize business objectives. Choosing a comprehensive partner that provides complete support means there's no need for internal staff to manage the day-to-day operations of the network or troubleshoot when problems arise.

Managed network services also help reduce long-term operating costs by letting hoteliers get the most out of their vendor partnership with limited resources. "The decision to go with a managed services platform frees the hotelier and staff from network oversight. The vendor instead is responsible for all management and maintenance of the equipment," said Mukherji. "Since network management and support costs are typically included in the service plan, hotel management and owners can save already stressed OPEX budgets while incurring a consistent monthly cost. By choosing a partner to manage their network, the hotelier frees staff to concrete on other areas, improving guest experience while increasing productivity."

Hiersche pointed to a focus on the consolidation of software and telecom contracts and vendors. "Look at where you're spending money, especially if you need to funnel funds into new technology. Are you over-paying? Are you using two tools when one tool would be an effective solution? We consolidated vendors and become more



organized and proficient through a simplified, yet efficient approach. What we've accomplished with technology since COVID-19 would not have been possible without proper planning."

CONCLUSION

What are the key components of a new technology-driven playbook to raise occupancy, satisfaction and profitability?

- Recovery in the hospitality industry is largely reliant on how safe guests feel staying at a hotel. Experiencing that safety is fundamentally tied to the implementation of high-tech offerings to seamlessly meet and exceed consumer expectations in their hotel room and around a property.

- Contactless interactions at a hotel have quickly emerged as a traveler expectation, and delivery of these interactions is dependent on a robust technology network. But, touch-less doesn't mean "less" – advanced technology can effectively be used to provide a high-touch feel that speaks to the core of successful hospitality and drives coveted guest loyalty.

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DEVELOPING THE RIGHT TECHNOLOGY DEMANDS A FORWARD-THINKING PERSPECTIVE.



■ Hotels that institute touch-less interactions with an eye to the benefits of staff members typically secure heightened loyalty from their employees.

■ Today's travelers carry multiple devices and high expectations about what they can do in their hotel accommodations, making seamless connectivity a major expectation. Creating a "home away from home" relies on a powerful, reliable network that can keep up with consumer demands.

■ Lay the technology groundwork now for the eventual resumption of both leisure and group business and scale accordingly as travelers return. Align with an experienced

technology partner who understands the hospitality community, can provide a property with a strong, reliable, fiber-powered network built to go the distance, and is committed to supporting that hotel network.

■ Technology presents opportunities for hotels to streamline and automate operations and drive game-changing efficiencies.

■ Guests now expect more transparency about procedures – from contactless to cleanliness and everything in between – to ensure their health and safety. This is driving the industry to be more direct and straightforward with their communications efforts, creating an important two-way dialogue that inspires confidence and trust.

■ It's important to evaluate and determine which solutions will remain in place long after the pandemic is over. Advanced in-room entertainment solutions that provide guests the ability to self-serve and communicate with hotel staff digitally had already gained popularity prior to the pandemic and will remain an important factor in providing seamless, positive guest experiences for years to come. Technologies such as these will help to mitigate revenue impacts, retain customers, and adapt product offerings for the post-pandemic world.



ABOUT SPECTRUM ENTERPRISE

Spectrum Enterprise, a part of Charter Communications, Inc., is a national provider of scalable, fiber technology solutions serving America's largest businesses and communications service providers. The broad Spectrum Enterprise portfolio includes networking and managed services solutions: Internet access, Ethernet access and networks, Voice and TV solutions. Spectrum Enterprise's industry-leading team of experts' works closely with clients to achieve greater business success by providing solutions designed to meet their evolving needs. More information about Spectrum Enterprise can be found at enterprise.spectrum.com/hospitality.