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The Fast-Forward Tech Stack for 2024

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The Importance of Hotel Connectivity for an Outstanding Guest Experience

Tech Stack

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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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