

2024

# The Fast-Forward Tech Stack for 2024

The Hotel Yearbook Technology 2024

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# 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, upskilling 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 from 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](https://hftp.org)

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