The Fast-Forward Tech Stack for 2024

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Harnessing Technology in the Hotel Industry: A Strategic Approach

Tech Stack

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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.

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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.