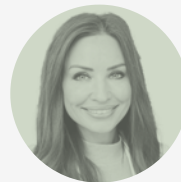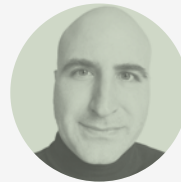# HYB25

Sustainability Tech Edition
Unlocking Smart & Sustainable Tech Solutions for Hospitality

The Hotel Yearbook
Foresight and innovation in the global hotel industry

HYB

Now Is The Time To Embrace Eco-Technology

Sustainable Tech

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While the hospitality market's sustainability ambitions have hit the launchpad here in the USA, they haven't quite reached a sustained orbit. But we're on our way, and to get there, our nation must first acknowledge that, at this moment, we're trailing much of the world in this vital stewardship movement throughout. We've got a way to go. The commercial asset class of hospitality is still trailing behind much of the developed world to date.

So, what in the world does that mean for our industry in 2025 and 2026?

TECHNOLOGY, CIRCULAR ECONOMY INNOVATORS, AND RESISTANCE

Many great sustainability technologies are now available, and more innovations enter the market daily. For instance, in-room smart thermostat solutions] can reduce most hotels' energy bills by 30% on average and work well with most existing HVAC systems in the field today. They have been widely available for at least a decade now–*"table stakes"* as a no-brainer investment. Still, they have less than 15% global hotel market penetration, perhaps a few points less here in the USA. With energy costs alone representing the second highest expense for a hotel or resort, this simple-to-implement solution is clearly a key to implementing sustainable best practices, with many others to follow.

There are also partnerships that embrace what's called *"Circular Economic Innovation,"* a fancy phrase for *"recycling"*. For instance, RoomOneSolutions.com is in the innovative recycling space. They focus on the waste often ending up in landfill, including old HVAC/PTAC equipment. During renovations, when discarding used PTACs, they offer *"3 Easy Steps Towards Responsible and Dependable PTAC Disposal Service."* Reach out to them and let them pay to collect your old PTAC equipment which they will strip, recycle and reuse what they can, eliminating vast amounts of metals otherwise going to a landfill.

Yes, there remain plenty of friction points along this transition path. One is hotel developers' resistance: They don't always build a hotel with ongoing operating assets and monthly expenses as a primary focus. That may be surprising to those who aren't aware, but a common concern to those in the business–penny-wise, pound-foolish, and widespread.

Another market friction point: The track record of deployment of this technology with respect to user practices, or lack thereof. Having worked at two primary manufacturers of this technology, I can share first-hand that, just a year or two after deployment, all too many hotel teams no longer consistently monitor nor maintain critical platforms, sometimes to the point where no one on property knows a system's login information.

To be fair, Directors of Engineering and Chief Engineers historically are not selected for their technological proficiencies, which are generational. That's even more in play at smaller or select service hotels operating with smaller staff who simply cannot keep up with every technological requirement as they juggle other needs to perform their basic day-to-day jobs.

A third friction point: Those companies developing and selling these solutions are often not nuanced in the art and science of hospitality, however much they may consider themselves *"hoteliers"* for serving the industry. Therefore, the User Interface involved is not as fully developed or thoughtfully created to make it as fun and easy to use as possible by hotel team members.

BETTERING THE BOTTOM LINE

Even with today's ever-increasing energy costs–the average hotel's second-highest expense category - we are starting to see true cost savings through technology. Companies like Connecticut-based Smartcon offer best-in-class ongoing support for all top-tier guest room energy systems available on the market today. They demonstrate clearly that investing solely in manufacturer support is often not the best way to go. Smartcon specializes in handling common friction points at a reasonable cost to a hotel. With their 2024 acquisition of Neuro Building Systems, they added additional capability to manage and maintain water and indoor air quality as well as reporting key metrics in sustainability required in most of the world and will eventually become *"table stakes"* in the USA as well. Smartcon is now better armed to accelerate the adoption of sustainable technology in the hotel sector, assuming owners and developers commit to their sustainability responsibilities in the *"commercial real estate, hospitality"* asset class.

Alongside today's new focus on broader sustainability initiatives comes the need to manage and report on sustainability metrics. After all, you can't change what you don't measure.

As a professional community, hoteliers are extremely effective in accomplishing complex tasks once they have the right tools in hand–and clear direction to use them.

A GLOBAL COMMITMENT

Geopolitically, hotel operators in the USA should acknowledge that our international guests are now used to, and expect to follow, new rules and regulatory requirements established around the globe. Indeed, several of the largest states and major cities are taking effective and achievable regulatory steps in the absence of uniform federal leadership. We are truly a global industry, and no one wants to have to manufacture different solutions to fit different locations, nor do hotel operators want to have disparate systems and solutions based solely on geography.

So, are we there yet? I think we can conclude that we now have access to more complete, scalable sustainable systems and solutions–along with support teams who can ensure a return on the investment while enhancing the user experience for all emerging technology.

How can ownership and management make sustainable best practices fun and entertaining for hotel staff? I don't have that answer quite yet, but getting guests involved is key, as is, perhaps, adding a *"gamification dimension"* to the end-user interface. That seems to fit the current new generation of tech-savvy team members. Stay tuned. There's definitely more to come.

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