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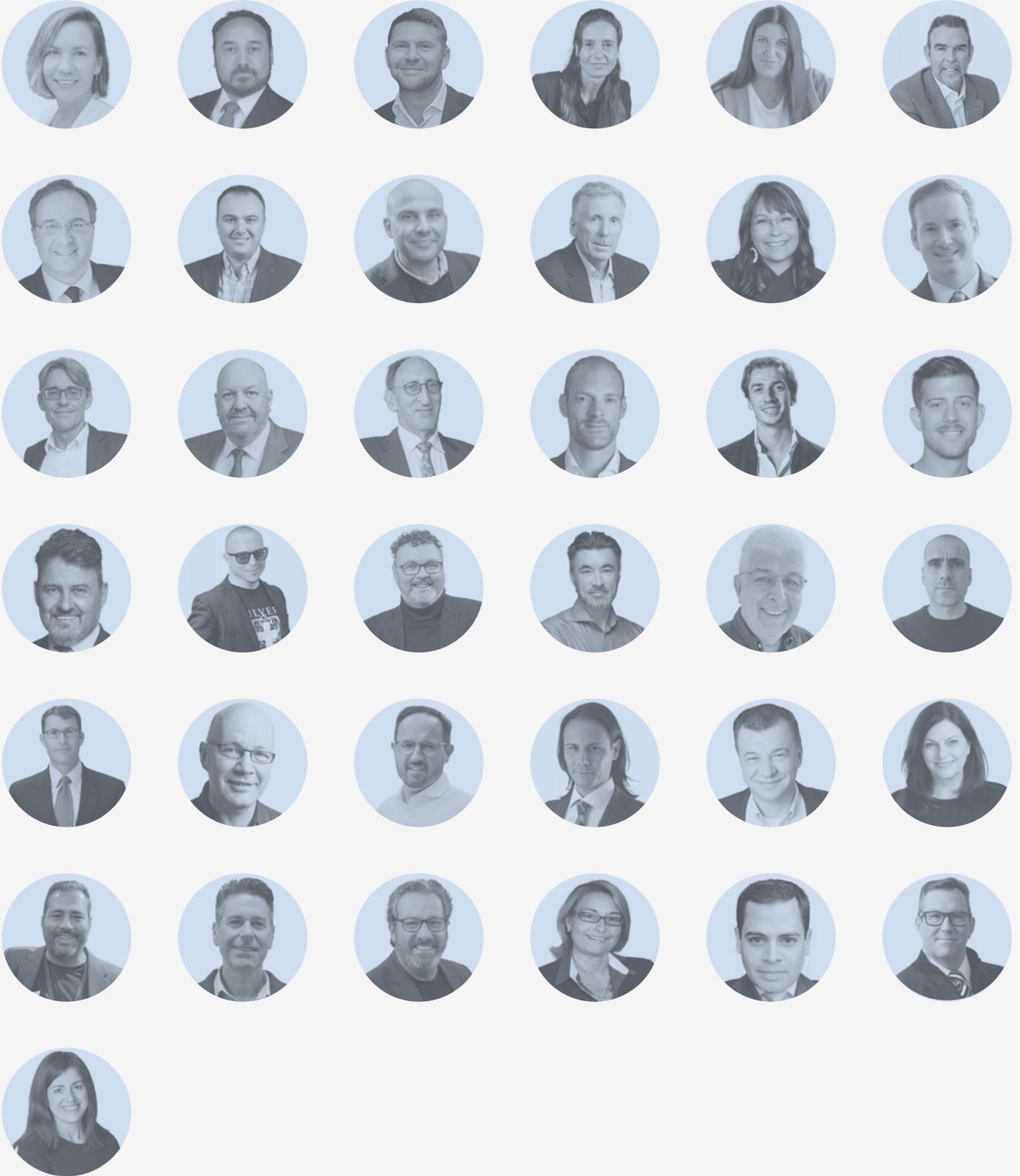
Do's & Don'ts of Going Paperless and Digital in the Guest Journey

Data & Insights

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If you have traveled in the past couple of decades, you have likely experienced a hotel room overflowing with printed material. Menus, brochures, directories, safety guides, city maps, and the occasional glossy magazine were all part of the package. While once helpful, this paper overload feels increasingly out of place in today's connected world. Guests now expect simplicity, clarity, and digital access.

The hospitality experience is shifting, and with it comes the opportunity to rethink how we deliver information in a more modern, efficient, and guest–friendly way.

For everyone who has had experience traveling in the last decades, there's a universal truth that they might or might not have noticed when it comes to hotels, especially hotel rooms. With every single room came an abundance of papers. Menus, SPA brochures, hotel directories, an obligatory emergency guide, don't forget about the city maps and inevitable magazines, to mention a few.

While it might have been appreciated in the past when you couldn't easily look up things, visual clutter can feel overwhelming today and seem outdated in a contemporary setting. Guests don't appreciate it, and the housekeeping staff is not fond of it either.

They in this case, guests prefer quick and easy access to everything that comes as a benefit of digital access through their phones, tablets, or in–room technology. While going paperless can seem excessive to some or like an attempt at greenwashing, it will be a welcome change for most.

Imagine a gorgeous hotel: everything looks impressive at first glance. But then you are hit with a mess of brochures, menus, and flyers everywhere. It is clear they were trying to be helpful, but the whole thing feels a bit chaotic, as if no one has thought through the guest experience.

At the same time, similar hotels that have chosen to make their materials digital instantly seemed more coherent visually. Sleek interior design was in sync with the idea of conveying information through in–room TV and my phone screen, and it was everything I needed. The hotel took its task seriously, creating a coherent physical and mental space.

Working with hotels has opened my eyes. I've seen how digital tools can reduce waste and seriously improve the guest experience. Simplify day–to–day tasks, create new ways to connect with guests, and even unlock revenue opportunities that weren't there before. Everything feels smoother and more thoughtful, turning a stay into something more intentional.

Obviously, transformation is not plug-and-play; that much is clear. There are clear rules to follow when taking this step, so allow me to tell you what will work and give you my list of do's and don'ts.

10 DO'S

1 DO ELIMINATE PAPER, BUT DO IT THOUGHTFULLY

Start with what guests use, like in–room dining menus or spa information, and move that into a digital–first approach. Don't just mindlessly throw away everything overnight. Prioritize high–impact content that will make the most significant difference.

2 DO CENTRALIZE YOUR CONTENT MANAGEMENT

Scattered PDFs and print–ready files saved across different platforms are a guaranteed way to miss updates and communicate inconsistent messages. Instead, a unified content management system will ensure that every screen shows the same correct information.

3 DO OFFER ACCESS VIA THE GUESTS' DEVICES

This is the simple truth: guests might like your shiny new tech but prefer to interact with your staff using their smartphones. Make their wish come true by giving them a user–friendly app they can load whenever that doesn't require a 40–step login.

4 EMPOWER YOUR GUESTS TO MAKE A CHOICE AND SHOW THEM THE RESULT

It can be easy to skip the sustainable options when there is no actual impact. Show your guests they have options and what those options will result in – how much water is saved by skipped cleaning or reduced housekeeping. Please give them the choice to support sustainability with you.

5 DO ALLOW FOR PERSONALIZED COMMUNICATION, NOT JUST GREETINGS

The first name displayed across various touchpoints during the check–in might seem like a lot, but it's a bare minimum. Personalization should be meaningful and relevant. Offer a discount at your SPA or a complimentary drink; don't just say hi for the sake of it.

6 DO USE IN–ROOM SCREENS FOR AMBIENT PERSONALIZATION

It all changes once you realize TVs can be more than just news–watching white–noise machines. Welcome your guests, display personalized offers, promote visual guides – show, don't just tell. And, of course, let them cast their content during their stay.

7 DESIGN A COMMUNICATION JOURNEY, NOT JUST ONE–OFF PROMOS

Upselling works best in context: a gentle welcome message, a mid–stay upgrade offer, ideal refreshments during any given activity, and a pre–checkout late departure deal. Create automated flows that arrive quickly, not badly timed upsell pushes.

8 DO GIVE GUESTS REAL–TIME ACCESS TO HOTEL SERVICES
Booking the SPA, ordering wine, asking for extra pillows, or anything else if that matters should always be one tap away. Through an in–room tablet, ideally, creating a smooth in–room experience.

9 DO THINK BEYOND GREENWASHING WHEN CUTTING PAPER
Yes, removing print helps the planet not to mention cutting costs for you. But even more importantly, it allows guests to experience a truly clutter–free, calm, and curated environment.

10 DO INVEST IN SYSTEMS THAT TALK TO EACH OTHER
Creating a harmonious ecosystem in your hotel's backend should be a priority, not only for the sake of your staff but also to create a frictionless guest experience. PMS, guest experience platform, entertainment, and communication tools should all integrate and work together, not just add to the pile.

10 DON'TS

1 DON'T TREAT *"PAPERLESS"* AS JUST AN ECO–STATEMENT
You're missing the real benefit if it doesn't improve the guest experience. Focus on utility first, then celebrate sustainability.

2 DON'T GIVE GUESTS FIVE PLATFORMS TO NAVIGATE
A hotel stay should not feel like an escape room experience. For example, is there a TV menu that works with a QR code you have to scan to get to a separate app to order food? Don't create a disjointed experience; opt for unified access whenever possible.

3 DON'T IGNORE THE PHYSICAL SPACE YOU'RE FREEING UP
Going paperless creates a visually calm, elevated luxury feeling. Don't replace paper stacks with random devices, more decor, or clutter. You've gotten to this point; now keep it minimal.

4 DON'T ASSUME EVERYONE WANTS TO SKIP CLEANING
Sustainability doesn't mean denying service or dropping service standards. Don't assume how much of their comfort guests are willing to compromise for a green policy, but give them actual control over it.

5 DON'T CONFUSE PERSONALIZATION WITH SURVEILLANCE
Having the option to do something doesn't mean you need to do it entirely, and this goes double for the collected data. Stay transparent with your guests' data, use insights to create meaningful personalizations, and do not creep them out.

6 DON'T GET AGGRESSIVE WITH YOUR PROMOTIONS
Hourly notifications about every service under the sun? That sounds like a fast track to being permanently blocked on all devices. I keep mentioning it, but meaningful personalization is the key. Time it correctly, and keep your segments in check.

7 DON'T TREAT THE TV AS AN ADDITIONAL THING TO DUST
Well–placed, visually drawing real estate? Use it wisely. Through streaming and casting, in–room displays can welcome, inform, upsell, and entertain.

8 DON'T IGNORE THE POST–STAY
The guest journey doesn't end at check–out. Use your app or message channel to follow up with feedback requests or future offers.

9 DON'T BUY TECH THAT LOCKS YOU IN
All your tools should be scalable, integrable, and future–proof. Avoid closed ecosystems, simple as that.

10 DON'T SKIP STAFF TRAINING
Don't underestimate your most valuable asset: your team. Your front desk and housekeeping teams must understand how your digital systems work to support guests confidently.

CONCLUSION

Don't fall into the trap of removing information when going paperless. The transformation you aim to get is about how information is delivered, at what frequency, and to which groups.

The endgame is creating a digital system to support your hospitality. To give guests instant, intuitive access to what they need, even before they know it, without adding noise, friction, or clutter to their experience.

I believe that the future of hospitality doesn't include more devices, apps, or clutter. On the contrary, it's filled with imaginative journeys, clutter–free rooms, and meaningful personalization. When done correctly, digital transformation is not about centering screens; it's about centering serenity.

And that's something every traveler can appreciate.

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