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User Adoption Isn't Enough: Accelerate Proficiency & ROI in Hospitality Tech

Data & Insights

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For all the buzz around digital transformation in hospitality, the reality is far less polished. Technology is being bought, installed, and announced with fanfare, yet it's still not delivering on its promise. Why? Because installing tech isn't the same as adopting it. And adopting it isn't the same as mastering it.

After 25 years in the industry, I have seen the same pattern repeat: tools that should drive progress end up gathering dust. Not because they're flawed, but because we have overlooked the human side of innovation. The real challenge isn't choosing the right platform, it's building the muscle to use it well. This isn't just a tech problem. It's a leadership problem. A communication problem. A change management problem. And solving it starts with one simple shift: prioritize people first.

The gap between technology implementation and its full potential is still wide and pervasive in the hospitality industry. As a passionate technologist, I find it frustrating that this challenge has persisted throughout my 25-year career and for many years before.

Who and what is causing this divide? Everyone is playing a part.

- Buyers are making investments in technology without a playbook. They are choosing “bolt-on” solutions to solve a specific problem without a holistic view of their own tech stack and their current usage across existing solutions.
- Vendors are selling their products, but they aren't selling the change required to reach successful adoption. The bottom line is if buyers can't effectively adopt your solution, then you aren't really selling them anything.

AI is widening this gap because it's accelerating innovation faster than anything we've seen in our lifetimes, yet many are implementing it without strategic alignment or the expertise to optimize it for their use cases. This is where structure comes in. A well-defined framework keeps technology from outpacing adoption and ensures teams can harness its full potential. Rather than simply deploying tools, organizations need to focus on empowering users to adapt, innovate and drive real results. The A.I.M. (Align, Inspire, Mobilize) framework is built on this principle, taking a human-centered approach that prioritizes proficiency and ROI.

This article walks you through its fundamentals, showing you how to prioritize people first and what to avoid so that you can transform technology implementation from a basic installation project into a value-driven journey.

DO'S

1 PRIORITIZE ALIGNMENT

Ensure teams have a shared vision and clearly defined goals before executing on any initiative. Start with operational pain points, not features. Align your strategy with challenges your team faces daily so you are solving real business problems.

2 COMMUNICATE CONSISTENTLY

Give everyone across the organization the context behind the change so they can appreciate the reasoning and how it affects them. It takes 20% more time to add the why, but the result is empowered employees who embrace the change and share it with others in the organization.

3 FIND CHAMPIONS

Select enthusiastic team members from each department to become system experts who can provide peer-to-peer support. Employees learn better from their peers because of shared experiences and relatability.

4 ESTABLISH PROFICIENCY METRICS

Define system-specific benchmarks for mastery at different levels. Measure adoption success and track growth with periodic evaluations tailored to the system's unique requirements.

5 TRAIN BY MODULE

Structure learning paths by role and break training into digestible modules. This approach improves retention and allows everyone to apply what they learn with minimal disruption, so the system is both fully understood and actively used.

6 ENABLE PRACTICAL LEARNING

Develop realistic examples of how different roles will benefit from leveraging technology in their daily tasks. Create hands-on practice opportunities where team members can safely experiment with new systems in a low-risk environment with support and guidance.

7 CHECK-IN REGULARLY

Establish a regular cadence for reviewing system usage to monitor adoption and growth. Conduct periodic assessments to identify patterns where teams might be reverting to old habits or bypassing key system features. Gather feedback from users to understand challenges and provide targeted support or retraining.

8 CELEBRATE ACHIEVEMENTS

Recognize and reward team members who achieve new levels of system proficiency. When teams see their efforts recognized and valued, they are more motivated to keep exploring new ways to maximize technology's potential.

9 SHARE SUCCESS STORIES

Highlight specific examples where improved technology proficiency led to better guest experiences or operational efficiency. Demonstrating how technology works for people rather than against them creates sustainable and positive change.

10 MANAGE THE CHANGE

Technology adoption isn't a set it and forget it process. To get real value, you need to invest time in adoption and ongoing refinement. This is even more critical with AI, which isn't a product but a process, one that requires policy, governance and education to be truly effective.

DON'TS**1 ASSUME ADOPTION = PROFICIENCY**

Avoid the common pitfall of ending support after the first system training. Without deliberate reinforcement and continuous learning, proficiency stalls leading to inefficiencies, frustrations and underutilization of the system.

2 IGNORE CHANGE RESISTANCE:

Address underlying fears and uncertainties about new technology early, particularly from experienced team members. Resistance often signals valid concerns, so listen to the worries about usability and job security.

3 OVERWHELM STAFF

Resist the temptation to roll out every system capability at once. Focus on the features that have the most impact on day-to-day tasks before expanding to the advanced capabilities. Choose early adopter groups to introduce new features gradually and minimize disruption.

4 RELY ON VENDOR TRAINING

Vendor training only provides a foundational understanding of a system's features. This often lacks the real-world context necessary to support daily use. Supplement standard training with role-specific use cases and scenarios relevant to your operations and unique workflows.

5 LET WORKAROUNDS BECOME STANDARDS

Despite how harmless these shortcuts may seem, they often mask underlying system inefficiencies. If left unchecked, they can undermine long-term proficiency. Look for patterns where the team bypasses intended workflows and address the root cause.

6 FORGET TO MEASURE BASELINE

Without a benchmark for current adoption, it will be challenging to show improvement and justify continued investment in training or optimization. Define key metrics, gather data across roles and communicate the results.

7 NEGLECT ONGOING EDUCATION

Avoid the assumption that individuals will discover advanced features on their own. If you treat training as a one-time event, you risk stagnation and underutilized systems. Plan for continuous education so teams stay current on new features and best practices.

8 ALLOW DEPARTMENT SILOS

When teams work in isolation, they develop inconsistent workflows, communication gaps and inefficiencies. Encourage collaboration across departments and create a centralized knowledge-sharing hub.

9 UNDERESTIMATE STAFF TURNOVER

High turnover can create gaps in proficiency, disrupt team workflows and slow technology adoption. Develop sustainable onboarding processes that quickly bring new hires up to speed on technology systems.

10 IGNORE FEEDBACK

Team feedback is often the missing link to unlocking greater efficiency and long-term success. They can help you find blind spots as they are the ones interacting with the system daily. Solicit feedback regularly, act on feedback quickly and close the loop with the team to share how their suggestions have influenced changes.

CONCLUSION

The A.I.M. Framework shifts hospitality technology adoption from a technical hurdle to a people-first strategy. By aligning tools with operational needs, inspiring teams to truly master their systems, and mobilizing them with structured support, the hospitality industry can finally bridge the gap between investment and impact.

Success in hospitality isn't about having the newest tech; it's about making it work for your team and guests. Stopping at user adoption means missing out on the full potential of technology. Adoption is the starting point, but real results come when teams gain proficiency. When technology is mastered, it stops being just a tool and becomes a business driver improving efficiency, service quality and profitability.





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