

HYB26

Annual Edition

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The Hotel Yearbook

Foresight and innovation in the global hotel industry



HY8



Turning Technology Adoption Challenges into Revenue Engines

Tech adoption

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Prince Thampi of Hudini argues that most hotel tech projects fall short not because the tools are weak, but because adoption is treated like an IT rollout instead of a guest and staff journey. He outlines three common blockers and offers a clear playbook to turn digital investment into real operational and revenue gains.

Nearly every hotel and resort today is undergoing some form of digital transformation, implementing apps, web tools, IPTV systems, digital keys, or installing check-in kiosks in an effort to create more seamless and personalized guest experiences. Despite good intentions and heavy investment, many solutions fail to achieve meaningful guest adoption, operational impact and return on investment. The issue rarely lies in the technology itself, but in how hotels bring that technology to life.

NOW. CHALLENGES OF HOTEL TECH ADOPTION

Digital transformation isn't about putting technology in place; it's about making it work for guests and staff. Over the years, I've observed three major barriers to successful technological adoption in hospitality:

- Low guest adoption: native apps typically achieve less than 10% download rates because guests are hesitant to install an app for a short stay or a one-time visit
- Fragmented execution: without a coordinated adoption strategy across technology, marketing, and operations, even the best digital solutions fail to scale
- Limited staff engagement: hotel teams are often not properly trained, incentivized, or even informed about the digital tools available, making it difficult for them to encourage guest usage

I have personally experienced entering a hotel room with a digital key, and a housekeeping staff looking at me like I was performing some magic trick. She was not aware that the hotel had digital keys and had never seen guests using them.

NEXT. DRIVING SUCCESSFUL TECH ADOPTION

The most successful hotels recognize that digital transformation is not just a technology rollout, it's a cultural and operational shift. They focus on three essential pillars:

1 ENGAGE GUESTS IN THE RIGHT WAY

- Start with useful, universal solutions, such as digital check-in/check-out, before adding advanced features
- Provide multiple, frictionless access points in addition to native apps, such as web apps, QR codes, or IPTV ordering
- Create value for guests to engage digitally, whether through convenience, loyalty integration, or personalization

2 ALIGN ALL INTERNAL STAKEHOLDERS

- Cross-functional ownership is critical, with management, technology, marketing, and operations working together on tech adoption
- Use the marketing department to drive awareness; operations to ensure on-ground execution; and management to provide the vision and consistency

3 EMPOWER AND INCENTIVIZE HOTEL STAFF

- Frontline staff must understand, trust, and be motivated to confidently promote new tools
- Continuous training prevents technology solutions from becoming "invisible"
- Incentive models tied to digital engagement, like upsells, loyalty enrollments or in-room dining, consistently boost adoption

I've seen hotels reach exceptionally high guest adoption by unifying these three pillars while at the same time dramatically reducing manual staff time and consolidating numerous legacy systems into a single platform.

BEYOND. THE RESULTS ARE MEASURABLE

When digital adoption is planned holistically, transformation drives measurable impact across operations and revenue. Industry examples show that some hotels are now generating tens of thousands of dollars per month in additional in-room dining revenue through IPTV ordering alone, while digital check-in is eliminating the vast majority of manual processing time, freeing teams to focus on higher-value guest interactions. Simplified, convenient experiences also strengthen engagement and loyalty, and hotels that begin with a single high-impact solution like digital check-in are best positioned to expand into additional services effectively.

Staff portal solutions are streamlining processes, saving valuable time, and delivering efficiency across front office operations. In-stay messaging empowers teams to address requests proactively, while guests benefit from seamless convenience and staff benefit from greater clarity and control. These capabilities are becoming integral to daily operations - smart, dependable, and consistently guest-first.

The shift to more personalized arrival experiences has also proven immensely successful according to guest feedback. Through re-engineered workflows, hotels are realizing unprecedented operational efficiency, removing dozens of previously required steps across business units and achieving massive time savings in some processes.

In conclusion, digital transformation succeeds when hotels treat it as a human journey, not a technology rollout. When leadership sets the vision, marketing builds awareness, operations empower staff, and incentives drive engagement, digital tools elevate both the guest experience and the bottom line.

My advice to hoteliers embarking on digital transformations is: Don't start with WHAT technology to deploy, start with WHO will make it work and how you'll bring them along.

