

HYB26

Annual Edition

Converging Forces – The Future is Hybrid by Design



The Hotel Yearbook

Foresight and innovation in the global hotel industry



HYB



Best business strategy? Jimmy the barkeeper, Francis the breakfast waitress.

Hybrid Hospitality

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Dr. Andreas Kroboth, Founder & CEO at Absolute Future IT & Marketing, points out the obvious truth: we will have more tourists, fewer employees, and it makes absolutely no sense to waste precious human time on repetitive screen work. His message is simple: use every bit of automation you can, so your rare, emotionally intelligent team members can focus on the human moments that create great reviews, leading directly to higher ADR. In business models focused on upscale and luxury, this will be your main differentiator. And for all others, this waste will no longer be sustainable anyway.

And yes, besides Jimmy and Francis, there is also Jane at the front-desk. In upscale hospitality, your guest facing people will become more important daily, and they should be at the center of your business strategy.

INCREASING NUMBER OF TOURISTS.

Usually forecasting the future is difficult, however some trends are obvious. The growing middle class in Asia is filling the traveler pipeline with unprecedented force. The experience economy is adding growth dynamics on top. Massive investments in tourism infrastructure (eg., in Middle East) are another factor. Not to forget the permanent promotional fire on social media, causing a strong “I want this too” feeling.

All this leads to one conclusion: the number of tourists will increase for many years to come.

DECREASING NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES SERVING THEM.

On the other hand, the number of employees in hospitality? Not that much. Pure demographics leads to a decreasing workforce. And those left increasingly chose jobs with a “better work-life balance”. Which intensifies the stress for those still working in hospitality, often so much that they finally also leave this industry.

And I am not even talking about really qualified employees, equipped with training and most of all with an attitude and the emotional intelligence to create hospitable moments, worth to be remembered. Whoever thinks we already today suffer from a shortage: we ain’t seen nothing yet! The dimension of this challenge is foreseeable, and it is foreseeably HUGE.

NEED FOR AUTOMATION? URGENTLY!

Tradition? Not enough pain to change? Complex tech stack in a complex industry? I am not 100% sure about the reasons behind it, but overall it is pretty amazing, how much potential for automation has so far been left unused. There are many processes (check-in/check-out anyone?), which are more or less decision trees, waiting for automation.

Picture that: we are wishing and searching intensely for hospitable team members. And then we are wasting their time and talent with repetitive work behind screens, often annoying them additionally with outdated tools.

This doesn’t make any f#@king sense, and this is the most polite way I can describe it.

The good thing is, that the market will take care of it because this is not sustainable. To use whatever tools available, to free up human resources for doing what only humans can do will be a pure economic necessity.

HUMAN INTERACTION FOR POSITIVE REVIEWS

And now let’s close the loop. Everybody knows the importance of reviews for a successful business. Given the incredibly thin margins, the difference between 4.1 and 4.7 can make or break the economic success of a hotel. Of course, all the basics have to be in place. Cleanliness, comfortable beds, no noise, fast WiFi – all this is a baseline, not a differentiator (or if so, due to lack of it, in the wrong direction). By far the main reason for positive reviews? Always humans, or more concrete, human interaction.

Jimmy the barkeeper making and serving with pleasure the favorite cocktail although it was not on the menu. Jane the front desk agent, successfully comforting the tired and crying toddler, providing much needed help for the single mom who is busy taking care of her baby. Francis the breakfast waitress with the big smile, serving a filled bread basket from the buffet to the table because she realized that the elderly couple struggles a bit walking back and forth.

If your business model is purely around lodging (providing a safe place, bed and shower) – fine, you might not depend on it. But if you are in hospitality, this is exactly what you are looking for in your team. Attention, empathy, a serving attitude, friendliness, humanity at its best. Already today this is rare, therefore providing a real potential for differentiation. But combining the decreasing number of qualified employees, serving an increasing number of guests, these behaviors will not only be rare, but “remarkably rare”. So remarkable, that it will be reflected in raving positive reviews, lifting ADR to profitable heights.

HYBRID HOSPITALITY

Use every technology available to automate all processes where humans add hardly any value, and do so as soon as you can. Because this is the only way you will be able to attract (and afford) those team members making a real difference by adding value in ways only humans can. No matter how you call it, hybrid or not, it should be a central part of every sustainable business strategy in hospitality.