



Are You Ready for Some... **TECHNOLOGY?**

A young newlywed couple is preparing for their first holiday dinner. The bride takes out her recipe cards handed down from her mother. She reads through the cards for scalloped potatoes, deviled eggs and baked beans and gets to the card for preparing the ham. The instructions tell her to cut off the bottom three inches of the ham and bake it separately. She is curious about this and calls her mother to ask why. Her mother only remembers writing down what her mother told her to do. So, they call the grandmother. When they ask her why it was important to cut off a portion of the ham, she told them that she did that because the pan she baked her ham in wasn't big enough to hold it.

Many hotel companies have the same mindset when it comes to purchasing new technology. They are stuck in the same belief systems that they have always used and regardless of how big or how great the new technology is, and they often cut off a major portion of the solution, if they buy it all.

One of the more interesting trends in solutions now being offered to the hospitality industry is convergence. Most of you would think that convergence would mean the triple play of voice, video and data. Just as powerful a convergence is happening with technology and marketing. Social networking would be one example of this type of convergence. In today's world, many of the more successful vendors supporting our industry are selling solutions rather than just tools. In many cases their solutions combine technological capabilities with marketing initiatives. And, in many cases hotels are not yet ready to purchase these solutions because in doing so it will cause a change in business practices, operational processes and/or marketing mindsets.

Let's take a look at some of the new solutions coming to our market and how adoption of these great products just won't happen without hoteliers changing the way they have always done things.

The first example is from Ariane Systems, which offers self-service, checkin/out kiosks for hotels. The Allegro Suite of services includes Web online checkin/out, mobile checkin/out, and e-mail and SMS gateway module, among others. Christelle Pigeat, the director of operations, said, "Any guest may checkin or out when and where (he or she) wants with infinite possibilities; using a laptop, a mobile phone, from home, from the airport and at any time. On the day of arrival, the guest can simply proceed to his online checkin from his office, and retrieve his room key card at the checkin/out hotel kiosk by inserting his reservation number sent by SMS to his iPhone™ or BlackBerry® smartphone prior to arrival. At checkout, the guest may leave the hotel without going to the reception desk. He can checkout at the kiosk or in the taxi on the way to the airport," Pigeat said. In the last case the guest would view his invoice details on a smartphone, and proceed to checkout by accepting to be charged on the credit card on file from the pre-checkin process. This flexibility provides hotels with alternative checkin and checkout procedures for their guests.

Beginning with the mobile strategies, hotel companies will now have a new way of communicating with guests. More frequent and very personalized messaging is now available and hotels will need to change their campaigns. In so doing, guests will have far more access and freedom to make changes to their reservations and hotels will both want to accommodate this and find ways to upsell via this media.

At the property level, hotels will deploy kiosks that have both standalone checkin/out and mobile checkin key dispensing capabilities. These kiosks will require both electrical and Internet connections, as well as physical space with highly visible signage. In addition, the more successful deployments will require front desk staff to get out from behind the desk and in front of the guests at the kiosks. The

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responsibilities of this position now change from basically data input to guest interaction, with personality, and a sales component.

Pascal Metivier, founder and CEO of OpenWays, said, "(The solution is) a cell phone-based front desk bypass solution that works with

100 percent of guest cell phones. The mobile phone service allows for a guest to get a room number and a room key on his cell phone and go straight to the room upon arrival at the property."

The OpenWays solution is more than a cell phone application that acts as the key to a hotel door lock. It begins with the online reservation process, enabling hotel companies to create more traction on their own booking sites. Then, with access to the guest cell phone, hotels can now provide marketing content before, during and after the stay in a way they never could before.

For a hotel to successfully take advantage of everything OpenWays has to offer, it may need to make some significant changes. These would start with adding new content to the booking Websites. It may include developing new marketing campaigns that are delivered through different media, and perhaps to a different demographic as this technology should drive more business and Generation Y travelers. And, at the hotel level, door locks in existing hotels will need a slight retrofit to enable the cell phones to open the locks.

Another solution is from Tiare Technology which allows for faster and more efficient service, empowering staff with information to provide more attentive and personalized service to guests. Julie Werbit, CEO of Tiare Technology said, "We provide patented ordering systems that allow hotel guests to order food and beverages, purchase merchandise and reserve services using a wireless device such as an Apple

iPad or iPhone® from anywhere on the property. The systems interface to the POS, and allow the property to increase revenues and improve the efficiency of service operations.” Providing hospitality companies with a powerful platform to reach the guest with a real-time, targeted marketing message can reinforce the company brand and impress the guest with intuitive offerings.

One of Tiare Technology’s products, *intelliChaise*, enables guests via an iPhone to order F&B items from the pool or beachside. A hotel can keep its menus current without having to reprint paper menus when items run out or new specials are available. The system provides hotel staff not only with the order, but information about that guest so that service can be personalized. This might require retraining of staff, and possibly rewriting job requirement skills.

Another Tiare Technology product is its wireless WineList, which displays a restaurant’s complete selection of wines and cocktails to the guest. The WineList product also gives management an opportunity to upsell premium alcohol or food and wine pairings in real time to the guest automatically, without



www.tiaretech.com

additional effort by staff. To be most successful, the restaurant should focus on organizing the menus to take advantage of these opportunities. To use this product, the hotel or restaurant will need wireless service and create procedures to distribute, clean and well maintained Apple iPads.

Our final example is a service called Expressway from VOC Systems, which allows hotel managers an efficient and effective method to guests’ needs and comments. Brad Kesel, president of VOC Systems said, “While in their rooms (or at any phone or strategically located touch-screen kiosk), guests leave spoken comments about their experiences by leaving a voicemail recording for the general manager. Within minutes, targeted managers receive customized e-mails alerting them to feedback events.”

Expressway allows the general manager to leave each guest a voice message encouraging them to contact

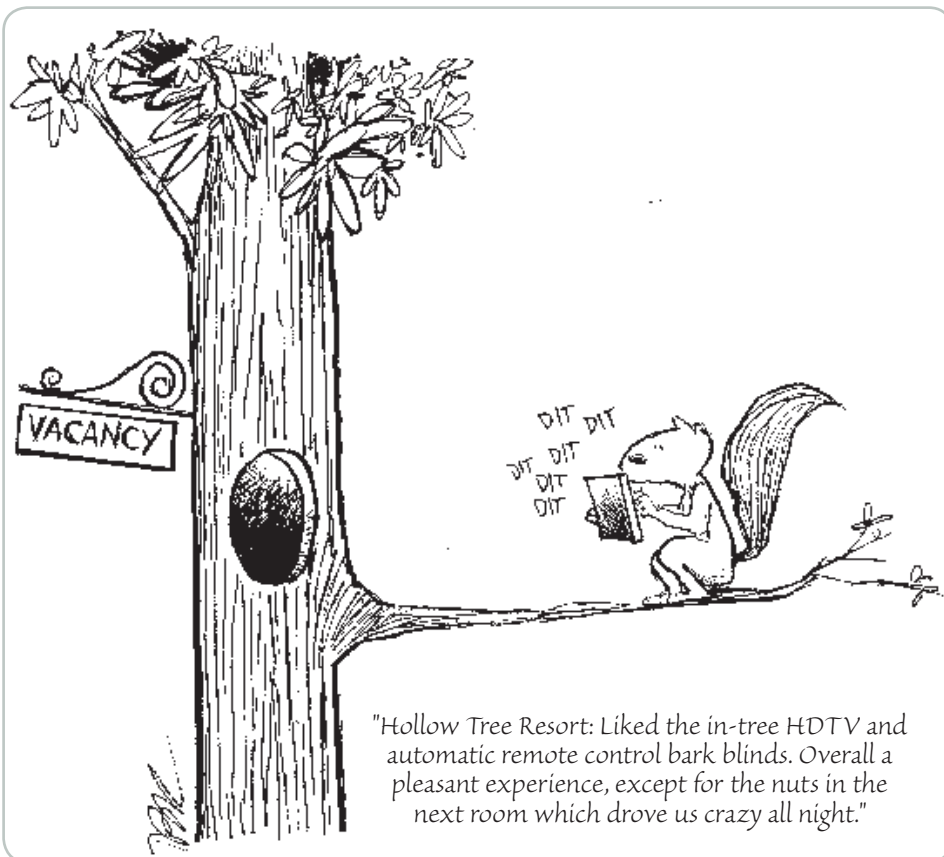
him directly via the VOC System. Guests can leave messages, complaints or commendations. The VOC services transcribes the message into text, and e-mails the transcription and a .wav file based upon key words to the appropriate managers responsible for timely resolution.

In order for a hotel to implement this solution, it first has to incorporate a new philosophy of actually wanting to hear from guests and address issues in real time, versus getting feedback weeks later in the form of paper-driven surveys. Staff must be accessible, either via e-mail or PDAs. A chain of command regarding issue resolution must be established, tracked and modified as needed. And, this technology could make inroads into marketing initiatives as a differentiator in service levels against a hotel’s competitive set.

From just these four examples one can clearly see that in order to install, integrate, manage and take advantage of new solutions to the industry, we must change. Some changes may be physical to the property. Others will require newly created staff positions, perhaps at the demise of other positions. Many changes will demand new and different ways in which our industry touches our guests.

While hotel companies currently suffer through some tough economic times, many vendors have rolled up their sleeves and developed fantastic new products, services and solutions. As we come out of this recession, hotels will begin to revamp their properties, and adding new amenities will be one significant way to do that. In order to be successful, hoteliers will need to be prepared to take a new look at business processes, operational procedures, job descriptions and marketing initiatives. It will be sad to see any hotel companies stubbornly holding on to outdated concepts when this year’s HITEC will present so many new solutions that will require sometimes significant change on the part of the operator to employ to the most benefit of guests and properties alike.

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"Hollow Tree Resort: Liked the in-tree HDTV and automatic remote control bark blinds. Overall a pleasant experience, except for the nuts in the next room which drove us crazy all night."