

THE CONNECTED TRAVELER:

WHAT YOUR HOTEL

NEEDS TO KNOW

COMCAST
BUSINESS
B4B[™]



TODAY'S TRAVELER HAS HIGH EXPECTATIONS

Hotels and the travelers who frequent them bear little resemblance to their counterparts from just a few years ago. The explosion of new technologies has allowed hotels to change the way they operate and has made the average traveler more tech-savvy and connected than ever.

Mobile devices are driving this innovation. Not only have mobile devices changed how people interact with each other, they also have changed how people expect businesses to engage with them. According to SmartBrief, 40 percent of hotel guests carry three or more mobile devices. And with global mobile data traffic growing 30 percent every year according to Cisco, there will be an estimated 4.9 billion mobile users by 2018. When these mobile users travel, will they choose your hotel? Only if you have the mobile amenities they demand.

Travelers—especially business travelers and Millennials—don't want to wait. They don't want to wait for their room to be ready upon check-in, and they certainly don't want to wait for slow Internet connectivity when they're trying to get work done in the lobby, attending a web meeting in their hotel room, or even streaming movies, music or TV shows. They expect free access to high-speed Internet and the ability to connect through multiple devices no matter where they are on the property. Hoteliers, therefore, need strategies to accommodate guests' technology needs in order to attract and engage this highly mobile, always "on" traveler.

In this white paper, we will review three mobile trends that every hotelier should address, and we'll offer recommendations on how to best address them.

*Deploying customer-facing mobile solutions is the **#1 priority** driving hospitality I.T. spending.*

Source: Hospitality Technology Lodging Study. 2014



TREND 1:

GUESTS WANT TO STAY ENTERTAINED WITH IN-ROOM WiFi

Remember when the hottest trend in guest room technology was a fancy TV with premium channels and maybe a gaming console? In-room entertainment used to be just that, but not anymore. Advances in technology have changed the way in which today's travelers consume content and what they consider "entertainment."

Now, hotel guests bring their entertainment with them, in the form of smart phones, tablets and laptops through which they stream movies, download music and play online games—giving them a "home away from home" experience. Although some hotels may provide their own streaming entertainment options, many choose an easier way: helping guests connect to their personal streaming entertainment through a strong, reliable WiFi network.

According to TripAdvisor, free in-room WiFi is the number one amenity travelers expect. In fact, many travelers seek out and stay at properties where the WiFi is free, in an effort to avoid seeing extra charges on their data plans.

1 OF 3
HOTELIERS

plan to upgrade their in-room bandwidth in the next 18 months.

Source: Hospitality Technology Lodging Study. 2014



MOBILE TECHNOLOGIES ARE MAKING CHECK-IN/OUT EASIER

Nobody likes waiting at a hotel check-in desk, especially after a long day of travel, business meetings and other activities. That's why many hotels are using mobile technologies to streamline the check-in/check-out process and give the guest more control. New mobile check-in options include on-site check-in kiosks, roaming tablet-based check-in systems, and mobile check-in from a guest's smart phone.

Check-in kiosks offer similar efficiency and speed as using an ATM rather than going inside the bank to see a teller. The technology has been used successfully by airlines for several years now, meaning most travelers are familiar and comfortable with the process. According to a report on HotelExecutive.com, many hotels have already achieved great success in implementing self-service kiosks by personalizing offers and promotions to guests, such as the ability to offer coupons, vouchers or special messages. Kiosks even let guests choose their own room and how many keys they need and then encode those keys for use.

Hotels are also starting to adopt another mobile check-in option: hotel employees greet guests as they walk in and check them in on the spot using a wireless-enabled tablet. Tablets can be enabled with a credit card swiper and signature capture and can be used anywhere in the hotel for faster check-outs as well.

Mobile check-in from a guest's smart phone may offer the ultimate in speed and efficiency. One large hotel chain recently introduced an app that lets guests check into—and get into—their rooms through their smart phone, which acts as a mobile key. Another chain is using smartphone technology to let guests bypass the front desk upon departure, with final bills automatically sent to the guest's email address.

76%
OF TRAVELERS

state that they have checked in using an automated kiosk and would do so again.

Source: SmartBrief Media Services. 2013



TREND 3:

COMMON AREA WiFi TURNS LOBBIES INTO DESTINATIONS

Today, hotel common areas are more than just a dark lobby with a check-in desk and a couple of chairs. From economy motels to luxury lodgings, properties are testing the “coffee-house” style concept of open spaces that combine the lobby, front desk, lounge, restaurant, gaming nooks, and business center (complete with charging stations) in one contemporary space that encourages collaboration and social interaction.

Guests patronizing these open lobby spaces need to be able to connect to networks and access the cloud via WiFi without signals degrading. But this guest access comes at a price: research firm Gartner estimates that 25 percent more network traffic is generated for each device a guest connects to the network. It’s easy to see how this increased network traffic can quickly overwhelm a hotel’s existing bandwidth, making a robust network infrastructure more important than ever.

NEARLY
50%
OF HOTELS

plan to upgrade their public area bandwidth in the next 18 months.

Source: Hospitality Technology Lodging study, 2014



HIGH BANDWIDTH NEEDED TO SOLVE THE MOBILE PUZZLE

Hotels have endless possibilities for leveraging mobile technology to meet guests' needs and increase their satisfaction. That's why it's important for hoteliers to plan their technology expansion strategy carefully. Start with an evaluation of the hotel's current infrastructure and its capabilities, then define the gap between those current capabilities and where the hotel needs to go in the future.

So where should hoteliers invest their technology dollars? No discussion of incorporating mobile technology into a hotel's technology infrastructure can be complete without talking about network bandwidth, a typical stumbling block to adopting mobile technologies. While bandwidth growth has always been an issue for hospitality IT departments, the additional demands of mobile technologies have accelerated the urgency.

Consider the new check-in technologies mentioned above. A check-in kiosk or app requires quick and reliable access to guest data (including room preferences, affinity club data, and private payment data) that can be turned into actionable information at the point of service. The system must communicate effectively with the hotel's reservations system, and potentially remote data centers. And when taking into account the number of transactions that are processed in any given day through a multitude of mobile devices and kiosks, bandwidth requirements can increase exponentially.

When evaluating data service providers, look for one that understands your industry and can offer a variety of robust solutions that can be catered to your specific needs. A provider with customized products unique to the Hospitality industry, like Comcast Business, can help provide support for your mobile strategy. Comcast Business's scalable, high-performance data solutions serve as a powerful foundation for a hotel's WiFi network.

Comcast Business Hospitality Internet is ideal for smaller properties and offers a range of speed tiers to fit any budget. Download speeds are available up to 100Mbps, and two modems are provided. This enables hotels to keep guest WiFi traffic separate from secure, back-office WiFi traffic.

For larger properties that need significant data capacity, Comcast Business Hospitality Ethernet provides fast and reliable network connectivity, with speeds that easily scale up to 10Gbps. Our secure, private network provides hotels with a reliable connection—even across geographically dispersed properties.

Comcast Business's scalable, high-performance data solutions serve as a powerful foundation for hotels that offer WiFi access to their guests.

CONCLUSION

Mobile technologies help hotels enhance customer service and better utilize hotel resources. They enhance the in-room entertainment experience, allow travelers to access outside networks and the cloud, and help to streamline the guest check-in/check-out process, among other benefits.

Many guests will not return to a hotel where there is slow or unreliable WiFi. Consider how many people post on travel sites with negative reviews about “lousy WiFi.” Then consider the loss of repeat and future business from these travelers. For these reasons and more, it is imperative for hotels to choose high-performance data solutions that serve as the backbone for a robust, reliable WiFi network. Comcast Business can help.

RULE OF THUMB:

1 MBPS
OF BANDWIDTH
PER GUEST ROOM

should provide fast, reliable internet to all guests.



Sources:

“Visual Networking Index Global Mobile Data Traffic Forecast.” Cisco. 2014

“10 Hospitality Trends You Need to Know About.” SmartBrief Media Services. 2013

“2015 Lodging Technology Study”. Hospitality Technology. 2014

“How Cloud, Mobile and Video Will Increase Enterprise Bandwidth Needs Through 2017.” Gartner. 2013

“TripBarometer Truth in Travel Survey.” TripAdvisor. 2013

“Hotels Can Benefit from Self-Service Kiosks” HotelExecutive.com