

## The guest is tomorrow's interior designer



If modern man is defined by anything, it is by his use – or some would say abuse - of technology. As hotel guests, business and leisure travellers alike come to us with ever-increasing expectations, it is difficult for hoteliers to know how to react or, indeed, what to provide.

So it is useful to have emerging technologies, applicable to the guestroom, showcased in one place – first at HITEC organised by HFTP (Hospitality and Finance Technology Professionals) in Orlando and later at the BAHA (British Association of Hospitality Accountants) conference and exhibition in London.

### Guestroom 2010

The 'Guestroom 2010' project is in its second year. The experiences and exposures permitted technologists and others to escape the day-to-day core demands of front- and back-office systems, telecoms, infrastructure, connectivity, etc., to reflect upon what some of the technologies on display might preface strategically.

'Guestroom 2010' demonstrates a different approach to the living areas compared with today's hotel rooms. Reflecting the concerns of frequent travellers whose private bathroom space is 'invaded' by passing hotel staff such as bellboys and room service, a new design features a bathroom at the back of the room.

So-called 'privacy glass' creates an exterior window which changes from a clear to a cloudy translucent barrier in just 100 milliseconds at the touch of a switch by the guest. This technology alone allows interior designers of bedrooms a completely new freedom. Add to this a technology that enables guests to choose their own digitised art work at the touch of a button and the interior designer that is latent in each guest is released.

### Robots

Some of the more interesting products include the use of robots and RFID (radio frequency identification). We've seen robots in use for a decade or more in manufacturing. Now we are beginning to see robots designed for use in hotels to sweep, wash and dry floors - and even vacuuming around furniture, along walls and avoiding the stairs.

RFID is used in one product to alert room service of empty food trays in the hallway. Isn't it one of the worst experiences to walk past the remains of other guests' meals in the corridor on the way to your room? RFID is also harnessed in the latest generation of door-locking systems to allow remote check-in/proximity access using encrypted SMS messages to mobile phones

### Entertainment

The buzz nowadays is that a hotel stay is an experience rather than simply a selection of products and services. I wasn't surprised to see included in 'Guestroom 2010' a projector that allows in-room movies to be projected to a scale of a large-screen home theatre, together with digital audio systems that allow iPod music playback, AM/FM radio and video all in a true surround-sound environment - and all within a guest's bedroom.

## Guest experience

Now we see technology offering the opportunity for an enriched guest-room experience. Perhaps, though, the trick is not to get carried away with the pizzazz of it all.

We must not lose sight of the guest's reality which includes:

- a) thriving on being recognised and greeted by hotel staff much more than a welcome message on the IP phone
- b) preferring helpful order takers and timely delivery of room service rather than an 'order it yourself from the TV or phone' approach
- c) being ripped off for WiFi access or experiencing a lousy checkout will undo any of the 'wow' factors that many of the technological innovations provide'.

For more information, visit [www.guestroom2010.org](http://www.guestroom2010.org) or [www.hitec.org](http://www.hitec.org)

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