

The technology landscape



Anytime from mid to late June, my diary is normally reserved for attendance at HITEC, undoubtedly the world's leading hospitality technology event. This year was no exception so I found myself in Austin, Texas. What a great place – with hotels close to the Convention Centre, this 'Live Music Capital of the World' also enjoys being one of the world's technology innovation capitals.

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HITEC offers a unique combination of highly rated educational sessions, a huge technology exposition and many, many sponsored evening parties for those ever valuable networking opportunities and conspicuous consumption of margarita cocktails. Sessions are led by industry peers and experts whilst the expo showcases the latest industry products and services from over 300 companies. Combined with the opportunities to connect with fellow hotel technology professionals, HITEC has everything to keep me current in my thinking for today and the future. This year I came away excited by the evidence that the global hotel industry and its technology providers are working on the right issues.

Innovation

Today's connected world allows for businesses to be structured in very different ways, with **innovation** being accessed from both inside and increasingly outside the organisation. In some ways of course this is the trend that Hotel Solutions Partnership is part of – enabling clients that engage online to import expertise that can be delivered in person and/ or on-line. There are many examples of hotel companies distributing and networking to garner a higher level of thinking and innovations in service, experience, design, creation and execution than that which is available within the four corporate walls.

I've written in these columns before about how technology is allowing the customer to be the innovator of the bedroom experience and once again I saw the Guestroom of the Future at HITEC. Such has been the interest that Guestroom 2010 is looking much further into the future by recently re-branding as Guestroom 20X. At this year's show I also noted that progressive hotel brands are increasingly **willing customers to engage online** with one another and with the organization. The goal is to tap into this new type of guest engagement for shareholder gain. Brands are engaging with guests to design, test and market different elements of the guest experience. With improved insights into the guests needs, such brands should be better equipped to quickly reconfigure the hotel product, service and overall experience.

As my associate Larry Bowman points out later, technology allows employers to **tap into the pool of talent** in very different ways than in recent years. And I think we will see an increasing willingness to outsource more and more essential but non-core processes leveraging the web as hotel companies drive toward further and further productivity gains.

Business information

My hobby horse for a number of years has been the opportunity that BI (business information) systems offer; Take a look at the tools provided by such vendors as Datavision and Aptech. **Systems are becoming more and more interconnected** through common standards (think of HTNG's efforts in this regard) for exchanging data – providing not only better, deeper and wider information for decision making but also enabling new levels of automation.

But its also **unbundling** that is a trend – using other companies and entrepreneurs to enable rapid scaling (up or down) whilst keeping balance sheets light and tight. This is more and more enabled by technology (e.g. Saas) where hotels and hotel companies are more trusting of security and bandwidth reliability and are making better use of web services and related technologies.

These columns have previously drawn attention to the role that technology tools have played, are playing and will play, in transforming revenue management. Predictive technology tools are increasingly available and used – bringing more and more discipline into many aspects of hotel management. Sometimes I sense the balance has gone a little too far (*don't lose sight of the hotelier in us!*) but there can be no doubt that the hotel industry is a much more effective user of **productivity and performance enhancing** technology tools than it was even a few years ago

Evolution

Finally in this rapid scan across the technology available to the 21st century hotelier, it is worth also remembering that some businesses have evolved that are essentially accumulating pools of data and **making revenue by providing access to selected data or the entire data**. TravelCLICK is perhaps the most obvious example of a business based on this premise, but so too the newly emergent STR Global.

I wonder what the technology landscape in 2020 will be like. Any suggestions? You can bet your last dollar that the new and inventive landscape will be badged as addressing Generation Zs 'must haves'. It's a little scary to be a member of the Baby Boomers – now there is something I can't change.

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