

Technology Prospectus 2022: Hospa's Jane Pendlebury on essential tech

24 November 2021 by Jane Pendlebury



People might be at the heart of hospitality, but technology is the essential helping hand, says Jane Pendlebury, chief executive of Hospa.

Traditional hospitality, for all intents and purposes, hasn't changed all that much over the years. The hotel experience of 50, 60, 70 years ago (or even longer) is likely something that most guests would feel familiar with, were they to go back in time or vice versa. A front of house greeting, a concierge, a room, a bed, pillows, dinner in a restaurant, waiters, bar staff – all of this would be instantly recognisable. When we look at it, the fundamentals of hospitality haven't really changed at all.

What has changed though – enormously – is the technology that drives it. So many elements have been improved thanks to technological developments. From managing bookings, the workforce and marketing, through to procurement, payments, in-room entertainment and even implementing sustainability initiatives – technology touches upon and enhances the full spectrum of a working hospitality environment. What it seeks to do is to make our lives easier and the ways in which it can do that are manifold. It's made, and continues to make, a huge difference, with its influence ever growing.

pronounced as we come to depend upon it more and more.

Back-office functions that would have taken an age are now streamlined and speedy operations, allowing individuals to take on more responsibilities without creating an overwhelming workload, while the risk of human error is minimised. Automation helps with efficiency, as time-consuming manual tasks are whittled down with each new tech innovation. It allows for more targeted marketing and attracts guests in the first place.

Of course, it's not just the impact on the workforce and working processes where the benefits of technology can be felt. For the guest, technology enhances the hospitality experience in innumerable ways. From the process of first contemplating a hotel stay or meal out, tech points us where to go – leading us to an appropriate venue online before being whisked along the booking funnel that's becoming ever easier to navigate, with pre-stay or pre-dining prompts helping to minimise cancellations (and the dreaded no-shows).

Upon arrival guests can opt for self check-in in hotels, or QR code ordering when in restaurants. Of course, staff are still on hand to assist them, but ultimately technology helps guests with choice too. They get to choose what's right for them, and their experience is all the better for it (most of the time).

As touched upon above though, although the traditional rudiments of hospitality remain unchanged, the gap between the hotel or dining experience of yore, and the hotel or dining experience of today is starting to get wider. At its heart, of course, it won't. Hospitality businesses will always be looking after people and tending to their needs, but the ways in which we do it are changing – and, often, changing for the better.

Hospitality venues need to embrace the technological shift. There are so many innovative and exciting developments that keeping abreast of them is essential if you're an operator that wants not just to remain ahead of the curve but to present a truly modern outlook for your establishment. And as we continue to weather the storm of challenges hammering the industry, technology will not just help us get through it – it will also set us up for the future. It's a future that, I'm fully confident, is a bright one.

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