
Analyze This

3 Must-Haves For New-Generation Hospitality Tech

Two platform providers aim to integrate, update and get truly customer-centric.

Aging systems, lack of Web-based applications and fragmented databases are the unfortunate norm for most hoteliers these days. But a handful of technology companies are seeking to change this trend.

Get the inside scoop on hoteliers' current top demands — and what hospitality tech pioneers are doing to address them.

✓ Tech Must Connect The Dots

One of hoteliers' biggest concerns is that they're forced to use standalone systems that can't share data. But some tech providers are stepping up to the challenge of linking a hotel's central reservation system (CRS), GDS connectivity and Web channel, as well as its property management system (PMS) and revenue management system, notes **John Burns**, president of **Hospitality Consulting Technology**.

Watch for: Amadeus Hospitality Business Group, formed in 2005 via hotel technology company acquisitions, is in the process of developing the Amadeus Hotel Distribution Platform (HDP) to address concerns like this. Although the company isn't yet disclosing product details, it does indicate that connecting data across the board is a major focus.

"Hoteliers have told us that they want a single view that automatically updates inventory across the system, and we're addressing that," confirms **Annette Hogan**, managing director of the Amadeus Hospitality Business Group. Amadeus is also addressing the demand "to store guest data in a single format in a single database."

The goal: The tech provider is out to put hoteliers on the same playing field as airlines, an industry segment that already enjoys modern technology that can input and transfer information from system to system, Hogan says.

✓ CRM Needs Booster Shot

Hoteliers could also use an injection of customer relations management tools that helps them cater to consumers' changing purchase behavior.

A lot of customer feedback leaves suppliers asking, "How do we tailor content by distribution channel? or by audience?" and "How do we incorporate consumer-driven content, like TripAdvisor?" points out **Connie Rheams**, VP of business development and marketing for **AltiusPAR**, a technology subsidiary of Latin American hotel operator, **Grupo Posadas**.

Solution: AltiusPAR, whose new-generation product is already live, seeks to ease the task of acting on answers to the above questions by "managing all our guest activity in one central database," Rheams says. And looking ahead, the company is working on:

- Collecting guest data and finding ways to "push that out to all the hotel chain's distribution outlets or touch-points with which the customer interacts;"
- Turning that data into "valuable information that drives marketing campaigns and customer retention."

Don't miss: Another growing complexity that can potentially affect customer relations is hoteliers' ability to handle the traffic from the fast-growing Web channel. "Look-to-book ratios are 400:1 and rising, and today, systems are

unable to cope with that," Hogan says. Because of that, the hotel industry is looking for a "streamlined, integrated IT and distribution environment" that ultimately creates better customer service.

✓ Best Bet: Ease Customers Into Tech

All these hotelier wishes sound great on paper, but doing a technology overhaul is not that simple — or easy on the budget.

AltiusPAR promises to make the transition easier by pinpointing the areas where it can offer the most initial help to hoteliers — and which tech features have the most potential to attract customers.

The idea is to remove the "take it or leave it" ultimatum when it comes to offering new bells and whistles. "Hotel groups want to modernize their technology, but many have just invested in new components, such as a property system, where there's no real value in changing it," Rheams explains. In response, AltiusPAR created a modular suite that allows hoteliers to either buy the whole package of applications or go a la carte.

One step further: In addition, AltiusPAR will tailor its tech to the hoteliers' needs. "It's not about what products we have — it's about the customer's business processes and building the best ecosystem of products that fit their business needs," Rheams says.

Key: "Everyone will need to upgrade, so the issue is 'when,' not 'if,'" Burns warns. But tech companies may attract more hoteliers earlier if they offer this kind of flexibility. ■
