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The Hotelier's Playbook to

Amplifying Revenue and Engagement Across the Guest Journey

Learn how to improve guest satisfaction at each touchpoint – from booking to on-property to post-stay follow-up – while maximizing revenue every step of the way.

shrGROUP + stay**n**touch

Table of contents

Introduction

As the hotel industry emerges from the COVID pandemic, it's clear that the desire for travel has not diminished these past two years; in fact, it appears to be as strong as ever. But while demand may be back, your guests' wants, needs and demands have changed, and so should your offerings. Guest expectations have never been greater, and the owners and operators who evolve their offerings to meet and exceed them will stand out amongst the crowd.

Hospitality commercial teams have expanded their strategies to examine and improve all aspects of the guest journey, from the dreaming and research phases, through the booking phase and on-property experience, all the way through post-stay follow-up. At each touchpoint you have with the guest along their journey, there are opportunities to "wow" the guest as well as drive more revenue through upsell programs and personalized offers. With the right digital tools in place, hotel commercial teams can maximize revenue per guest – not by constantly pushing offers the guest is not interested in, but by anticipating their needs and providing a memorable experience that ensures the guest will return.

In this report, you'll learn:

- How to adapt to changing guest travel and booking behaviors

- Why you need to tailor the booking experience

- Key ways to drive direct bookings in today's changing world

- How to create a well-rounded distribution strategy

- Why the employee experience directly affects the guest experience

- How to personalize the guest experience at all stages of the journey

- Why automation is key to the employee and guest experience

- Why guest loyalty is changing and how you can adapt

Pre-Stay: How to Adapt to Changing Guest

Hoteliers today are acutely focused on building better connections with their guests. Whether it's pre-booking, at the time of conversion, while the guest is on property, or after they've checked out, hoteliers are improving their engagement with travelers at each touchpoint.

Hasn't that always been the focus? Yes, but the stakes have intensified. Alternative accommodations are rising in popularity for leisure guests and hotels see their unique, service-oriented nature as a differentiator. At the same time, third-party distribution partners continue to add pressure to margins, which have been slow to recover post-pandemic.

OTAs are actively working to improve the guest journey and, in many cases, are offering an easier and more rewarding booking experience. To truly compete, it's time hoteliers start thinking more like OTAs. Thankfully, modern tools are available to help level the playing field.

Think More Like an OTA and Tailor the Booking Experience

The strategies have been outlined and the digital tools are available for hotels to capture as much direct business as possible. A critical component is tailoring the booking experience to provide the traveler with the right offer that speaks to them and will convert at the highest rate.

Like OTAs, hotels can use simple guest recognition programs to reward guests booking via their direct channels while remaining in true parity with OTAs.

Today, some Central Reservation Systems have moved beyond their powerful distribution capabilities to now include lightweight Customer Relationship Management functionality. What does a booking experience look like when it's powered by a "Smart CRS?"

- The guest is provided a seamless transition when browsing the website, booking engine or calling the contact center. The offers available to book are clearly communicated or displayed to the guest.

- Guests are then met with a compelling message to access exclusive benefits and services which encourages them to register. Guests then register and book their stay.

- Hoteliers now have the ability to recognize the guest each time they stay. With the data in your system, you can begin to anticipate their needs. Guest information is now on file for marketing and future bookings.

Cater to Guests' Changing Booking Behaviors

If we go back to the most basic definition of revenue management – delivering the right room, at the right price,
at the right time, to the right guest – there are now about two or three dozen more parameters and qualifiers that can and have been added to that definition. So, how do we take what we've learned from these past two years and apply it to a future that continues to rapidly change?

We can expect our guests and their reasons for travel to look very different coming out of these last two years, and the data bears this out. According to Expedia's Q4 global data, three points should stick in the minds of hoteliers:

1. There are fewer travelers, but they're not price sensitive. Q4 stayed room nights were down 31% from 2019, but ADRs were up 23%.

2. There's a continued mix shift toward lodging, and more specifically vacation rentals, versus air travel.

3. The vacation rental summer bookings are pacing ahead
of 2021 and 2019.

This data tells us more people are traveling locally or regionally. They're looking further ahead as restrictions are lifting and they're looking for different experiences than they're used to.

Because your guests are changing, you need to change along with them. In the face of these trends, your hotel needs to strategize pricing just as much in the vacation rental space as within your traditional comp

set. Monitor vacation rental rates and inventory in your area and listing on vacation rental websites where that's supported. Focus on services your hotel can offer a guest that vacation rentals cannot, things like:

· Security

· A 24-hour front desk

· On-site F&B

· Spa

· Mid-stay cleaning

· Hotel amenities

And stay focused on guest loyalty programs. SHR data shows that hotels with a guest recognition program saw an ADR lift despite offering their guests special offers and discounts. Why? Because guests were incentivized to book direct and buy add-ons that contributed to increased ancillary spend. Thus, hotels have gotten very creative during COVID in utilizing and adapting their space as they continue to shift toward total revenue management. It's going to be important to continue to reimagine your hotel as travel continues to rebound.

Ask the Experts

Q: How are guests returning to the road today different from pre-pandemic? What new types of experiences are they looking for?

"There are a number of interesting trends I am seeing. One is the trend of trip stacking, where travelers try to hedge their bets in terms of both price and circumstances so that they can change based on their situation. Another is experiential travel continuing to grow as an important aspect of travel. Many travelers are now looking for a unique experience, not just four walls and a bed. I have spoken to hoteliers who have built their properties for this purpose, creating things like a speakeasy and other "hooks" into their properties to others who have created amazing programming that brings guests in who might not otherwise consider that property. For example, a traditional summer resort created an igloo gourmet dining package to bring in new guests."

Dan Wacksman,
Sassato

"The buyer has more of a sense of urgency, more of a sense that this has to be good. They're saying, 'I don't have a lot of time, and I want this to be memorable.' How do we as hotels respond to that and say this is going to be an experience of a lifetime? That's the personal relationship part of it. There was a time when hotel operators considered themselves hosts. We can be hosts again."

John Burns,
Hospitality Technology Consulting

Driving Direct Bookings

The digital marketing game is evolving at a rapid pace. Many of the channels hoteliers traditionally relied on for acquiring guests – OTAs, metasearch channels, Google, Facebook – are placing a heightened emphasis on customer privacy, creating hurdles for how hotel marketers track the traveler's online booking journey. This is leading more hospitality digital marketers to shift from using third-party cookies to using their internal data – first-party cookies – for building better connections with their guests.

For all these reasons, hoteliers find themselves at an inflection point with an impetus on driving travelers to their direct websites and converting more direct bookings. Here are several strategies hotels can implement now to ensure they're driving more direct traffic and then converting more of those lookers into bookers.

1. **Create cohesive strategies between marketing and revenue departments**. Revenue should identify need periods and then work with Marketing to determine the best strategies to fill, using segmented approaches that target specific travelers on specific channels.

2. **Lean on first-party data to build better guest connections in a cookieless world**. First-party data comes straight from your audience, so you can be sure it's relevant to your hotel. First-party data helps you learn about your guests interests, preferences and booking behaviors. Armed with this data, you can make informed strategies, because you're better able to predict future behaviors.

3. **Perfect your metasearch distribution strategy**. As valuable as metasearch is now for hoteliers – two out of three independent hotels receive direct bookings from metasearch engines and 75% of travelers are believed to use metasearch engines in their search process – it will become even more critical in a cookieless world.

4. **Use Facebook and Instagram to inspire travelers and drive direct traffic**. Travelers spend five times more time on Facebook than any other travel-related touchpoint. Instagram, filled with user-generated photos and videos of destinations, hotels, and attractions, is a major source of inspiration for travelers. Promoting your brand on Facebook and Instagram gets your brand in front of high-intent travelers and drives them to visit your website and engage with your brand early on in their trip search.

5. **Segment your customer base to offer more personalized marketing**. Using past stay history and a database of guest profiles, hotels can segment their list and send promotions to smaller groups of travelers, which will convert more bookings and reduce the amount of people who unsubscribe from your marketing promotions.

6. **Welcome travelers to your website with optimal content and offerings**. As more travelers go digital, hotels must ensure they're welcoming guests online just the same as they would welcome them in the lobby — with warm hospitality and the right offers and upsell opportunities.

7. **Implement guest-recognition programs that provide instant gratification**. It's not necessary for hotels to have gigantic loyalty schemes that reward customers once they've spent so much money or booked so many nights at their hotels. Instead, today's travelers want instant gratification – they want rewarded on the spot – and that gratification can come in the form of "value" rather than always through a discount.

Should I Continue to Rely on OTAs?

Many hoteliers question how much they should rely on OTAs for demand, in light of the commissions paid to these channels and the desire to ultimately convince guests to book direct. But there's value in those third-party bookings, so hoteliers should welcome the business and work to convert OTA bookers to book direct for future stays.

At higher accommodation levels, that may mean increasing the amount of contact and interaction between staff and guest, but in a proprietary manner that encourages that guest to cut out the middleman in the future. Hoteliers say that providing higher levels of care and personalization through hotel-run channels will be the key to bolstering loyalty in this new age of distribution.

"A direct booking strategy is vital, and it needs to be given a higher priority. But hoteliers aren't using the tools and talent that they could be. They're still too tentative, and they are underfunding and not investing in it as they should be."

John Burns,
Hospitality Technology Consulting

Case in Point

Aparium's Revamped Focus on Conversion Rates Drives Success

Chicago-based Aparium Hotel Group implemented a strategy during COVID to reduce its dependency on OTAs, with a key objective of driving and converting more direct business.

Since its inception, Chicago-based Aparium Hotel Group has set itself apart as a new kind of hotel brand—one that allows itself to venture off the beaten path, both geographically and philosophically.

The Goal: Reduce dependency on OTAs

Because independent hotels don't have the backing of a big brand, they can be inherently challenging to market and build guest loyalty—causing many independent hoteliers to turn to Online Travel Agencies to garner awareness and drive bookings. On top of this, as Aparium opened several new properties during the COVID-19 pandemic, reliance on OTAs was somewhat higher than normal because of the need to drive awareness of the new property.

To reduce dependency on third-party distribution, Aparium's VP of Marketing Jason Pirock and team created a strategy to drive and capture more business on their direct website, specifically focusing on raising conversion rate on the property's booking engines, powered by SHR's Windsurfer. The team performed a deep dive into conversation rates across the entire guest journey, starting with comparing guests booking room reservations versus restaurant reservations, and then dove into conversion rates at both the website and booking-engine level.

Steps to a Better Conversion Rate

To start, the Aparium team spent much of late 2021 and early 2022 rebuilding their websites, adopting modern technology and migrating to best in class servers that could accept real-time rate and inventory changes. Objectives were to stand up sites that are as easy to use as possible, and ensuring the visitor is never too far away from a Call To Action (CTA). The company placed a larger focus on mobile, a channel that continues to show demand growth. Aparium partnered with SHR in its mission to convert lookers to bookers. The team credits the close relationship with SHR, who did a massive audit on all of Aparium's properties and pointed to several opportunities to drive conversion, including:

- Shifting the focus to showing rooms and their amenities over rates and packages

- An imagery audit to find top areas of opportunity (the audit found inconsistency in image sizes, resolution, etc.)

- A deep dive into guest-facing descriptions to ensure they told the right story.

Leaning on Data to Make Decisions

Immediately after the site audit and switchover, Aparium began reporting significantly decreased load speeds, which has helped increase the properties' visibility on Google.

Thanks to Aparium's renewed focus on converting direct business, conversion rates on the booking engine are rising across most properties. But Pirock isn't satisfied. Even at 8% conversion, he can't help but wonder why the other 92% are abandoning their booking. Next steps, he says, are to focus on mobile conversion rates, where Aparium is seeing increasingly heavy traffic, and evaluating e-mail abandon cart technology.

"If they're already in there, what can we be doing differently to get them to convert?" Pirock says. "We should be able to flip the script and capture these customers."

"Hotels for sure need to have a distribution strategy, and most larger or more upscale properties will want a direct booking strategy, but many smaller or midrange hotels don't need one. I see many of these hotels who look at the cost of OTA commissions as comparable to doing all the marketing and reservation processing themselves or with commercial partners, and the OTAs do a significantly better job of marketing and (increasingly) merchandising. If I had a 50-room midpriced boutique hotel I might very well rely on OTAs as my sole source of business. Yes, I might pay 20%, but I would save many other costs."

Douglas Rice,
Managing Director
Hospitality Technology Network

On-Property: Boosting the Guest (and Employee) Experience with Tech

The on-property experience is just as much about the employee as it is about the guest. When the employee experience gets a boost, so does the guest experience. According to research from Qualtrics, 79% of employees at companies with above-average customer experience are highly engaged in their jobs, compared to 49% of employees at companies with average or below-average customer experience scores. And companies with a highly engaged workforce report experiencing a 19.2% growth in operating income over a 12-month period.

However, a Gartner survey showed that only 13% of employees are fully satisfied with their experience. That means there's a huge opportunity to enhance the employee experience to bolster the guest experience.

The following are three ways hoteliers can enhance the guest and employee experience while on-property, including:

- **Unburden the guest experience** by making their stay as convenient and streamlined as possible. Investing in technology such as mobile check-in, mobile guest messaging, and mobile amenity/ upgrade offers allows guests to instantly craft their ideal guest stay.

- **Empower your employees** so they can freely engage with guests anywhere on property. Technology should facilitate great hospitality, not stand in its way. Hoteliers should leverage a PMS that features mobile accessibility so staff can break free from the front desk and meet guests where they are, robust automation and mobile communication that can amplify the productivity of small teams, and an easy-to-use user interface, which can reduce employee training time from weeks to a few days.

- **Deliver the gift of choice** by giving your guests every opportunity to customize and personalize their stay, from delivering expanded asset classes at booking (e.g. standard overnight, hourly, or day-use), to offering a choice in check-in & check-out (e.g. mobile, kiosk-based, or staff-assisted), to ensuring that their preferences and special requests inform every digital or physical touchpoint of their journey.

Automating the Employee Experience to Enhance the Guest Experience

It's a common misconception that high-tech amenities and high-touch human service must always be at odds. While mobile technology does provide guests with the option to enjoy a fully contactless guest journey, it also empowers hotel employees to engage with their guests in ways never before possible.

Automation of simple tech-based tasks has become as essential as hotel operators balance travel recovery with an incredibly tight labor market. As staffing shortages become more prevalent, teams are running smaller and leaner than ever before – from housekeeping and the front desk to sales, marketing and revenue management.

Therefore, it's crucial to allocate the time of these scarce staffers to tasks that actually require human interaction, versus those that can be efficiently replaced by automation.

- **Housekeeping, maintenance and engineering** departments run more effectively when task management and communications are automated.

- Making the check-in process self-service, including keyless room entry, allows your **front desk staff** to engage with guests on a more meaningful level, while reducing long waiting lines in the lobby. Your guests will certainly appreciate that, especially when arriving at the hotel after a long day of traveling.

- In the executive offices, automation is just as powerful. Hotel industry demand trends are volatile and shifting rapidly, making it very difficult for overworked **revenue managers** to keep up on constant changes. Automation solves this dilemma, ensuring rate parity and maximized revenue.

- **Sales and marketing teams** are also finding automation just as useful for their own efforts, particularly when applying it to marketing emails and loyalty driven communications that tap into a CRM platform.

In today's travel landscape, every aspect of the guest experience is mediated through technology. That means instead of viewing tech as separate, independent systems each affecting a single guest touchpoint, hoteliers must think of hotel technology as a highly interconnected ecosystem that touches every stage of the guest journey, from booking, to welcome, to departure.

Case in Point

InTown Suites Automates to

InTown Suites – a leader in extended-stay hotels with nearly 200 properties in 22 states and a user of Windsurfer CRS – worked with SHR to build custom, automated solutions to save measurable man hours per day. Employees at InTown Suites spent too much time manually entering data and copying and pasting data from one system to another. On top of it, faulty integrations between legacy systems meant some critical data, such as weekday availability restrictions, wasn't translating properly among systems in the tech stack.

There were other manual tasks that InTown knew they could automate. For example, credit card charges for discounted bookings where the guest pays 50% up front and 50% at a later date were sometimes denied, which required a manual email sent to the traveler with cancellation and rebooking options. Other times, rates that were provided to front-desk agents were displayed differently on web channels, putting the agent in an awkward situation when challenged by a guest.

To help reduce the man hours required to handle these traditionally manual tasks, SHR implemented Bridge workflows to perform automated rate management tasks in the CRS, while monitoring for issues in the PMS, and in their critical payment processing flows. The successful project paves the way for future workflows that InTown may require.

"With a smaller team of revenue managers covering nearly 200 properties, the automation and added efficiency SHR's Bridge application can deliver is truly impressive," said Brendan Wegler, VP of Revenue Strategy, InTown Suites. "With this automation in place, our team is able to focus on our revenue strategy instead of manual tasks, so we know we're providing a great guest experience and not missing out on revenue opportunities."

The Results: Since the upgrade, executives say the brand has been able to solve several system constraints that were causing operational headaches. Perhaps the biggest win for InTown has been the resulting time and labor savings. With the new expanded automation in place, the InTown team is now able to focus on both improving guest service and buttoning up its revenue strategy, instead of being bogged down with manual tasks for each. This helps ensure they're always providing a great guest experience at the front of the house, while not missing out on revenue opportunities in the back office.

"There are certain touchpoints that need to be human and others that easily lend themselves to being automated. This also depends on the type of hotel (resort, business hotel, etc). You can almost go down the list of the guest experience and check them off as to what should be personal and what should be automated. The list for what needs to be personal will be surprisingly short, but what is on that list will also be surprisingly important."

Dan Wacksman,
Sassato

On-Property Personalization

Personalization is paramount for enhancing the guest experience. However, many hotels can find personalization difficult once the guest arrives on property. That's where technology can help streamline. Hyper-personalizing the guest stay is ultimately achieved by maintaining a nuanced and dynamic guest profile.

"The ideal PMS provides the foundation for guest data by maintaining a profile that includes a guest's booking and rate history, purchase history, housekeeping and maintenance data, and customized preferences," says Michael Heflin, Chief Revenue Officer, Stayntouch. "Integrating with an advanced CRM can take this level of personalization even further, adding fields such as loyalty status, travel intent and preferences, propensity to spend, and individualized survey results. This highly nuanced profile can then be pushed out to other platforms to inform highly targeted messaging, rates, and amenity offers."

Another way to directly enhance personalization is to incorporate the Internet-of-Things (IoT) into the guest experience by integrating with a guest-facing, in-room tablet. This will allow guests to completely customize the features and environment in their room, including controls for mood lighting, smart thermostats, motorized blinds, in-room entertainment and "do not disturb" alerts.

"The PMS is both the central repository of all guest data and the physical heart of the hotel's tech stack. It acts as the central keystone around which all of the hotel's other platforms rest. As such, hoteliers should select a PMS that is run on a powerful and ultra-reliable **cloud-native server** (such as Amazon AWS) and is built upon a **webhook-enhanced open-API architecture**. This will ensure that your PMS is always running when it needs to be and that it can sustain the type of seamless and dynamic data flows which are necessary to deliver a hyper-personalized guest experience," says Heflin.

"The hotel business is not sufficiently competent in ecommerce. Booking.com and Expedia spend a huge amount of energy getting ecommerce right. They are really good at presenting the proposition and the value at the time of booking. Hotels offer a one-to-all booking experience that's entirely generic. Compare a big hotel brand with the OTAs or Airbnb – the brand is 95% operations and 5% ecommerce. The OTAs and Airbnb are 100% ecommerce focused and

John Burns,
Hospitality Technology
Consulting

Enhancing the Experience with Contactless Service

"Contactless" and "service" may seem counterintuitive. However, research shows that travelers want contactless service, with 71% of people saying they'd be more likely to stay at a hotel with self-service tech. Michael Heflin, Chief Revenue Officer, Stayntouch shares three ways contactless service can help to enhance the on-property guest experience.

1. **Guest welcome and departure:** Offering a mobile or kiosk-based option for contactless check-in/out is critical in today's hospitality market. By integrating a mobile PMS that features a mobile check-in option with seamless integrations to digital payment platform, a keyless entry system, and a guest SMS messaging system, hoteliers can create a fully contactless welcome experience that allows guests to check into their rooms in under a minute, and customize their stay with targeted mobile offers for room upgrades and amenities sent directly to their smartphone.

2. **In-Stay Dining:** Integrating a mobile PMS with a mobile POS allows hoteliers to deliver the same contactless journey that guests enjoy at check-in during their in-stay dining experience. A mobile POS delivers the option to order online through a guest's mobile device, through digital tableside service, or through a strategically-placed guest-facing kiosk. It can also streamline restaurant operations by providing a centralized platform to manage orders, payments, and sales across multiple locations.

3. **Mobile Guest Messaging:** Integrating with a mobile guest messaging platform allows your guests to instantly ask questions and make requests using the messaging platform of their choice (SMS, Facebook Messenger, WhatsApp, etc). It can also free up your staff bandwidth, since one team member can process multiple chat threads, and a natural language chatbot can be programmed to handle more routine requests.

Post-Stay: Building Loyalty through Guest Recognition Programs

Guest loyalty is important – not only for the guest experience but also for the bottom line. Consider this: 65% of a company's business comes from existing customers and loyal customers spend 67% more than new customers, according to Markinblog. But for most industries, the average customer retention rate is below 20%. That means there's a huge opportunity to maximize revenue. But hoteliers will need to build guest loyalty. That starts with rethinking what loyalty is.

"Most reward programs, including the big brands, are bottom heavy. The vast majority of members are on the bottom tier and never leave there, and while the top tier is very important, so is the bottom tier. The book direct movement definitely helped focus more on the bottom tier by offering member rates, and this is one of the most powerful aspects for all levels of the loyalty program," says Dan Wacksman, Principal at Sassato.

Loyalty Programs Aren't the Only Way to Build Loyalty

Guests are still customers even after they leave a property. That means hoteliers shouldn't cease all communication. Entice them to return! And communicate the benefits of booking direct when they do choose to return. Here are three ways to build loyalty through post-stay communication.

1. **Send a thank-you email after departure**. It's critical to follow-up with guests directly after they leave your property. Give them a way to send you direct feedback. If the experience was poor, this gives the opportunity to save the hotel from a negative online review and you can begin service recovery (which builds loyalty). If guests have feedback for you, it's equally important to act on that feedback. When guests know you are listening and adapting to their needs, they will build loyalty with your brand.

2. **Send emails to stay relevant**. Update your prior guests on what's new at your property. Show them how a stay with you again can still be a unique experience. By sending communications that help you stay relevant, you can continue to build loyalty with guests.

3. **Personalize emails to gain attention**. The majority of loyalty program members (85%) haven't heard a single word since the day they signed up from the program, according to Colloquy Loyalty Census. That could be because the emails they do receive look like junk mail. When you personalize emails, you have a better likelihood that the people you are trying to reach will actually open and read your message. And again, the more you stay relevant to your guests, the more loyal they will become.

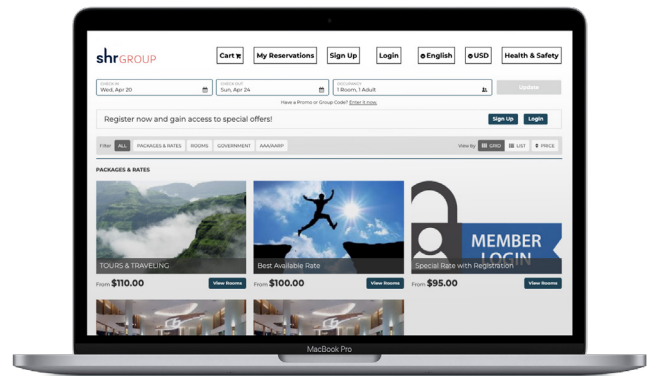## Loyalty Programs vs. Guest Recognition Programs

Hoteliers should consider implementing a guest recognition program to build loyalty. This is different from a loyalty program. Think of it this way: Loyalty is earned. Being a member of a loyalty program doesn't necessarily mean a guest is loyal to the business. The average American household is part of 18 loyalty programs but only active in about eight of them, according to Colloquy Loyalty Census. Research has found that the majority of guests who stay at hotels never even sign up for loyalty programs. That means hoteliers need to find other ways to build loyalty with guests – in a way that doesn't make guests work so hard for their loyalty.

"While on-property happenings are certainly important, it's also imperative to remember the guest experience doesn't start when travelers arrive at a hotel. There are many different touchpoints before, during, and after the stay that work together to make a cohesive guest experience," says Allegra Medina, Senior Director of Product at SHR. "Guest recognition needs to be meaningful to add to the guest experience. With a consistently well-run recognition program, guests will be less price sensitive and will routinely rebook a hotel or brand. Knowing they will receive a specific level of service and quality, price becomes less of an issue."

Guest recognition programs work to personalize the experience for guests. So, it's not about just offering a bottle of water to every guest upon check-in or handing out a cookie. It's about knowing what the guest likes or dislikes. Is this a guest who has stayed with you before? Maybe the guest data shows he likes a certain type of pillow in his room. It's there for him upon arrival without him even asking. Or, maybe this guest profile's data shows she likes a certain bottle of wine from the hotel restaurant. It's waiting in her room for her. These small, personalized touchpoints recognize guests on an individual level. And it builds guest loyalty beyond accruing points for a stay.

"Points programs are on the way out. Make me feel appreciated," says John Burns, President of Hospitality Technology Consulting. "Often the booking experience is good, but when you get to the property the recognition is not there. That's connecting the tech and the operations, and as a guest I just see that as a breakdown."

Guest recognition programs come into play even more if a guest experiences a problem during their stay. Of course, if the guest communicates the issue while on-property, you have the opportunity to rectify the situation before they leave and thereby hopefully avoid a negative review. But what happens when an unhappy guest leaves and leaves a negative review? This is when you can dive into the guest's profile and not only personalize a response to a review but also follow up in a very individualized way. When guests have their issues resolved to their standards, they are more likely to return and remain loyal to a business. They are also more likely to recommend your business – more so than a guest who didn't even experience an issue at all. The differentiator here is that personalized touchpoint.

While some CRM systems only see limited information from third-party providers' systems, Maverick from SHR helps you know, recognize, and reward your best guests no matter how they booked. Hoteliers using Maverick know their OTA customers the same way they know their direct customers. The guest management software gathers all guests' profile data from the Windsurfer® CRS and aggregates it. It matches and cleanses profiles and creates microsegments that optimize recommendations for guest communication. Maverick also provides a built-in, easy-to-use, integrated marketing program for email and text message marketing and campaign management.

"Once you have the members in your database you will have a treasure trove of info – marketing gold! Points are not important for the vast majority of loyalty members, and focus should be on making the guest feel special when they stay as opposed to free nights."

Dan Wacksman,
Sassato

The ROI of Guest Loyalty

$48B
in reward points and miles are issued annually and one-third go unredeemed

88%
of loyalty members indicate quality is a key factor in their decision to remain loyal to a brand

72%
of customers say customer service is a top priority of loyalty

48%
say when they begin service or make their first purchase are the most critical times to gain their loyalty

54%
say they would consider increasing the amount of business they do for a loyalty reward

62%
don't believe brands they're most loyal to are doing enough to reward them

Source: Colloquy Loyalty Census

Conclusion

You can't maximize revenue at every touchpoint of the guest journey alone. You'll need help from your tech stack. The theory behind one partner providing a single solution for all of your hotel operating needs – inventory management, accounting, check-in, pricing, marketing, distribution, sales RFPs – sounds dreamy. One bill, one point of contact for service, one central storage center for guest and transactional data.

But, as it's been tested time and time again, we know challenges for one single provider to meet all the needs of a hotel operation are just too great to overcome. What ends up happening with each new "hotel in a box" is that the solution is really good at one or two functions but falls short in all the rest.

Thankfully, hotel systems providers that serve a specific role in the greater tech ecosystem have finally come to understand the appeal of a single provider and geared

their businesses to act more like them. The movement to open APIs and share data that was once siloed are first steps in the right direction. We're moving to a point where integrations are happening seamlessly behind the scenes, with no finger-pointing or unnecessary toll on the hotelier. And simpler, cloud-based integrations are driving down what ultimately matters most – cost.

When chosen properly, your carefully cultivated tech stack made up of deeply integrated systems will act as if it's one single platform, yet each part will provide best-in-class functionality. The most critical integration in a best-of-breed tech stack is with the Property Management System, as this system acts as the main hub in connecting much of the back-of-house and front-of-house applications.

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ALWAYS AHEAD

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SHR Group unites hotel technology and marketing services to empower hoteliers. Our allora.ai platform is an eco-system of tools that maximizes guest success and value at every touchpoint. Over 2,000 hotels globally rely on our products to optimize their channel mix, personalize guest experiences and maximize revenue and profitability.

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