



January: Mobile Technology: The Necessity for a Well-Defined Strategy

Editorial Deadline: **October 23, 2013**
Advertising Deadline: **December 13, 2013**

Mobile technology has altered the way the world does just about everything. With mobile devices in our hands (smart phones and tablets) and media and information up in The Cloud, the possibilities for immediate, worldwide, personal access are limitless. Smart mobile devices are dictating how we live our lives and as a result, these developments are game-changers for all businesses, but especially for service industries, including the hotel sector. These advancements are literally redefining how guests interact with a hotel in virtually every aspect of its operation, and savvy hoteliers who are implementing the latest mobile technologies and best practices in each critical channel will steal market share from their competitors, decrease dependency on their Online Travel Agents, and generate incremental revenues which will substantially increase their bottom line. A well-defined mobile strategy is no longer a “nice-to-have” but an essential weapon in an industry that is evolving at a blistering pace, and those operations that are slow to respond do so at their peril. The January Hotel Business Review will examine which mobile strategies some operators have adopted in order to meet these challenges, and will report on the solutions that are proving to be most advantageous for both companies and their guests.



February: Hotel Social Media: Adopting a Comprehensive Strategy

Editorial Deadline: **November 27, 2013**
Advertising Deadline: **January 17, 2014**

Consider these astounding online communication statistics: there are currently more than 2 billion e-mail users; 180 million blogs; 400 million daily tweets; and 8.6 trillion SMS text messages are sent annually. In addition, 61% of Millennials (those born after 1984) reference social media when deciding where and how to spend their travel and leisure dollars, and 78% of all small businesses now get at least a quarter of their new customers through the use of social media. As a result, it is incumbent upon all businesses – but especially the hospitality industries – to adopt a comprehensive social media strategy. Hotel guests will not only expect these communication channels to be in place but will demand them, given that they have already been integrated into their everyday lives. Next-generation hotels must connect with guests socially via Facebook, Twitter, Google+, YouTube, Pinterest, Instagram and more, and they must also manage their online presence on review sites like Yelp and Trip Advisor in order to protect their reputation and brand. Other social media tools might also include blogs (to promote thought-leadership), video and photo sharing, e-newsletters, and geo-location applications that allow for real-time interactions when a guest is on-property. Having sufficient staff to manage these efforts is a challenge, as is the requirement that these processes must be tailored to conform to each of the major platforms – desktop, smart phone and tablet. In order to shed some light on these critical issues, the February Hotel Business Review will explore how some hotels are successfully utilizing social media in their operations.



March:

Hotel Human Resources 2014: Not Just Recruitment

Editorial Deadline: **December 18, 2013**

Advertising Deadline: **February 14, 2014**

In a business that interacts with guests 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, success for a hotel is absolutely determined by the quality of staffing and service, and those vital operational elements are generally provided by the Human Resource department. However, staff recruitment is just one area of responsibility for today's HR professional. Generally, an HR team leads all aspects of new employee orientation and on-boarding; creating training systems; managing career development; and ensuring compliance with all legal, employment and government regulations. Today's HR professional must also be an effective communicator who is able to interact with all levels of staff, and establish good working relationships with all department heads. They must have an intrinsic desire to see others succeed, and be able to recognize potential in others. Finally, they must be able to work under pressure because there always seem to be crises – anything from technology breaches to staffing shortages to personnel issues, so the ability to thrive in a multiple priority environment is a necessity. The March Hotel Business Review will document some of the biggest challenges currently facing HR professionals, and will report on some of the best practices they are employing to achieve their diverse goals.



April:

Cultivating Guest Satisfaction and Retention

Editorial Deadline: **January 29, 2014**

Advertising Deadline: **March 14, 2014**

At the heart of every positive hotel experience is excellent customer service and yet there are a myriad of factors that contribute to a successful guest transaction. Some are tangible, obvious and easier-to-manage; others are more ineffable and elusive; but professional analysts and experts are going to great lengths to define and measure the elements that comprise a complete customer satisfaction package. Some of the categories include the following: Interpersonal (the customers' experience or human interaction with those who deliver the product or service); Financial (what the customer pays for the total experience); Informational (the availability and delivery of all the information a customer needs to function as a customer); Deliverable (anything the customer takes possession of, even temporarily); Procedural (all the functions that customers perform in their role as a customer); Environmental (the physical setting in which a customer experiences the delivery of the product or service); Aesthetic (any sensory experience that affects the perception of value – smell, flavor, visual appeal, temperature, sound levels, music, etc.). By aggregating these specific areas of operation and then analyzing them in a Customer Service Management System, the goal is to identify, capture and retain customers, and to provide a comprehensive view of the customer experience across the entire enterprise. The April issue of the Hotel Business Review will report on what some leading hotels are doing to cultivate guest satisfaction and retention in their operations.



May:

Hotel Sustainable Development: Integrating Practices for the Environment and the Bottom Line

Editorial Deadline: **February 26, 2014**

Advertising Deadline: **April 18, 2014**

The term “sustainable development” was first coined in 1987. In a report entitled, “Our Common Future,” the Brundtland Commission defined sustainable development as follows: “Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.” This definition immediately caught on. In the business world, it is sometimes referred to as a triple bottom line – capturing the concept that investments are profitable, good for people and protective of the environment. Within the hotel industry, companies have taken an active role in committing themselves to addressing climate change and sustainability. Hotel operations have realized that environmentally sound practices not only help the environment, but can lead to cost reductions, business expansion, and profit growth as consumers increasingly seek environmentally sustainable products and services. In a recent survey by Deloitte, it was noted that 95% of respondents believe that the hotel industry should be undertaking “green” initiatives. Additionally, 38% of respondents said they made efforts to identify “green” hotels before traveling, and 40% said they would be willing to pay a premium for the privilege. These results suggest that consumers want and expect sustainability in their travel plans. In response to these trends, many hotel companies and on-line travel agencies have even begun offering their consumers an opportunity to purchase carbon offsets to reduce the environmental impact of their trips. The May issue of the Hotel Business Review will document how some leading hotels are integrating sustainability practices into their hotels and how their operations, consumers and the environment are profiting from them.



June:

Hotel Design: Creating an Experience

Editorial Deadline: **March 26, 2014**

Advertising Deadline: **May 16, 2014**

Recent social and technological change has impelled hotel architects and designers to adapt their work to meet the expectations of the modern traveler, and the essential principle they are following is this – they are no longer designing buildings or interior spaces; they are designing experiences. From check-in to sleeping, to bathing to dining, psychographic profiles are driving design decisions. It is not enough for a hotel to label itself as business or leisure; people are doing business while they play, and they are playing while they travel for business. There has to be a degree of escapism, even in business hotels. People want to go beyond their usual routine and they desire to experience something new. In order to accommodate this new reality, architects and designers are re-imagining all areas of a hotel’s operation. For example, lobbies are being envisioned as dynamic, multi-use spaces which have the capacity to host both formal and casual talks, providing both intimate and social zones, and yet can also be a place where individual work can be accomplished. Bathrooms are becoming more spa-like, alluring guests through the promise of sublime luxury and relaxation. Hotel restaurants are being turned into memorable spaces through imaginative design, pushing creativity to new heights and turning each venue into a destination in itself. These are just a few of the exciting developments in the fields of hotel architecture and design that will be explored in the June issue of the Hotel Business Review.



July:

Hotel Spa: The Expanding Wellness Movement

Editorial Deadline: **April 23, 2014**

Advertising Deadline: **June 13, 2014**

Of all the trends in the hotel spa sector (which, in some cases, also includes the hotel itself) perhaps none is more significant and prevalent than the expansion of the Wellness Movement. If the hotel spa and gym have traditionally been considered mere “amenities”, the emphasis now is on providing health-focused experiences and “wellness everywhere” environments to their fitness-minded guests. Some companies are launching new hotel brands themed entirely around the concept of health and wellness, while other major hotel chains are re-branding some of their properties to offer similar health-oriented amenities. Some of these services include personalized spa menus, free fitness gear, wake-up light therapy, air purification and aromatherapy, vitamin C-infused showers, and wellness videos. This increased emphasis on health and fitness underscores the importance of the spa and its value in attracting and serving hotel guests. As a result, they are also expanding their menu of services. Some spas are integrating more ancient and authentic wellness traditions into their operations, including Ayurveda (an ancient Indian medical system), Roman and Turkish baths, and even Russian and Finnish saunas. Another exotic treatment is a concept known as “earthing” which promotes direct contact with the earth's electron-rich surface (walking barefoot, etc.). The premise is that “grounding” the body to the earth's surface stabilizes natural electrical rhythms and reduces disease-causing inflammation. The July issue of the Hotel Business Review will report on the trends and challenges hotel spas are facing in order to effectively integrate new practices into their operations.



August:

Food and Beverage: Investing to Keep Pace

Editorial Deadline: **May 28, 2014**

Advertising Deadline: **July 18, 2014**

After five harrowing years of recession and uncertain recovery, revenues in the hotel industry (including food and beverage) have finally surpassed the previous peak year of 2007. Profits are once again on the rise and are expected to advance for the foreseeable future. The consequence of this situation means that hotel operators now have the funds to invest in their food and beverage operations in order to keep pace with rapidly changing industry trends and the evolving tastes of their hotel guests. One of the most prominent recent trends is the “Locavore Movement” which relies heavily on local sources to supply products to the hotel restaurant. In addition to fresh produce, meats and herbs, some operators are engaging local craft breweries, distilleries, bakers, coffee roasters and more to enhance their food and beverage options, and to give their operation a local identity. This effort is designed to increasingly attract local patrons, as well as traveling hotel guests. Some hotels are also introducing menus that cater to both the calorie and the ingredient conscious. Gluten-free, low-cal and low-carb menu items prepared with fresh, seasonal ingredients are available to more fitness-minded guests. Another trend is placing greater emphasis on “comfort” and “street” foods which are being offered in more casual settings. The idea is to allow chefs to create their own versions of these classic recipes, with the understanding that the general public seems to be eschewing more formal dining options. Finally, because the hotel lobby is becoming the social epicenter of its operation – a space which both guests and locals can enjoy – more diverse and expanded food and beverage options are available there. The August issue of the Hotel Business Review will report on all the recent trends and challenges in the food and beverage sector, and document what some leading hotels are doing to augment this area of their business.



September: Hotel Group Meetings for 2015

Editorial Deadline: **June 25, 2014**

Advertising Deadline: **August 15, 2014**

As the economy continues to improve, hotels are finally luring back business travelers, including those who are participating in group meetings and conventions. According to The Global Business Travel Association, group travel spending has grown 5.3% to \$117.1 billion in 2014, a figure that well exceeds previous expectations. Given that group business accounts for as much as 30-40% of total revenues for a hotel operation, this is welcome news indeed. Still, this is no time for complacency. Savvy hoteliers are incorporating new creative ideas into their operations in order to satisfy their clientele and to differentiate themselves for their competition, with the ultimate goal of making meetings easier, more comfortable and even more fun. The emphasis seems to be on making group meetings “less institutional” and “more residential”. One hotel chain has created meeting spaces that are more like lounges than standard conference rooms. Another offers its guests unusual food options like make-your-own trail mix stations and smoothie bars. Still another provides its guests with mobile apps that will let them make requests — from ordering coffee and food to changing the room temperature — without ever leaving the meeting room. Technological innovations are also of paramount concern as meeting planners are demanding that the latest innovations be available to attendees including universal wireless Internet access, videoconferencing capabilities, charging stations, and a secure protected environment in which to conduct proprietary business. Finally, some hotels are offering more breakout rooms in order to encourage smaller and more intimate interchanges among attendees after long group sessions throughout the day. The September Hotel Business Review will examine what some hotels are doing to facilitate this segment of their business and to meet the expectations of their guests.



October: New Developments and Best Practices on Maximizing Revenue Management

Editorial Deadline: **July 23, 2014**

Advertising Deadline: **September 19, 2014**

Revenue Management is the application of precision analytics that predict consumer behavior and optimize product availability and price to maximize revenue growth. The primary aim of Hotel Revenue Management is selling the right room to the right customer at the right time for the right price. The essence of this application is in understanding customers' perception of product value and accurately aligning product prices, placement and availability with each customer segment. In the hotel industry, implementing an effective revenue management strategy is a vital component of its operations. In fact, in a recent survey of nearly 500 revenue management professionals in the hotel industry, they predicted that revenue management strategies will become even more targeted and will be supported by increasingly sophisticated technology, as they are applied to other areas within a hotel. In particular, revenue management techniques are likely to be integrated into other hotel income streams, including spas, restaurants, conference/groups and golf courses. As a consequence, the revenue management function will become more crucial to hotel operations, and will likely become a separate department that is under the general manager's supervision. The October issue of the Hotel Business Review will address these significant developments and document how some leading hotels are executing their revenue management strategies.



November:

Hotel Sales & Marketing: The Heart of the Matter

Editorial Deadline: **August 27, 2014**

Advertising Deadline: **October 17, 2014**

Of all the areas of a hotel's operation, perhaps none are as crucial, challenging and dynamic as the Sales and Marketing department. In their rapidly evolving world, change is the only constant, driven by technological innovations and the variable demands and expectations of a diverse traveling public. These professionals occupy a vast, multi-channel universe and it is incumbent on them to choose wisely when determining where and how marketing dollars are to be spent to generate revenue from all their multiple constituencies – individuals, corporate guests, groups and wholesalers. Complicated decisions are made and complex plans are devised, based on answers produced from intricate questions – What is the proper balance between Direct vs. Indirect Channel Sales? What kinds of resources are to be devoted to a comprehensive digital marketing program (website, email, social, blog, text and online advertising) on multiple channels (desktop, tablet and smart phone)? What are the elements driving local market conditions and how can local people be attracted and the local competition bested? How does an operation research, analyze and partner with group business generators, meeting planners, wholesalers, incentive travel companies, corporate travel departments, and franchise-sponsored marketing programs? How can effective sales incentive programs be implemented and how can a strategic marketing campaign be deployed? How are new sales leads prospected, qualified, sold and closed? The November Hotel Business Review will examine some of these critical issues and explore what some sales and marketing professionals are doing to address them.



December:

Hotel Law: The Biggest Challenges

Editorial Deadline: **September 24, 2014**

Advertising Deadline: **November 14, 2014**

Given the size and scope of the international hotel industry, the subject of hotel law is equally varied and vast. From development deals to management agreements; from food and beverage liability to labor and employment; from claims management to anti-trust matters; to legal concerns surrounding the issues of risk, safety and security, the practice of hotel law relies upon the expertise of many different kinds of legal specialists and practitioners. Though the subject matter is broad, there are several pending legal issues which will loom large in 2014 and beyond. The Affordable Care Act will be fully implemented in 2014 and its impact on hotel companies and their hiring practices is still to be determined. Other significant labor issues to be addressed include lawsuits pertaining to tip credit and tip pooling; wage-hour audits conducted by the Department of Labor; ongoing negotiations with unions involving living wage issues and the right of workers to organize; and increased pressure on hotel operations to be fully compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act. On the business side of the industry, it is expected that there will be a wave of new hotel development that will engender all the related legal issues – land acquisition, entitlements, joint ventures and other financing, selection of hotel operators and brands, along with Hotel Management and Franchise Agreements. In addition, it is projected that there will be a substantial increase in foreign investment – particularly from the Chinese. Chinese investment will involve all the normal legal issues of an investment from due diligence, acquisition and financing, but will add layers of complexity to deal with tax and other international issues involving direct foreign investment in the U.S. These critical issues and others pertaining to Hotel Law will be explored in the December issue of Hotel Business Review.