



January:

Mobile Technology: The Relentless Pace of Change Continues

Editorial Deadline: **October 22, 2014**

Advertising Deadline: **December 12, 2014**

Run Date: 12/28/14 – 01/31/15

As the relentless pace of change in Mobile Technology continues unabated, the entire hotel industry is challenged to adapt and evolve in order to keep up. Every aspect of hotel operations is affected by advancements in mobile communications – from the front desk to room service, from marketing to maintenance, from housekeeping to food and beverage – and everywhere in between. Hotel guests now predominantly research and book their reservations on a mobile device and soon, if current trials are successful, they will also be able to self check-in, use their smart phone as their room key, order food and beverages from anywhere on the property, and link their own mobile devices to in-room entertainment centers so they can access and enjoy their own content. This mobile-powered behavior presents tremendous opportunities for in-location marketing. In-location marketing – which includes tactics such as geo-targeting and geo-fencing, proximity and beacon technology – uses varying location-aware capabilities that reside within mobile devices (think GPS, WiFi, Bluetooth and NFC) to reach guests directly on their mobile devices with marketing or customer service-focused messages and alerts – inside or near a hotel’s location. Location-focused strategies can be used in a number of new and exciting ways to attract guests to hotel properties, especially as technologies evolve and become more widely adopted by hotels and their guests alike. Hotels must make the necessary investments in their own internal communications infrastructure, not only to meet their guests’ expectations but to update and streamline hotel operations. 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: Engage, Promote, Personalize and Reward

Editorial Deadline: **November 26, 2014**

Advertising Deadline: **January 16, 2015**

Run Date: 02/01/15 – 02/28/15

The evolution of social media continues its rapid advance and integration into hotel operations. No longer condemned by some traditionalists as a “passing fad” or a “nice-to-have” by skeptical accountants, it is now a fully accepted customer engagement touchpoint that must be appropriately funded and professionally managed. And companies can no longer assume that merely having a “social presence” is enough. In order to capture the attention they seek and to achieve the returns on investment they desire, companies have to prove their value to social media users who are educated, empowered, vocal and selective. And the strategies for accomplishing this are diverse and distinct. Reputations need to be monitored and maintained on travel review sites, which are quickly evolving into “real-time” networks. Customer service issues and complaints are more frequently identified and resolved in public social forums. Hotels are obliged to choose which social networks best serve their needs (Facebook, Instagram, Pinterest, Google Plus or Twitter) and to utilize them to engage, promote, personalize and reward their existing and prospective customers. Video is becoming increasingly popular as a communication tool and therefore must be professionally rendered, and blogging is now an accepted means to promote brand identity and thought leadership. And finally, effective paid advertising and marketing campaigns need to be devised to target potential customers on social media sites. The February Hotel Business Review will examine all these critical issues and explore how some hotels are successfully utilizing social media strategies in their operations.



March:

Hotel Human Resources 2015: Recruiting and Retaining the Best Employees

Editorial Deadline: **December 17, 2014**

Advertising Deadline: **February 13, 2015**

Run Date: 03/01/15 – 03/28/15

Due to the ever-increasing demands for improvements in guest experience, intense pressures are brought to bear on hotel workforces, as well as on the Human Resource professionals who are responsible for recruiting, training and retaining them. Meeting and exceeding guest expectations requires a substantial investment in recruiting and development, so that top talent can be hired, and career paths can be established to ensure the continuation of five-star service performances. So important is staff development that most HR professionals believe that retaining and rewarding their best employees, and cultivating the next generation of corporate leaders represent their greatest challenges. And they are expected to accomplish these feats at a time when competition for in-demand skilled talent has never been greater, and when HR budgets are still constrained due to the slow-growth recovery following the Great Recession of 2007-2009. HR strategies continue to evolve as social media has become an accepted means for recruiting purposes, and there is also a greater emphasis on metrics so that investments in HR practices and policies can be measured and justified. In addition, issues surrounding demographic changes in the workforce are being addressed. A large percentage of existing workers are ageing out of the industry, just as the Millennial generation is entering it, and there is also greater diversity in the workforce which affects many aspects of HR operations. The March Hotel Business Review will examine some of the challenges facing HR professionals, and will report on some of the best practices they are employing to achieve their goals.



April:

Guest Service: Customer Service is a Key Business Differentiator

Editorial Deadline: **January 28, 2015**

Advertising Deadline: **March 13, 2015**

Run Date: 03/29/15 – 04/25/15

In today's hyper-competitive, hyper-connected global marketplace, customer experience has assumed a major role as a key business differentiator. There is a growing understanding that competition based on products or price alone is no longer a viable strategy. Since feature or function advantages can be quickly duplicated and/or enhanced, product innovation is no longer the differentiator it once was. And competition based on price impairs profitability. On the other hand, research indicates that 86 percent of consumers said they would be willing to pay more for a better customer experience. To protect both market share and margins, hotel companies must provide customers with consistent, compelling experiences—before, during, and after their purchases—across all major channels. There are many things organizations can do to deliver a superior customer experience. Management must align everything a company does with the customer service experience in mind. They must assign high value to anticipation of customers' real needs and desires, and they must incentivize and reward personal initiative in the pursuit of customer satisfaction. They must respond quickly to customer requests. They must ensure that customer interactions are highly personalized, and they must deliver the right information to the right place at the right time. And perhaps most importantly, upper management must create a culture where customer service is valued and esteemed, taught and rewarded. Customer experience leaders who can drive this kind of cultural change will radically affect their companies' competitive position and business performance. The April issue of the Hotel Business Review will document what some leading hotels are doing to cultivate and manage guest satisfaction in their operations.



May:

Hotel Sustainable Development: Responsible Decision-Making for the Near and Long-term

Editorial Deadline: **February 25, 2015**

Advertising Deadline: **April 17, 2015**

Run Date: 04/26/15 – 05/30/15

The subject of sustainability has gained considerable momentum in recent years. There has been an increasing awareness among hotel owners and investors regarding the environmental impacts of hotel development and operations, such that sustainability issues have now permeated nearly every aspect of the industry. Despite the lack of clear metrics which makes the issue difficult to quantify, there is a growing consensus about the definition of what sustainability is, and its essential importance in the everyday, decision-making process. Simply put, sustainability seeks to balance financial, social and environmental factors to facilitate responsible business decision-making over the near and long term. How those factors are balanced may differ from company to company, but there are several fundamental issues about which there is little dispute. First, sustainability has become an important factor when customers make a hotel selection. According to a recent TripAdvisor survey, 71% of travelers reported that they planned to choose hotels based on sustainability over the next year. Thus, hotels that are managed and operating sustainably have a considerable advantage over their competitors. Secondly, sustainability can be a profit center. The main emission sources of carbon footprint in the hotel industry are energy, heating and water. Thus, the reduction in consumption of those elements means that both the size of their carbon footprint and their costs go down, so it is a true win-win for both businesses and the environment. These are just some of the issues that will be examined in the May issue of the Hotel Business Review, which will report on how some hotels are integrating sustainability practices into their operations, and how their businesses are benefiting from them.



June:

Hotel Sales & Marketing: The Shift to Digital is Leading the Way

Editorial Deadline: **March 25, 2015**

Advertising Deadline: **May 15, 2015**

Run Date: 05/31/15 – 06/27/15

Hotel Sales & Marketing departments have been dramatically transformed in recent years. Advances in technology have prompted changes in consumer buying habits, and these professionals have had to adapt to keep up. Like so many other facets in the industry, the shift to digital is leading the way. An established online presence provides marketing professionals with more direct interaction with their guests; the capacity to collect more detailed information about them; and an increased ability to share their brand stories. These endeavors can be accomplished through website usage but increasingly, social media is assuming a larger role in the digital mix. Social media has moved marketing into a new era. Hotels that offer a good product, at a good value, and consistently deliver that product and price, will benefit from thousands of people who view positive comments on travel review sites. Online reviews continue to be a popular way for users to determine which companies they can trust. And though online marketing may have changed how professionals connect with and convert customers, they still need to focus on traditional marketing channels as well – ones that are cost-effective; protect price integrity; and which generate the most bookings. Some of the larger chains are employing efforts that feature both a top down (global) and bottom up (local) approach to ensure that new business is generated from the greatest number of sources. These include the use of loyalty programs, monthly e-mail newsletters, brand identity tools, advertising campaigns tailored to specific regions, regional marketing co-op programs, and business-to-business marketing campaigns. 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.



July:

Hotel Spa: Branding Around the Concept of Wellness

Editorial Deadline: **April 22, 2015**

Advertising Deadline: **June 12, 2015**

Run Date: 06/28/15 – 07/01/15

According to a recent Spafinder Wellness survey, 85 percent of people have returned from a vacation less rejuvenated than when they left. Perhaps because of this, travelers also indicated that they now expect “wellness” programs to be provided by their travel destinations – 87 percent want healthier food, 82 percent expect spa/massage programs, 82 percent desire nature experiences, 73 percent prefer eco-conscious properties, 70 percent want gyms with cardio and weights, 54 percent would like healthy sleep programs and 47 percent are seeking meditation and mindfulness classes. To accommodate these travelers, hotel properties are branding around the concept of wellness. As a result, hotels are offering more spectacular gyms; more inspiring fitness classes; more expert-led, local runs and hikes; more free workout gear, bikes and pedometers; more in-room virtual training; and even personal trainers and nutritionists. For their part, hotel spas are also continuing to upgrade and innovate when it comes to providing expanded services to their guests. Some spas are offering more weightless flotation tanks, chambers and pools to combat the effects of gravity and others are incorporating new technologies like anti-gravity massage beds that simulate the experience of floating on a cloud. Some spas are offering Rest and Renew sleep programs, which include personal sleep consultations, sleep-inducing massages, total blackout rooms, extensive pillow menus and sleep-aiding snacks. Demand for natural, organic skin products is still very strong, and the same is true for aromatherapy products which can now be customized and personalized based on individual guest preferences. The July issue of the Hotel Business Review will report on these trends and developments and how hotel spas are integrating them into their operations.



August:

Food and Beverage: Going Local

Editorial Deadline: **May 27, 2015**

Advertising Deadline: **July 17, 2015**

Run Date: 08/02/15 – 08/29/15

“Going local” is no longer a trend; it’s a colossal phenomenon that shows no sign of dissipating. There is a near obsession with slow, real, farm-to-table food that is organic, nutritious and locally sourced. In response, hotel chefs are creating menus that are customized to accommodate all the vegans, vegetarians, gluten-free, paleo, diabetics and other diet-conscious guests who are demanding healthy alternatives to traditional restaurant fare. In addition, there is a social component to this movement. In some cases, chefs are escorting guests to local markets to select fresh ingredients and then visit a local cooking school to prepare their purchases. Other hotels are getting guests involved in gardening activities, or exploring local farms, bakeries and the shops of other culinary artisans. Part of the appeal is in knowing the story behind the food – being personally aware of the source and integrity of the product, and how it was handled. In addition to this “locavore” movement, there are other food-related developments which are becoming popular with hotel guests. Small plate and tasting-only menus are proliferating around the country. Tasting-only special event menus offer numerous benefits including guaranteed revenue per customer, reservations usually made weeks in advance, and an exciting dining option for guests to experience. Bread and butter are also getting a makeover as chefs are replacing bread baskets with boards, and replacing butter with custom-flavored spreads. One dining establishment offers a veritable smorgasbord of exotic spreads including garlic mostarda, vanilla tapenade, rosemary hummus, salsa butter, porcini oil and tomato jam, to name just a few. The August issue of the Hotel Business Review will document some current trends and challenges in the food and beverage sector, and report on what various leading hotels are doing to enhance and expand this area of their business.



September:

Hotel Group Meetings: There is Good News

Editorial Deadline: **June 24, 2015**

Advertising Deadline: **August 14, 2015**

Run Date: 08/30/15 – 09/26/15

The good news for those hotels that host Group Meetings and Conferences is that there is good news. The effects of the Great Recession have mostly worn off and corporations are now investing again in training and development, which translates into a robust booking pace. And though demand is strong, there are new developments within this sector that must be addressed in order to effectively compete, and to meet the expectations of conference attendees. First, and perhaps foremost, is wireless communications. According to a recent survey, the average participant arrives at a conference with three mobile devices in tow so it is imperative that a WiFi network be free, fast and reliable. And though this is the #1 issue for planning professionals in the meetings business today, there are numerous other concerns. There is a growing trend to incorporate out-of-the-ordinary occasions into the Group Meeting experience. Some examples of this might include partnering with local venues such as wineries; natural and historic wonders; intriguing adventure resources; and unique off-site reception and dinner venues – all of which might be a factor in deciding where to locate for a conference. Team-building activities are also making a resurgence. Some groups are looking for unusual ways to motivate, inspire, and build camaraderie, which might include a volunteerism initiative, like building bikes for kids in the local community. Of course, food and beverage options are also important and like the trend in hotel restaurants, planners want a variety of healthy choices to be available for meal menus and refreshment breaks. They are looking for food and beverages that will “perk up” their participants, not lull them into lethargy. The September Hotel Business Review will examine what some hotels are doing to facilitate this segment of their business in order to meet the expectations of group planners and attendees.



October:

Revenue Management: Optimizing Income Streams Across All Avenues

Editorial Deadline: **July 22, 2015**

Advertising Deadline: **September 18, 2015**

Run Date: 09/27/15 – 10/31/15

The role of Revenue Managers, within their profession and the organizations they serve, continues to evolve. A significant portion of the change is driven by technological innovation which, given its magnitude in today's markets, also redefines their standing on the hotel team. Revenue Managers are moving away from being exclusively spreadsheet-centric and finding better ways to share their data. This shift also requires them to engage more directly with their sales, marketing, and operations departments. Part of this development is due to a reassessment of their metrics for success. Revenue was previously the sole factor by which success was determined but now there is a greater emphasis on price optimization, profitability and flow through. Managers are combining sales, marketing and revenue management, and then adopting a data approach to optimize their income streams across all avenues. This metric evaluates performance in all revenue streams and then calculates the gross operating profit per available room. Hotels are now measuring everything a guest does – and spends money on – from the time he books until the moment he checks out. In addition, Revenue Managers will soon be able to shift their focus from room availability to the guest and his ability to pay. A future revenue management system might take into account things like weather forecasts, the recent online activity of the guest, the guest profile and persona, time of booking, the mode of travel and the fare paid. It might also calculate all the previous stays for this guest, and how much was spent on their room and in the hotel. All of this will be compared to millions of other potential future reservations to determine a unique room and rate for a specific individual guest. The October issue of the Hotel Business Review will address all these developments and document how some hotels are executing their revenue management strategies.



November:

Hotel Architecture and Design: Unique, Timeless and Memorable Design

Editorial Deadline: **August 26, 2015**

Advertising Deadline: **October 16, 2015**

Run Date: 11/01/15 – 11/28/15

With hotel refurbishments typically taking place every eight to ten years for the soft elements, and every fifteen to twenty years for public spaces and bathrooms, owners and investors rely on architects and designers to get things right. Their solutions must satisfy a targeted demographic, be aesthetically timeless and durable, and fulfill the market's desire for unique and memorable design. From re-thinking guestroom configurations to constructing dramatic public spaces, an effort is being made to recast hotels as the highlight of any business trip or vacation. In that regard, many architects have chosen to make a striking first impression, with an emphasis on the hotel lobby. These areas are being designed as multi-use spaces to accommodate casual or formal talks, individual or group work, and zones for social activity. Creative space segmentation is required, along with furniture that provides comfort and functionality. More extravagant entrance features also include indoor waterfalls, large chandeliers and multi-media stations. The bathroom is also an area of interest for designers in recognition of guest desires to experience luxury beyond their everyday lives. Spa-like features such as en-suite bedrooms, waterfall showers, over-sized bathtubs, his & hers sinks, giant towels, plush robes, and deluxe beauty items provide the promise of indulgent luxury. Additionally, hotel restaurants can no longer afford to be mere providers of three meals a day and a buffet. Signature restaurants are being designed to offer a genuine “wow” factor to both guests and external patrons alike. Along with sustainability concerns and an increased emphasis on local sourcing, these are some of the subjects in the fields of hotel architecture and design that will be explored in the June issue of the Hotel Business Review.



December:

Hotel Law: Legal Issues Looming Large in 2015

Editorial Deadline: **September 23, 2015**

Advertising Deadline: **November 13, 2015**

Run Date: 11/29/15 – 01/02/16

In an industry where people are on-property 24/7/365, the possibilities are endless for legal issues to arise stemming from hotel guest concerns. And given the sheer enormity of the international hotel industry, issues pertaining to business, franchise, investment and real estate law are equally immense. Finally, given the huge numbers of diverse people who are employed in the hospitality industry, whether in hotel operations or food and beverage, legal issues pertaining to labor, union, immigration and employment law are also significant and substantial. The expertise of all kinds of specialists and practitioners is required to administer the legal issues within the hotel industry, and though the subject areas are vast and varied, there are numerous issues which will be in the forefront in 2015 and beyond. One issue that is gaining traction is how hotels are dealing with the use of marijuana by employees, given its ever-changing legal status. The use of marijuana is now legal in 21 states and the District of Columbia for certain medical conditions. Two other states, Colorado and Washington, have legalized recreational marijuana use for individuals who are 21 years old or older, and Alaska and Oregon currently have similar legislation pending. Most state laws legalizing marijuana do not address the employment issues implicated by these statutes. Therefore, it is incumbent on all hotel operators to be aware of the laws in their states and to adjust their employment policies accordingly regarding marijuana use by their employees. Other issues that are currently looming large pertain to guest identity theft by hotel employees and the legal liabilities which ensue; issues of property surveillance versus a guest's right to privacy; and immigration reform could also be a major compliance issue. The December issue of Hotel Business Review will examine some of the more critical issues involving hotel law and how some managers are addressing them in their operations.