

# LUXURY HOTELIERS

3rd Quarter  
2016

**SPOTLIGHT  
ON  
JOHN T.A.  
VANDERSLICE,**  
GLOBAL HEAD, LUXURY  
AND LIFESTYLE BRANDS,  
HILTON WORLDWIDE



**OTA**  
THREAT OR PARTNER?  
STRATEGIES TO IMPLEMENT

**MILLENNIALS  
AND MENUS**

**LEADERSHIP  
INSPIRING YOUR  
TEAM TO WANT**

**PERSONALIZING  
SLEEP**

# HOW TECHNOLOGY DRIVES MORE PERSONALIZED GUEST EXPERIENCES

*By Teri Howe*

While packing for a business trip recently I found myself reflecting on my most memorable experiences at different resorts around the world. I'm fortunate enough to have visited some of the more luxurious hotels and spas our industry has to offer. While many properties are nice but forgettable, the handful of unforgettable properties share a common thread that makes them stand out: the personalized service staff provided at every touch point. I remember how special this approach made me feel - as though I was the most important guest in the house. The warm, genuine smiles and caring attention I received at this handful of properties were the keys to unlocking a wealth of fond memories so many years later. Service staff at any hotel

or resort stand out above everything else, even more so than what I'm sure were, as I vaguely recall, fabulous meals and spa treatments. At one property in particular, what set my experience apart was the use of the latest technology. So smart in fact, I didn't even notice at first that technology was even being used. The magic going on behind the curtain enabled the staff to create a seamless experience - a sense of wonder for the guest.

Don't we all want to be able to create this wonderful memorable guest experience at our property? Even just 10 years ago, who would have imagined that technology can enable this level of personalized, quality guest experiences? Although it's easy to interpret the advent of technology

in a hotel service environment as an automation method which eliminates that 'personal touch' in guest service. In reality it's technology that gives hotels the capacity to enable the personal touch and deliver an unforgettable guest experience.

More than offering a new spa treatment or introducing a new executive chef, it's essential as leaders to continually evaluate our vision of guest service and identify potential technologies that might accelerate the ability to deliver personalized experiences. Outstanding cuisine will become a vague memory if there are errors during service; the most beautiful property forgotten (or remembered for undesirable reasons) by wait staff stretched too thin. The rapid



evolution of guest expectations, driven by the almost literal explosion of mobile devices, social media, rating and review sites and the demand for multiple touch points, creates management challenges across most any hospitality organization – and mistakes or failures to be persisted and broadcasted. Staying ahead of competitors, guest attitudes and market trends requires a commitment to innovation and an openness to change, even if it means changing an aspect of your services that might seem to be working well. Much of the technology employed in hotels, resorts and spas lack the robust capabilities necessary to meet guest demands. This disconnect between technology and evolving guest preferences has created an

ever-widening gap. If care is not taken, guest demands will outpace the implementation of innovative solutions and the gap will continue to widen until reflected in 1 less star (or more) on popular review sites.

As hotel restaurants, retail and F&B go through one of the most significant and pivotal shifts in the last couple of decades, innovation in their ability to serve guests across all areas of the property has become a requirement. Savvy guests are turning to technology to enhance their experience, and delighting this technology-embracing market requires operators to be more creative in finding ways to gain guest loyalty, and attract new business. As an example, the introduction of POS tablets has been steady over

the past three to five years, resulting in a proliferation in the use of tablets from coffee shops to standalone restaurants.

Historically, servers were well aware that the extra time spent taking and entering multiple, batch orders could negatively impact guests who placed their orders first, especially when covering large service areas. As the server smiled and did their best, an invisible stop watch was ticking in their head. However, an important shift is happening across properties. Servers are no longer order takers. They have become one of your most valuable assets: powerful brand ambassadors. New technology has enabled them to take food and beverage orders directly on their mobile POS tablet while still

in the presence of the guest. And it's not unusual for the drink order to be delivered by a runner to the guest while the server and guest are still warmly engaged in conversation, providing stunning service. With today's technology, servers are afforded more time to genuinely connect with every guest; making them feel more special and welcome.

Hotel properties of varying sizes and geographic regions are realizing needle-moving F&B revenue increases after the introduction of mobile technology. Speed of service and server availability are the top reasons attributed to these increases. And these results are achieved in venues where guests are eager to buy something, but the buying experiences become stalled because there is insufficient or no service staff available to provide that experience.

Throughout the change our industry faces, the single constant should be our focus on the guest and providing a more holistic, seamless guest experience. With integrated, mobile technology capabilities, servers have the information and tools needed to suggest items based on the guest's previous orders, their dietary needs or preferences. With the latest technology, top-end hotels and resorts are able to truly personalize each guest interaction, creating richer, more lasting connections with guests, resulting in higher guest ratings and greater revenue lift.

Today, it's exciting to think about the seemingly endless opportunities that technology provides to facilitate stronger connections with our guests. If we continue to explore these possibilities while staying connected to guest trends, we can expect a

more vibrant future for our brands while securing increased guest wallet share and, ultimately, greater loyalty.



**About the author**

Teri Howe is a principal product manager at Agilysys, a leading technology company providing innovative software solutions for point-of-sale (POS), property management, analytics, and mobile solutions and services to the hospitality industry. Ms. Howe is a global subject matter expert on POS mobility and responsible for the strategic development of the InfoGenesis® product family, the only proven enterprise-class POS solutions focused on delivering continuous innovation around guest lifecycle management for food & beverage.

# The hotel industry's premier talent recruiters

[WWW.HOSPITALITYRECRUITER.COM](http://WWW.HOSPITALITYRECRUITER.COM)

+1 941 866 1944



# ELEVATE YOUR PMS ACCELERATE YOUR ROI

## Make the switch to a hosted solution to lower your costs while optimizing the guest experience.

Introducing LMS™ Hosted and Visual One™ Hosted. That's right, along with traditional on-site deployment, the award-winning Agilysys LMS and Visual One solutions are now available as hosted offerings. As more enterprises are moving to the cloud, Agilysys is delivering the technology that lowers IT costs and accelerates ROI.

- ✓ Accelerate your ROI
- ✓ Elevate guest experiences
- ✓ Reduce your risk
- ✓ Increase speed and scalability
- ✓ Stay up to date and compliant

**MAKE THE SWITCH TODAY. CONTACT AGILYSYS AT 877-369-6208**

The Official Hospitality Technology Partner of the ILHA Summit

877-369-6208  
sales@agilysys.com  
www.agilysys.com

**Agilysys**...

Copyright ©2016 Agilysys NV, LLC.

re-imagining  
**HOSPITALITY**