

THE OVERVIEW

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CMA bites back at OTAs



The state of hospitality education
Learner of the year awards

Maximising hospitality efficiency in the face of Brexit



James Slatter, Managing Director, Agilysys EMEA, looks at the looming split with the EU

For many working within the hospitality industry, the prospect of Brexit casts a looming cloud, creating uncertainty around any future plans and forecasts.

With the Brexit landscape seemingly changing on a daily basis, it's difficult for any business in any sector to prepare definitively for the long term, yet the consequences for the hospitality industry could be particularly profound.

The Impact on UK's Hospitality Market

Hospitality, perhaps more so than any other sector, has a strong reliance on a migrant workforce. The percentage of EU workers in the hospitality industry is estimated by KPMG to be 23.7% - which equates to almost one in four UK hospitality professionals. Given such a strong reliance on continental workers, the apprehension in the industry is certainly understandable.

But while there's no real danger of a quarter of the hospitality workforce simply upping and leaving UK shores upon the implementation of Brexit, there is a clear risk of disenfranchisement and a gradual erosion as workers feel less valued and less welcome. With some workers already questioning their position, and with less opportunity for those looking to immigrate, hoteliers and the wider industry are faced with an ever-shrinking talent pool.

Given that hospitality is a service industry, much of a hospitality establishment's success revolves around its workforce and the service delivered by individuals. With Brexit already having an

impact, and one that's potentially set to increase exponentially in the coming months, hoteliers should be looking to do all they can to maximise the efficiency of their existing staff.

One of the key weapons in a hotelier's arsenal is that of technology. The hospitality industry is fortunate to have a wealth of technological advancements that can be utilised to ease the workload of staff - whether that be improved communication, automated guest-service functions, more expedient food service or more productive kitchen and bar staff.

Optimising Foodservice Efficiency

When it comes to evaluating your current offering, a good place to start is to take a holistic approach, as opposed to individually evaluating each separate area. By taking the broader view, rather than focusing on the minutiae, you can help to improve productivity across your entire enterprise.

Taking mobile Point-of-Sale (POS) as an example, this is something that makes it easier for front-of-house staff to serve guests, improving the quality and speed of service. This benefit alone is great, but it also has the added effect of improving the flow of incoming orders for back-of-the-house staff, giving them more time to prepare orders and to organise their workflow, thus aiding their efficiency in turn. Through making use of the technology that's available, hospitality venues can deliver a better quality of service by managing resources more proficiently.

On-demand, mobile ordering is another guest engagement tool

that's coming to the fore as technology improves. With guests able to place orders themselves, it removes the need for the server, freeing up staff to work elsewhere and focus on other pressing tasks. Mobile order, using the guest's own device, provides for a productivity-enhancing alternative, while also being cost-effective to deploy and easy to maintain.

Optimising Resort Efficiency

Booking a room online is nothing new, but as people change the way they use technology, it's expected that the mobile reservation experience becomes not just easy, but enjoyable. A side benefit of a smooth and seamless booking experience is that hoteliers can now encourage restaurant reservations at the same time - providing the opportunity to upsell and increase hotel revenue before guests have even arrived.

As technology continues to evolve, the concept of front desk check-in is much more flexible. Equipped with tablets or lobby kiosks, staff are no longer tethered to the front desk. They are free to engage with guests in a more authentic manner, delivering a warmer welcome.

Mobile devices also allow for the opportunity to display images of room upgrade options - or spa, golf and dining experiences; something that, again, can improve revenue elsewhere in a hotel or resort beyond the initial offering.

Guests can even complete a pre-check-in in advance, before completing a final check-in via their mobile device upon arrival, allowing them to bypass the front desk entirely should they choose. In busy resorts and hotels, this can be a much more appealing first impression than that of standing in line and waiting to be served by hard-pressed staff.

Maximising Guest Service Efficiency

In the not so distant past, a hotel's housekeeping staff often depended upon a manual checklist to ensure each room was properly prepared for guests' arrival, while maintenance requests and room service orders were similarly manually tracked - an inefficient method that presents the opportunity for human error. Failing to meet guest expectations through procedural oversight can have a negative impact on a hotel's reputation.

Thanks to the advent of mobile though, digital task assignments can work wonders in ensuring that each need is met. Automatic updates on room conditions also update the property management system in real-time, which, when combined with hotel-wide communications via smart devices and wearable technology, alerts staff to any outstanding guest or room requirements. These automated processes help to streamline and guarantee housekeeping, maintenance requests and room service orders, which all combine to deliver an outstanding guest experience - even if staffing levels are under pressure.

So, while the UK's post-Brexit future may be uncertain, and hospitality professionals are understandably nervous about its impact on their industry workforce, hoteliers and others can at least be reassured that the technology is out there to ease some of the burden. With UK waters set to be rocky for some time yet, it pays to invest in the efficiency tools that can help your establishment weather the worst of it.

James Slatter is EMEA Managing Director at Agilysys, a global hospitality technology company providing PMS, POS, Inventory and Document Management systems. Based in Windsor the UK, James heads Agilysys' regional team, which is focused on building lasting customer partnerships.

→ EHOTELIER

The recruitment dilemma: talent from within or from outside



It is a well-known fact that thoughtful hiring is critically important for the wellbeing of an organisation. Of the myriad factors considered before a final selection is made, the most controversial, perhaps, is to do with origin - should the employee be hired from within the company or from outside?

Employers often resort to a judicious mix of both to maintain a balance in the smooth working of the organisation. It is, therefore, necessary to understand the pros and cons of each choice.

Hiring from within the organisation works well when:

- An older employee has been diligent and motivated, and shows readiness to assume a larger role;
- The employee understands the finer nuances of the organisation's operations; and

- The employee is liked by her/his peers in the sense that the elevation of rank and role will not upset the smooth functioning or the overall wellbeing of the organisation.

Hiring from within is inherently time and resource friendly. Organisations are spared the time, cost and effort involved in identifying and recruiting the right fit, and then helping him/her acclimatise to the company and the new role. Instead, the newly-promoted employee can be hands-on almost immediately.

HOSPA

The Hospitality Professionals Association

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- ✓ Be part of the UK's only organisation representing senior professionals in the hospitality industry.
- ✓ HOSPA offers a vast array of sponsorship opportunities running across our platforms including HOSPACE our annual conference and exhibition.

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