THE CATERER 2022

TECHNOLOGY PROSPECTUS

YOUR COMPREHENSIVE GUIDE FOR THE YEAR AHEAD

"HOSPITALITY, BY OUR DEFINITION, IS ABOUT THE FRIENDLY AND GENEROUS RECEPTION OF GUESTS, VISITORS, AND STRANGERS – SO OUR DECISION TO SUPPORT STREETSMART OVER THE YEARS, WHO HELP SOME OF THE MOST VULNERABLE PEOPLE IN THE UK, HAS ALWAYS BEEN ONE OF THE EASIEST WE'VE EVER MADE"

JYOTIN SETHI
CEO, JKS Restaurants

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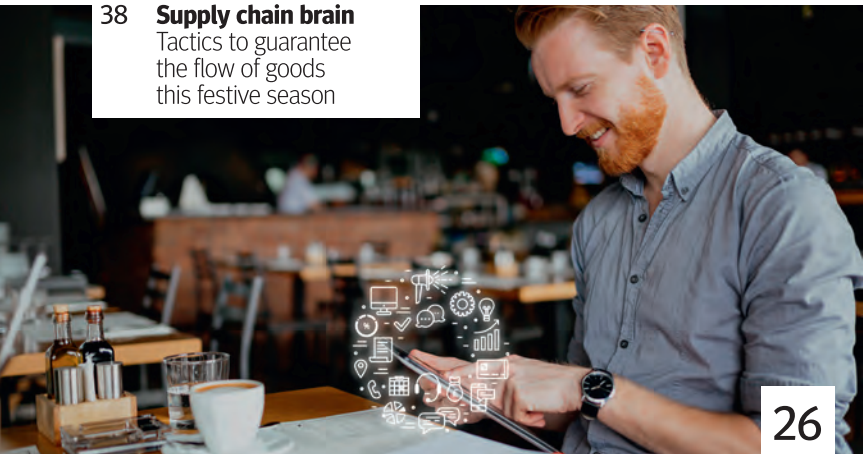
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WELCOME

Welcome to *The Caterer*'s guide to the latest technology to support your business in 2022 and beyond.

Technology continues to play a vital part in hospitality's recovery, from the websites built to support at-home meal kits, which are still providing additional revenue streams for some, to the booking tools and ordering apps which are allowing customers to self-serve and free up much-needed staff resources. The past 18 months has shown the industry's need for digital solutions.

The staffing crisis and supply chain problems are still looming over the industry, not to mention economic uncertainty in the wake of the pandemic, but having the right software and tools in your arsenal will help your business fight these ongoing battles.

That said, technologists often speak a completely different language to us hospitality folk (trust me, as a former technology journalist, I've spent the past 10 years trying to decipher their 'code' myself) and understanding what your business truly needs can be a minefield. So, we've pulled together this guide to detail the big topics in tech and an array of solutions that can help solve the business issues we are all facing.

From using technology to improve guest experience to solutions to manage costs and revenue management and the all-important systems we all need to allow guests to pay – there is so much technology that underpins our sector. We also examine the systems that allow you to manage your workforce efficiently – which is absolutely crucial if you want to attract and retain staff.

Through insight, opinions, case studies and supplier showcases, this is your comprehensive guide to technology for the year ahead.

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SUPPORT SYSTEMS

People might be at the heart of hospitality, but technology is the essential helping hand, says *Jane Pendlebury*, chief executive of Hospa

"There are so many innovative and exciting developments – keeping abreast of them is essential if you're an operator"

Traditional hospitality, for all intents and purposes, hasn't changed all that much over the years. The hotel experience of 50, 60, 70 years ago (or even longer) is likely something that most guests would feel familiar with, were they to go back in time or vice versa. A front of house greeting, a concierge, a room, a bed, pillows, dinner in a restaurant, waiters, bar staff – all of this would be instantly recognisable. When we look at it, the fundamentals of hospitality haven't really changed at all.

What has changed though – enormously – is the technology that drives it. So many elements have been improved thanks to technological developments. From managing bookings, the workforce and marketing, through to procurement, payments, in-room entertainment and even implementing sustainability initiatives – technology touches upon and enhances the full spectrum of a working hospitality environment. What it seeks to do is to make our lives easier and the ways in which it can do that are manifold. It's made, and continues to make, a huge difference, with its influence ever growing.

Given the myriad crises enveloping the industry at present, from supply chain issues to staffing, and of course the overarching impact of the pandemic, technology's importance is ever more pronounced as we come to depend upon it more and more.

Back-office functions that would have taken an age are now streamlined and speedy operations, allowing individuals to take on more responsibilities without creating an overwhelming workload, while the risk of human error is minimised. Automation helps with efficiency, as time-consuming manual tasks are whittled down with each new tech innovation. It allows for more targeted marketing and attracts guests in the first place.

Of course, it's not just the impact on the workforce and working processes where the benefits of technology can be felt. For the guest, technology enhances the hospitality experience in innumerable ways. From the process of first contemplating a hotel stay or meal out, tech points us where to go – leading us to an appropriate venue online before being whisked along the booking funnel that's becoming ever easier to navigate, with pre-stay or pre-dining prompts helping to minimise cancellations (and the dreaded no-shows).

Upon arrival guests can opt for self check-in in hotels, or QR code ordering when in restaurants. Of course, staff are still on hand to assist them, but ultimately technology helps guests with choice too. They get to choose what's right for them, and their experience is all the better for it (most of the time).

As touched upon above though, although the traditional rudiments of hospitality remain unchanged, the gap between the hotel or dining experience of yore, and the hotel or dining experience of today is starting to get wider. At its heart, of course, it won't. Hospitality businesses will always be looking after people and tending to their needs, but the ways in which we do it are changing – and, often, changing for the better.

Hospitality venues need to embrace the technological shift. There are so many innovative and exciting developments that keeping abreast of them is essential if you're an operator that wants not just to remain ahead of the curve but to present a truly modern outlook for your establishment. And as we continue to weather the storm of challenges hammering the industry, technology will not just help us get through it – it will also set us up for the future. It's a future that, I'm fully confident, is a bright one.

KNOWLEDGE IS POWER

Different staff on different shifts dealing with different regulars is a personalisation disaster. *Ben Walker* looks at how guest experience management software can put all your diner data in one place

The Ackroyds are regulars. They come to your restaurant almost every week. Dennis Ackroyd always orders one of your more expensive red wines and Jacqueline loves the fish dishes. They are on friendly terms with your waiter Riccardo.

One night Riccardo is off sick and the Ackroyds are served by a new waiter who seems unaware of who they are. The evening is OK although the Ackroyds miss Riccardo's warm welcome and service is a little bumpy. On leaving, they decide they'll try somewhere new next time.

Such an inconsistent guest experience would have been easy to avoid if the new waiter had been given some basic information about the Ackroyds in advance. This is where guest experience management (GEM) platforms can help.

Several technology vendors, including names like Superb, HGEM and Yumpingo, provide this service specifically for the restaurant industry. There are significant differences between the services these companies provide, although the principle of GEM – or GXM as it is also known – is the same: gathering and using guest data to make service and business improvements.

You have plenty of information about the Ackroyds from their previous visits; they have left a digital data trail in your reservations, electronic point of sale (Epos) and payment systems.

Historically, restaurant businesses have always had lots of data about their customers within their grasp; the problem has been easy access to it. Integrating different operating systems was costly and often it wasn't possible to achieve the desired outcomes.

This situation only changed a few years ago with the coming-of-age of open APIs (application programming interfaces). This is the technology that allows different systems to talk to each other, that, for instance, allows PayPal to make payments from your bank account.

CENTRALISE YOUR INFORMATION

Kevin Dow, restaurant manager of the Gannet in Glasgow, was familiar with working across four or five different platforms at his modern fine-dining restaurant in order to col-

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Running a restaurant using multiple systems isn't sufficient any more. The lack of integrations makes it challenging to collect and use data to improve performance, upsell to guests, and build repeat business.

Located in Copenhagen, Superb empowers the new generation of restaurateurs with a more innovative way of working. Our Guest Experience Management platform (GXM) is the world's first all-in-one platform that gathers every tool needed to run and market your restaurant (reservations, POS and payments) while collecting the guest data needed to provide personalised experiences and build relationships.

With GXM, restaurants can maximise revenue with gift cards, prepaid tickets, events and no-show protection – without sacrificing the guest experience.

It's our mission to make cutting-edge technology that works for your entire team. We innovate so you can adapt to the evolving demands of the industry.

Discover why #experiencematters at http://superbexperience.com

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late guest information, see how team members were performing or what dishes were the most successful. This process was time-consuming and took him away from concentrating on his guests and the dining experience.

Dow heard about Superb, a Copenhagen-based technology vendor, and decided to switch to their fully integrated reservation, EPoS and payments system. He says: "Having everything collated together as an all-in-one tool was so much easier for me and enabled us to make the whole experience so much better for our guests. For everyone who's got a dietary request or a specific table they like, we take a note of that."

Installation was carried out remotely and took a few days. Dow now uses the iPad as an EPoS and the card payment terminals issued by Superb as the only hardware necessary to run his business. He pays a monthly subscription for the service and, in addition, Superb receive a percentage of transactions similar to a card merchant processing fee.

Zaedo Musa, the co-founder of Superb, previously worked in restaurants as well as being part of the team that built coffee shop chain Joe & the Juice into a global brand with 300 outlets. He noticed that on nights when restaurant managers were absent, revenue would drop by around 25%.

> "To succeed today you need to know who your guests are and identify ways to bring them back"
>
> **Zaedo Musa, Superb**

"That was simply because the manager was sitting on more insights about the guests than the rest of the team," he says. "Our all-in-one tool gives the restaurant industry the opportunity to have full control of the data hidden in their software, so they can connect the dots. They need to collect and access insights on their business and guests. We believe that the next mega-trend is personalisation."

So, returning to the Ackroyds, a concise guest profile could clearly display their average spend (data source: EPoS). This could alert the new waiter to possible upselling if they were spending less than normal. Having given their consent under GDPR, the Ackroyds entered some information about their dietary requirements when making their first booking (data source: reservations). The new waiter would have known that the Ackroyds never touch white wine so has saved himself the trouble of pushing a zesty Verdicchio to match the Dover sole. ▶

In another example, you may have a young couple who always dine with you on different nights of the week and have been coming for several months. They are always served by a different team member, so do not feel as welcome as if they were recognised as loyal guests. It would be enough to record on their booking that they are loyal guests so that all staff could react accordingly. But without having the data, or an easy way to record it, loyal guests like these might slip through the net.

Henne is an independent 14-cover Cotswolds restaurant. With just two members of staff, co-founder Nick Fenton says that having advance notice of guest preferences and requirements, as provided via the Superb platform, has been "a game-changer." With only one chef, the restaurant can use the information to create a more personal experience, he explains.

For multi-site businesses, the core principle of guest experience management still holds true: using data to make service and business improvements. For fast-casual dining brands that do not take bookings so are not capturing guest information at this stage, the source of data shifts to post-visit feedback.

DATA AT SCALE

With much greater volumes of data, the scope for benchmarking increases. Large companies can quickly see how successful a new dish is; data can be selected to compare one location's performance against another's. The group can see patterns, by dish, by shift, by location, and start to draw conclusions and develop actions.

Nando's UK, for example, initially piloted a GEM solution provided by Yumpingo in July 2020. The platform was integrated with Vita Mojo, Nandos' order and pay provider, and rolled out across the group's 450 UK locations. Since implementation, Nando's UK has received on average more than 100,000 guest reviews a month. This has enabled the group to make significant improvements to its food and service offering, including satisfaction levels for take-away and delivery. The group reported a 15-point improvement in its Net Promoter Score (NPS), the key metric that measures how likely guests are to recommend a product or service to others.

Wingstop is a fast-casual dining franchise originating in the US. The UK business has eight dine-in restaurants plus six delivery-only kitchens. The group was already using UK company HGEM for mystery shopper audits and, in the summer of 2021, decided to use HGEM for guest feedback too rather than the service provided by its American franchisor.

The switch took about four weeks and involved putting QR codes onto all receipts and onto fliers dropped into take-away orders. Guests scan the QR codes to complete a short feedback questionnaire and have the chance to win a £100 voucher to spend at Wingstop.

Wingstop UK's head of marketing Andreia Harwood said the transition went well and she is now making sure that her teams use all the feedback, both negative and positive.

"We create reports every Monday morning and the operations team have meetings that same day," she explains. "They use the reports as a benchmark for performance week-on-week. It helps identify at any time if there is an issue – whether that's food quality, cleanliness, or team friendliness – we can get ahead of it."

She adds: "We want to reward our people, so every Friday we post all the great things that people have said about us on our intranet and we hero the team. We say congratulations and give them gifts."

Harwood says the relationship with HGEM is very much a partnership in continuous development and they are now in the process of adding reviews from Wingstop's sole delivery partner Deliveroo to the central platform: "We are relatively small and growing at a fast pace. HGEM are coming with us on this journey and they are willing to invest to make sure we have the tools that we need."

NAVIGATING THE DIGITAL JOURNEY

In fact, operators and their GEM suppliers have had to adapt to the increase in click and collect and delivery services during the pandemic.

Guest experience management at a glance

- Guest experience management (GEM) refers to tech services and platforms which enable businesses to improve their performance and profitability by analysing guest data.
- The operating systems used by restaurants (reservations, EPoS and payments) contain lots of guest data, but historically it has not been easy to bring it all together in one place. Advances in open API technology now make it much easier for restaurants to collect data about their guests and business performance directly from these operating systems.
- GEM services can include data gathered from guest reviews and social media. Multi-site fast-casual brands use review and feedback platforms to benchmark performance.
- Machine learning is helping to create dynamic feedback surveys that are increasing completion rates.

"When deliveries started to take off at the start of the pandemic, up to 7% of them failed for one reason or another, but the restaurants themselves were largely oblivious to that," says Steven Pike, managing director, HGEM. "Particularly for those with a recognisable brand, this was a problem – the customer orders online, a third-party delivers and they get nothing back. They don't know whether the order was successful or not."

Since then, brands and their GEM partners have taken action and the percentage of failed deliveries has come down. "We've seen a fluidity in the technology to cope with the expansion of channels. GEM ties all those digital journeys together and measures them," says Pike.

Employees in various positions have their own reasons for looking at the data; a chef manager will be interested in how new dishes are performing whereas the marketing manager will take a greater interest in overall patterns, review ratings and NPS scores.

It is now increasingly common for relatively small hospitality businesses to employ a data analyst or insight manager. Robert Findlay-Ayles, an insight analyst intern at Wagamama's south London headquarters, gives an example of the creativity of his role. He says: "Before the pandemic, we held an internal nationwide competition called Wokstars, a head-to-head competition between our chefs with a trip to Japan on offer for the winner. By using GEM customer measures, we were able to find a positive correlation between restaurants that took part in Wokstars and their menu performance. Simply put, customers eating at a competition restaurant reported higher satisfaction with our food. This insight wouldn't have been possible without GEM."

> "We want to reward our people, so every Friday we post all the great things that people have said about us on our intranet and we hero the team"
>
> **Andreia Harwood, Wingstop UK**

This positive correlation encouraged Wagamama to re-run the competition this year but also extend it to front of house teams, giving them the chance to showcase their ability to bring menus to life and impress guests.

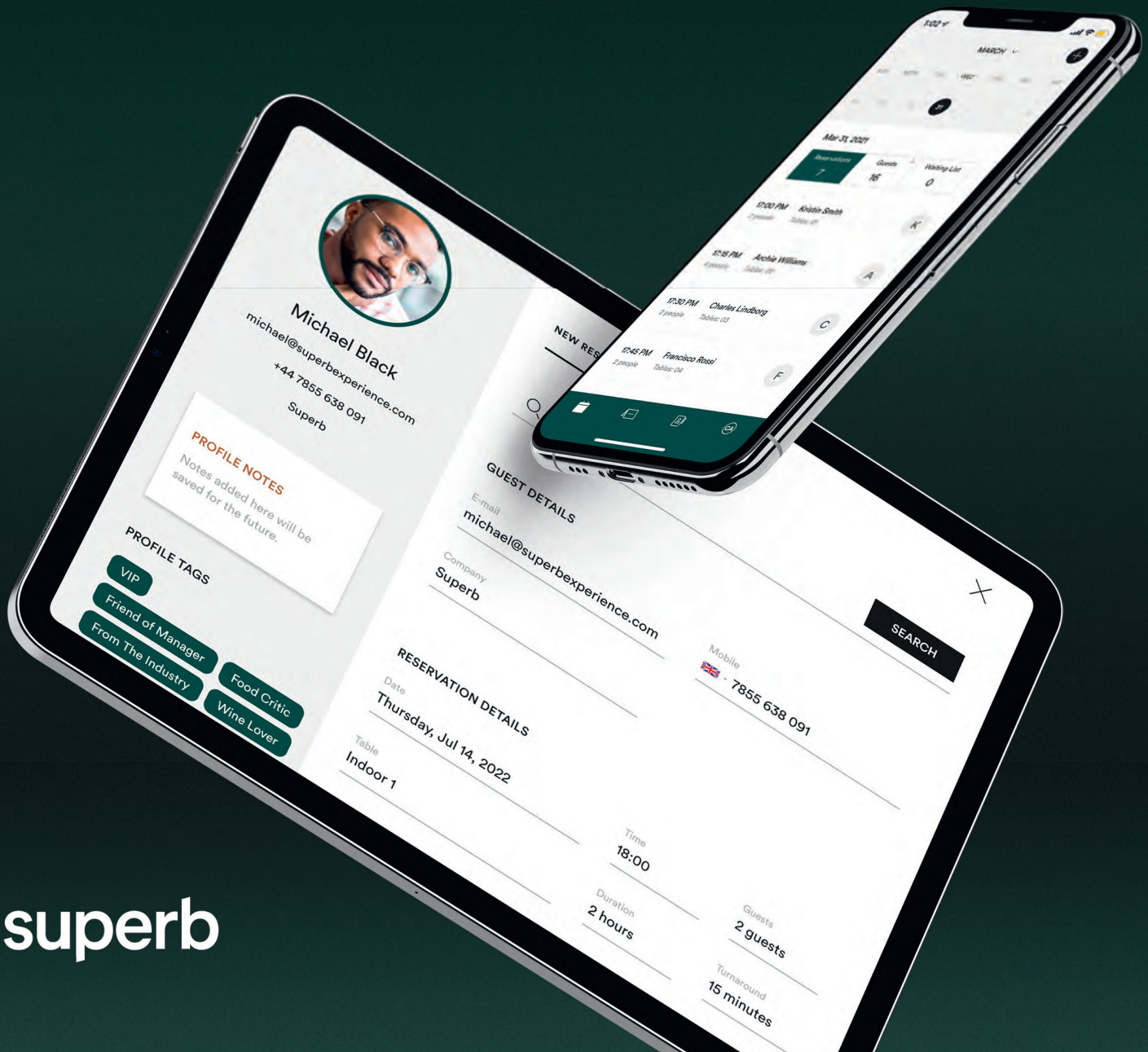
"Wagamama is very good at engaging teams in looking at the data and making sense of it," notes Pike at HGEM, who has worked with the Japanese-style chain since 2004.

Looking at innovation in the GEM space, restaurant operators can expect to see increasingly dynamic customer feedback surveys which change according to how much information guests want to give. Artificial intelligence and machine learning are making greater inroads, resulting in more intelligent data mining and continuing the theme of personalisation.

Zaedo Musa at Superb argues that post-pandemic trading conditions mean restaurants are more reliant than ever on their existing guests and have a constrained ability to attract new ones.

"To succeed today you need to know who your guests are and identify ways to bring them back," he says. "The old world is using multiple systems. The new world is using a GXM system with everything in one place so you can gather insights."

HOW TO TURN EVERY GUEST INTO A REGULAR USING DATA



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INTRODUCING GUEST EXPERIENCE MANAGEMENT

Today's guests won't just compare you to another restaurant. They'll compare their experience with you to an online shopping spree or a stay at a hotel. They'll remember the ease of same-day delivery with free returns and want their dining experience to be just as easy, personalised and seamless.

Guest data is the key to giving guests exactly what they want and turning customers into regulars.

PERSONALISE EVERY EXPERIENCE

Delicious food and drink are table stakes. Your guests expect more. They want to be remembered and greeted by name.

They want to be seated according to table preferences and offered recommendations based on their profile – allergies and dietary restrictions included.

Most restaurants only offer these personal touches to loyal customers because this knowledge is either written down or locked inside the head of key employees.

But what happens when the manager or maître d' isn't there? Or when that piece of paper gets tossed?

Demographics aren't enough. To offer personalised experiences, you have to know what Thomas wants versus what Michael wants – not simply millennials versus boomers.

Superb created the Guest Experience Management category and is on a mission to change the way restaurants operate by using guest data.

Our Guest Experience Management platform (GXM) makes it possible to deliver personal touches to every guest – even across different restaurants – by collecting all tools (reservations, POS and payments) in one place. Without 3rd-party plugins or integrations.

You can view guest preferences and access order history, average spend and contact information. This data isn't reserved for previous customers.

Your guests want to be known from their first visit, and Superb makes that happen with guest profiles.

BUILD RELATIONSHIPS

People aren't just eating with you, they're staying with you. It's a relationship.

With GXM, you provide your staff with a new way of working and reduce administrative tasks. Your team will finally have the time (and resources) to focus on the relationship. Plus, every team member will have access to the same information, giving guests a consistent experience.

MAXIMISE REVENUE

When someone walks into your restaurant, they're ready to spend – not window shop.

How do you use that? Access guest data. If you already know a customer likes red wine at a certain price point, don't waste time offering lower-priced wines.

From unique events and prepaid tickets to gift cards, turn guest preferences into profit.

With Superb, guests can preselect upgrades and add-ons during the reservation process, giving you time to prepare. And with no-show protection, you won't lose revenue from last-minute cancellations.

It's all about knowing what your guests want and having the right partner to help you provide it.

Superb is that partner.

Finally, an all-in-one platform that gathers everything you need for your restaurant to thrive now and in the future.

FIND OUT MORE: SUPERBEXPERIENCE.COM

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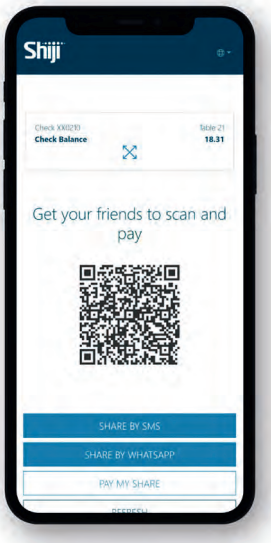
ELEVATE GUEST EXPERIENCE WITH AN ENTERPRISE-LEVEL, CLOUD-BASED POS

As hospitality companies continue to expand globally and open more and more properties, enterprise-level capabilities have become crucial to the technology stack of growing multi-national hospitality companies. Especially with the changes the food and beverage industry has been experiencing in the post-pandemic world, the need for flexible and scalable technology has increased for restaurants worldwide who are adapting to the 'new normal' in hospitality.

A COST-EFFECTIVE SOLUTION FOR AN EVOLVING MARKET

Within the food and beverage space, Shiji has been leading the way since 2016 with our cloud-based, but offline capable Infrasys Cloud POS, one of the most secure point-of-sale systems on the market today. The customisable system can be updated and tweaked to best fit an organisation's needs, with features including enterprise reporting, 24/7 global support, payment integrations and the ability to work on any hardware.



In order for staff to focus on providing better guest services, F&B technology needs to be fast, intuitive and reliable. Infrasys Cloud POS was designed to connect to a variety of operational, payment, inventory and ordering systems easily. With system-wide updating, customisable reporting, and central management, Infrasys allows for multiple outlet management for single and multiple locations around the world – all from the head office.

ROBUST, SECURE OPEN API CONNECTIVITY

As a cross-regional and multiple industry company, we provide tools and solutions for our customers from distribution channels, payment systems, property management systems, and more. In order for our customers to have a fully functional technology stack with maximum results, we prioritized the integrational capabilities of our products through open APIs to ensure the solutions are able to communicate with each other and work seamlessly together. For instance, Infrasys Cloud POS creates fast, reliable, and secure user experiences through its integrations to Shiji Payment Solutions and other integrated payments, as well as Mobile Ordering solutions.

GUEST-CENTRIC, ELEVATED ENTERPRISE-LEVEL SOLUTION

Shiji Group, the multi-national technology company that provides software solutions and services for enterprise companies in the hospitality, food service, retail and entertainment industries, has been connecting the global business of hospitality for decades. Our technology is built so our clients can focus on providing elevated services to ensure memorable guest experiences. With a great range of products across the varying industries, we have been helping our customers efficiently operate and strategically manage their hotels, restaurants, and retail outlets through our enterprise-level, flexible technology.

GLOBAL 24/7 SUPPORT

Providing consistent, tailored customer service is one of our main driving forces at Shiji. With offices in all regions around the world, Infrasys users receive full 24/7 support from Shiji teams in London, Barcelona, Berlin, Singapore, Washington DC, Mexico, Dubai and more.

To find out more, call +44 (0)7754 406 104.

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Scale your business with a seamless integrated POS solution.

Our technology is fast, intuitive and reliable so staff can focus on guest service, not the system. Cloud-based but network independent, Shiji's Infrasys is one of the most secure point of sales systems.

- Enterprise reporting
- 24/7 support
- Payment integration
- Cloud -based, works on any hardware

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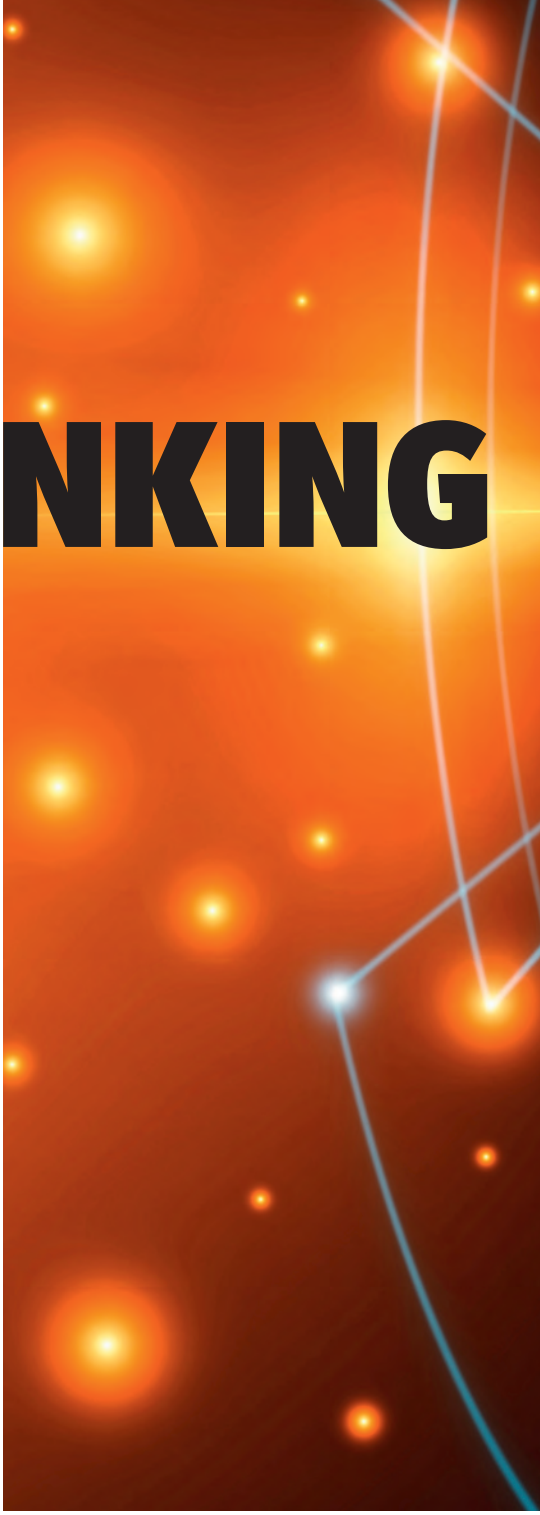
SHIFT YOUR THINKING



It's no secret that employers face challenges – and one of the biggest headaches at the moment is how to manage, recruit and retain staff while trimming costs and improving service. Here, we look at how today's workforce management and people technology platforms can help. *Rosalind Mullen* reports

One statistic that stands out around labour costs is that inefficient shift scheduling could be costing businesses up to 40% of income. With many hospitality businesses operating under thin margins and facing increased pressures, accurate scheduling and forecasting to ensure the right labour distribution is vital.

Last-minute rotas are also seeing disgruntled staff vote with their feet. Why? Well, because post-pandemic, your employees increasingly value their work-life balance and if you don't look after their physical and mental wellbeing, you will lose them. Worse still, you may find it expensive and difficult to replace them. According to the Office for National Statistics, job vacancies in the UK rose to a record 1.2 million in September – and the hospitality sector has more staff shortages than most.

However, there is a suite of techno-wizardry that aims to help with all this – and much more. Workforce management software (WFM) sets out to simplify the complex tasks of scheduling, time-reporting, communicating, budgeting and forecasting of hospitality workers. Giants such as McDonald's, Domino's, Hilton, Benugo and Starbucks, for instance, already use it to reduce labour costs, remain compliant, and improve workforce productivity – all while boosting the bottom line, employee satisfaction, and retention.

Providers of WFM are predictably going to sing its praises, but they can also cite evidence that it works. "Our customers – which in the UK include Odeon, Benugo and IHG – report up to an 80% reduction in admin time, plus up to 10% labour cost reduction, as well as increased productivity, and up to 100% labour law compliance," says Daniel Holmberg, country manager at Quinyx UK.

In its annual study Quinyx, which provides AI-powered WFM software to 850 global companies, found that a third of respondents had left a job in the hotel and foodservice sector because their employer didn't provide schedules with enough advance notice (a week or more) making work-life balance difficult. And some 49% said their place of work was understaffed, which led to a stressful environment.

It also found that companies not using WFM technology on average overspent by 25% on salary costs and lost up to 15% revenue, due to ineffective schedules.

So, in a post-pandemic world, the potential of WFM is obvious, says Holmberg. "There's intense competition for labour right now. It's unprecedented – Domino's is seeking to hire 8,000 delivery drivers, for example. What can Domino's do to compete with other businesses in filling those vacancies? You can only raise wages by so much. What it can offer instead is ensuring employees get a schedule they actually want to work – one that benefits the business and the employee – and that's what we can help them do. It is the companies that are using automated solutions that have navigated the uncertainty of the past two years."

GOING PAPERLESS

An effective WFM system is two-way, with a mobile-friendly user app for employees to communicate with managers and request shift-changes and holidays.

"In many businesses, this type of admin is done on spreadsheets or in a separate system, with huge potential for confusion – for example, leave requests being overlooked. It's time-consuming for managers and painful for employees," says Holmberg. "The app removes the stress of organising shifts. It provides seamless real-time communications

"If staff have access to self-service portals for training as well as shift planning, they can take a more active role in their own development and working life"

Henry Seddon, Access Hospitality

and flexible scheduling that staff can access whenever they need to."

While the manager still authorises shifts, the self-service portal empowers employees and means they can also flag up their availability, which is particularly useful in multi-site companies.

"In an environment where whole teams may be forced to isolate if one member becomes unwell with Covid-19, the value of advertising available shifts online across different sites in a group offers huge potential for business continuity and employee satisfaction," says Henry Seddon, managing director at Access Hospitality.

A significant financial benefit of WFM is that businesses can manage labour costs. At the press of a button, operators can get a real-time view of expenditure and calculate wages as a percentage of sales.

"It provides the tools needed to optimise ▶

labour costs while considering other factors, such as sales results, forecast demand and the performance of individual locations or events," says Andrew Northcott, chief executive and founder of Roubler, which provides cloud-based one-stop-shop software. "This enables managers to operate within their assigned budget, schedule staff according to demand, understand sales versus labour costs, and gain visibility cost centres. Armed with this information, they're able to make [informed] decisions – contributing to increased performance across the business" (*see case study*).

Some of the latest software can look further ahead, too, such as Quinyx's strategic planning algorithm. "Through AI technology, it helps business leaders make long-term, data-driven staffing and budgeting decisions, so you can plan and predict the workforce you will require in three, six, 12 months' time," says Holmberg. "It can be used to model 'what-if?' scenarios, too, so users can model the business impact of significant sales increases or decreases, or of store openings, and work out how much labour they might need in different situations. It would allow users to adjust budgeting based on the Living Wage increase, for example."

PAY AS YOU GO

On the subject of wages, on-demand pay is becoming as important as managing rotas when it comes to staff retention. This technology has made a difference at Gusto Italian, says chief executive Matt Snell. Speaking at a recent Access Hospitality webinar, he said: "I think [staff are] much more likely to stay with us because they get their rotas two weeks in advance so they can plan their lives, so they get regular time off, so they're not working 60 hours a week, so that they are able to access their rotas online, so that they can draw down wages before being paid."

Seddon comments: "[Giving employees] the option of drawing down wages when earned with a system such as Access EarlyPay enables them to work additional shifts when needed in the knowledge that they don't have to wait for a formal payday. In post-pandemic life, this flexibility [allows] them to be in control of their own life and finances."

> "The app removes the stress of organising shifts"
> **Daniel Holmberg, Quinyx UK**

Cloud-based software can also help with recruitment and onboarding by enabling managers to define workflow priorities, attract and manage candidates throughout each stage.

And as canny operators know, being able to demonstrate you offer a robust staff training and development programme is key. End-to-end cloud-based training software simplifies an employee's training path. It manages internal and external development programmes

PICTURES: SHUTTERSTOCK/ALEXANDER SUPERTRAMP; PROSTOCK-STUDIO

which integrate staff training absences and pay rates into operational rotas and automatically updates qualifications in the HR system.

"If staff have access to self-service portals for training as well as shift planning, they can take a more active role in their own development and working life," says Seddon.

So, are there any downsides? Seddon says that when considering WFM technology, it is important to balance business needs, employee satisfaction and customer sentiment. Recent Access research (conducted by CGA) found 40% of hospitality customers thought less interaction with staff to book, order and pay was the biggest downside of technology, but 28% agreed that technology improves their overall experience in pubs, bars and restaurants.

Interestingly, 24% of consumers believe that staff are now treated better than they were before technology was widely used. The most important factors that would encourage customers to use technology more were if they knew tips were going direct to staff (25%) and if they could still interact with staff (24%).

"Promoting a positive working environment and having a well-defined, transparent tips policy not only creates job satisfaction but also has an impact on guest feedback and return visits," says Seddon. "Using WFM to encourage employees to do brief, but regular surveys, gives maximum feedback across sites to assess general health and wellbeing, basic working conditions and best practice that can be shared and recognised."

A modern WFM system is also an effective platform for staff communication and engagement. In the event of another lockdown, that could help engage employees with news updates, information on protective measures, and up-to-date details of who is off sick. This digital communication is vital in both times of crisis and in a day-to-day working environment.

Case study: the Capital Hotels & Apartments, South Africa

The Capital Hotels & Apartments started in 2008 and has become the fastest-growing hotel group in South Africa, even throughout the challenges of Covid. It has expanded from 190 staff to 650 and is onboarding 240 recruits across three new hotels, taking the current total to 12.

The team needed a more agile workforce management system to support expansion. Previously, without an all-in-one system, employee information was fragmented and managers were spending valuable time onboarding and rostering staff. With no central place to manage teams and view workforce data, senior leadership lacked insight into where they could be making gains in terms of efficiency.

The Capital Hotels chose Roubler's system covering the employee lifecycle from onboarding, to time and attendance and rostering. They now have oversight across the entire group to ensure employees are working the right hours and being paid correctly in each location.

"At site level, new staff are onboarded faster, managers spend less time on admin and save valuable time with features like smart

WWW.FACEBOOK.COM/THECAPITALHOTELSANDAPARTMENTS/PHOTOS

rostering and leave management in the mobile app, allowing them to focus on providing an exceptional customer experience," says chief people officer John Skelton.

"Employees' lives are easier with the mobile app. They can view their roster, book leave and update personal information, without the need to log in to different systems or request information from HR."

When Covid hit, the system's flexibility was crucial, not just because rules on travel were changing, but to help with new procedures and keep service levels smooth. For instance, its properties were used as a quarantine base throughout lockdown and so had to manage a large influx of guests at short notice.

"Roubler helped us to galvanise the workforce with speed, as management could create rosters at the click of a button and notify staff of upcoming shifts automatically via the mobile app," says Skelton. "This flexibility to manage changing workforce demands and work patterns has been key to our ability to continue to scale."

Roubler's API allows data exchange between platforms so there is no need for data imports, fewer errors, and streamlined operations. The system integrates with accounting software, e-learning platforms, point of sale systems, job boards and operations software.

INVESTMENT IN TECHNOLOGY AND PEOPLE THE KEY TO FUTURE SUCCESS

The hospitality sector's emergence from lockdown has been hampered by a myriad of challenges: food and drink supply issues, staff shortages, rises in the minimum and national living wages, and the ever-present spectre of a resurgence in Covid cases leading to a repeat of trading restrictions.

This means that now, more than ever, operators need to invest in staff in order to recruit and retain the best people who can deliver outstanding customer experiences, despite the challenges, say workforce specialists Bizimply.

In their *From Fragile to Agile* report published in association with hospitality consultants Hospitality Mavericks in September, they put forward a compelling case for operators to combine the best available technology with a new approach to people management as the way to thrive going forward.

The report, which surveyed hospitality businesses across the UK, Europe and the US, found that the 15 months of on-off lockdowns has accelerated the pace of change in many areas, particularly technology. Yet, it also showed that the industry is still working largely with a 'top-down' approach to people management, despite most respondents realising that giving their front-line teams more autonomy would be overwhelmingly positive for the business.

Conor Shaw, CEO of Bizimply, said: "Good technology can play a pivotal role in helping hospitality businesses to succeed, by freeing up their staff to spend more time focusing on customer service, leading to better guest experiences and greater job satisfaction.

"Every business has access to the same technology, so that alone doesn't create a competitive edge. However, when implemented alongside new approaches to people management, particularly ones that empower front-line staff, it can help organisations to become more human – and in hospitality, great customer experiences are delivered by humans. Operators who understand this, and start to make the necessary changes, are the ones who will succeed, whatever fresh challenges are thrown at them!"

Bizimply's software is designed to help hospitality businesses reduce time spent on staff rosters and payroll and free up front-line staff, particularly GMs. Bizimply estimates GMs can spend up to six hours a week creating a staff rota using Excel or similar, and equipping them with the right software quickly gives them time back. One operator using Bizimply software is now creating rotas for 60 team members, across five sites, in just one hour a week.

Shaw adds: "The good news for hospitality businesses facing urgent staff challenges is that investment in systems doesn't have to be hugely expensive. There are plug-and-play options that can be implemented quickly and deliver immediate benefits."

Operators can find out more and request a free consultation on www.bizimply.com. The *Fragile to Agile* report can be downloaded at www.bizimply.com/resources

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TOTAL CONTROL

When the going gets tough, it can be tempting to cut back on investment in your property management system, but that could ultimately hurt your business by eliminating an opportunity for boosting operational efficiency. *Rosalind Mullen* reports

Many hospitality businesses will have spent this year juggling the demands of getting the business back on its feet post-Covid while battling a chronic skills shortage. Dealing with the long-tail Covid impact of track-and-trace on staff rotas and guest bookings, and managing new cleaning and social distancing expectations, will have presented further challenges for hotels.

As a result, technology has become more crucial than ever for hoteliers – especially those who find themselves short-staffed. Property management systems (PMS), which give centralised control over all operations and enhance guest service, are specially useful. The development of cloud computing, for instance, means PMS servers no longer have to be located on the premises, which allows for faster system implementation, consistent upgrades of new capabilities, and easier and more seamless integrations via open application programming interfaces (APIs).

> "If you can convince more than 50% of your guests to check in and out digitally, do you need as many front-desk staff?"
>
> **Calum McIndoe, Infor Hospitality,**

ALL IN ONE

In the past, a hotel would require a PMS and then several other applications that integrated with it. Increasingly, however, providers are building those apps into one system. The PMS, channel manager, booking engine, revenue management system and payment processor now all function from one backend, with everything seamlessly integrated.

Richard Castle, president and COO of software supplier Cloudbeds, says: "A hotelier

PICTURES: SHUTTERSTOCK/ZHU DIFENG; MONOPOLY 919; RA2 STUDIO

shouldn't have to constantly switch between different systems in their day-to-day work. We like to say that the last thing a hotelier needs is to deal with an alphabet soup of acronyms – PMS, CRS, RMS, CM, IBE, etc. All they need is one platform that allows them to run their business successfully: to increase reservations, streamline operations, and free staff up to deliver more memorable guest experiences."

Post-Covid, that level of versatility is good news. Oracle Hospitality, which launched Opera Cloud in March 2019 just before the pandemic, is one company that has responded quickly to changing demands from hotels and their guests. "There are new priorities," says vice-president of strategy and product management Tanya Pratt. "We look at changes in the marketplace and work out how we evolve and pivot to deliver what is meaningful today."

Pratt, who spent more than 20 years at Fairmont Hotels and Resorts, believes there are three key requirements. She says: "In a nutshell, it's about making guests and the employees feel safe about being together by making transactions touchless. Second, with remote working and furlough, it's about getting the information and knowledge that is in your employees' heads onto the app so that it is accessible to all. Third, it is about making APIs open so apps can talk to each other, with data for anybody to use, allowing an entire hospitality ecosystem to innovate alongside us."

INTO THE CLOUD

In line with this, more hoteliers have seen the benefit of moving their PMS to the cloud. Pratt says: "About 80% still had legacy systems on-premise, but that couldn't support new business strategies and integration with new partners and advancements. It was also labour-intensive and expensive to support. During lockdown, it made hotels vulnerable as there were no staff on-property."

With staff working remotely or on furlough, hoteliers also wanted greater communication with their teams – and to harness their knowledge. "Before Covid, you could ask the person next to you, but suddenly you couldn't do that. We needed to take information that was in people's heads and make it visible on the software. It sounds simple, but it wasn't there before," Pratt says. "The team got on top of that as soon as they got the feedback." ▶

Not just for the luxury end of the market

Smaller hotels can also benefit from a property management system, although they tend to go for more affordable cut-down systems than bigger companies do. PMS supplier Little Hotelier, for instance, designs systems for properties ranging from two to 30 rooms, with a basic package that starts at £30 a month plus 1% of total booking value.

Product director Harini Boppana says: "It's perfect for small hotel businesses that want to pay less when there is low demand. For example, if their total booking value is £1,000 a month, then 1% equates to just £10 a month."

The less complex system, which takes just an hour to set up, can still manage reservations and room allocations, take payments securely, distribute rooms, and sync all this activity across all a hotel's systems so there is no double-booking of rooms or missed bookings. Customers can get insights into how they're performing and there is also a mobile app.

In the wake of the pandemic, a feature has been introduced into the PMS that allows guest payments to be taken upfront. This means hoteliers can lock in revenue faster and more easily, as market conditions evolve.

"Likewise, we got serious about invoices to support small accommodation providers in markets where local regulations were tightening," Boppana says. "We also delivered multifactor authentication, and made our app available in more languages – it now supports English, French, German, Indonesian, Italian, Portuguese, Spanish and Thai."

For businesses that want more predictable costs, Little Hotelier Pro costs a fixed rate of £69 a month, and allows add-ons such as metasearch bookings, a hotel website builder and the ability to search competitor rates.

Sponsor's comment: Infor

Hospitality is about connection and experience.

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Each solution plays its part to create an end-to-end and scalable technology platform:

- **Hotel PMS** – the central hub of operations and CRM
- **Revenue and price management** – to forecast and analyse revenue opportunities and set competitive rates using AI, 24/7, 365 days a year.
- **Sales and catering** – managing hotel amenities and events and end to end in a user-friendly way.

Guests, meanwhile, wanted touchless transactions. "Because Opera Cloud is fully mobile and cloud-based, guests can check in from their room away from public spaces. This wasn't available in the past," says Pratt. "It was particularly helpful early on in the pandemic when people were bubble-wrapping themselves."

Communicating with the guest via their preferred device has also become more important. "We ensure guest profile information is available," says Pratt. "A team member can, for instance, make a note that a guest prefers three pillows – our application allows for that."

Another change is that operators already working from the cloud have demanded a more rapid delivery of new integrations. "They were looking at how to advance and evolve their business model to deliver to customers. Now, new features and functionality can be upgraded more rapidly," says Pratt. "The Oracle platform provides tools to enable customers and their partners to build their own integrations and innovate. It's fast and seamless; quick to market. It would have taken months or years previously."

Castle is also looking to satisfy this trend. He launched Cloudbeds' hospitality platform and is constantly adding channel partners and app integrations. The platform currently connects to more than 300 distribution channels and offers connections to hundreds of apps in areas such as guest experience, guest communications, housekeeping and point of sale.

OVERHEAD ELIMINATOR

Castle adds that short-staffed employers should be looking for a PMS that can reduce administrative work. Artificial intelligence, for instance, can be used to automate manual repetitive tasks so that fewer staff are needed.

> "Can you set pricing rules that automatically update your rates based on what prices your competitors have set?"
> **Richard Castle, Cloudbeds**

"When you're short-staffed, you have less time to deal with the manual work that comes with updating, much less maintaining, your rates in different extranets across different distribution channels," he says. "Does your PMS allow you to simply update the room across every channel instantly in one click? Can you set pricing rules that automatically update your rates based on what prices your competitors have set? If you have a short-term cancellation, is it possible for you to instantly make that inventory available again to sell?"

Calum McIndoe, director of sales UK & Ireland at PMS supplier Infor Hospitality, also identifies the staffing benefits of tech. "If you can convince more than 50% of your guests to check in and out digitally, do you need as many front-desk staff? If you can manage the room attendants and housekeeping more efficiently, can you reduce head count here also?"

No wonder, then, that the pandemic has led to the greater adoption of PMS apps. For instance, hotel departments that hadn't previously linked into a PMS are seeing clear benefits from going mobile. Take housekeeping. The head-housekeeper can now send attendants their duties via an app on their mobile device, all ranked in order. "It's all digital," says McIndoe. "Gone is the endless time spent trying to find a room attendant when something in a room needs to be corrected." The PMS app can also be used to launch a maintenance request. And even to manage social distancing and contact tracing.

On the subject of social distancing, there's a

handy new authorisation app on the market. It works for certain front-desk functions such as rate overrides, room-moves or large currency transactions that require authorisation from a supervisor or manager.

"Post-pandemic, the manager might be working from home, or wanting to socially distance so may not be as available as before," McIndoe explains. "The PMS can now be set to send a message to the authoriser's mobile device when required and receive back the authorisation to complete the task."

LOST OPPORTUNITIES?

The UK hospitality sector has taken a bashing from the pandemic and its associates lockdowns, so how does a hotelier balance making an investment in installing or upgrading their PMS with applying resource to solve some of their many other headaches?

"The time when things are tougher or slower is when it is more important to be more strategic about those investments," says Pratt at Oracle. "Hoteliers need to think about the opportunities that will be lost if they remain on whatever legacy system they are on today."

Castle at Cloudbeds, agrees, underlining his point that ideally a PMS needs to be part of a larger platform that allows for the automation needed to achieve operational efficiency. It should also serve as a data insight tool that you can use to analyse business in real-time.

"It's all about automation and the seamless integration between the systems needed to make your business run smoothly and successfully. A PMS isn't helping you if you're still putting in hours of work that you can easily eliminate through automation."

The cloud-based system opening up Acostay's horizons

Australian-based Acostay Hotel Group has been able to leverage the pandemic as an opportunity to test the cloud as a platform for a new business model.

Even before the Covid-19 crisis, the management company – which owns and operates Great Southern Hotels in Sydney, Perth, Melbourne and Brisbane, plus another in Colombo, Sri Lanka – was migrating to Oracle's Opera Cloud in a bid to reduce costs through the elimination of on-premises servers, faster innovation with continuous software updates, and centralised data that can be accessed from anywhere with mobile devices.

It also helps with staffing costs. Acostay director Robbie Owaijan says: "Labour is the biggest cost for any hotelier, and we addressed it by moving many of our departments – for example, reservations, accounts receivable, accounts payable, and finance – to an offshore setup, where the cost of doing business is much lower than in Australia.

"Our plan is to move back-office operations at each of our properties, shifting more than 40% of our total workforce and reducing labour cost by 30%. The reorganisation wouldn't be possible without Opera Cloud, which is allowing us not only to consolidate our business but also to get a better understanding of what's happening within it. Our employees can now access business-critical data in real time, share information with each other, and execute day-to-day activities at our hotels – without being on site."

An added benefit is that the PMS allows Acostay to continue developing its business model. The efficiencies and centralised control achieved will allow it to transform into a hotel management company for budget hotels, both independents and franchisees.

> "Technology offers a significant opportunity for budget hotels to take service level up and to increase revenue"
>
> **Robbie Owaijan, Acostay Hotel Group**

"We're confident that what we've achieved at our properties we can do for others. We have a model to increase hotel profitability, and we know it's one that works because we witnessed its performance during the pandemic," Owaijan says.

"When Covid-19 hit, we were slammed by a loss of income. While many hotel operators shut down their hotels, we managed to fill more than 100 rooms every night, mostly by providing healthcare workers with a safe place to stay. We operated efficiently and took care of our guests' needs because our employees could access their relevant information on Opera Cloud PMS remotely.

"There's a shift occurring within the hospitality industry, from prioritising physical infrastructure to looking at technology as an enabler of change. This trend is not limited to luxury hotels. By capitalising on that movement, there is a significant opportunity for budget hotels to take their service level up and to increase revenue."

YOUR GUESTS DON'T CARE

It's true, you know. Your guests don't care. Do they care about your technology and the benefits of complex systems? They do not. They don't care about how you're staying competitive either, or about how ready you are to be agile in a changing marketplace. They also don't care about how you've structured your revenue forecasting strategy, about quarterly targets, about revpar or what that even means.

Here's something else. They don't care about how you monitor performance across all your properties. They don't care about how you co-ordinate housekeeping schedules. They don't care about your operating costs or how you keep track of them. They don't care about business intelligence or how you keep your pricing competitive and up to date. They don't care what the name of your PMS is, or even what it does.

Imagine that. The nerve.

SO, WHAT DO THEY CARE ABOUT, EXACTLY?

Just this. They care about how the things they don't care about affect their experience with you. They care about reasonable rates and value for money. They care about secure transactions. They care about ease, convenience, and about as little friction as possible to get what they want. They care about safety and cleanliness. They care about the processes you have in place that don't feel like processes to them.

Remember; these are people who have the whole of human knowledge and history at their fingertips – literally. So, they care about having control and visibility around what they can get during their stay as they do in so many other areas of their lives. They want to know what their options are. They want those options presented in a straightforward way delivered right to them at the right time.

THEY CARE ABOUT BEING TREATED AS INDIVIDUALS, NOT TRANSACTIONS

They care about other things, too – about fun, rest, quiet, excitement, productivity, and the environments that allow for all of those. They care about *comfort*. They care about how well-connected they feel to the things they want or need in the moment. They care about tokens of welcome; a personalised offer, a text message to check in on them, or a complimentary appetiser at the hotel restaurant.

They care about the little things that become the big things. And as the industry shifts and changes, this will remain to be true. The right technology should support you in meeting that mandate.

Plan your roadmaps accordingly.

Infor Hospitality is dedicated to helping industry leaders create a scalable technology platform by developing powerful multi-tenant cloud software for hotels organisations. Learn more www.infor.com/hospitality or scan the code opposite

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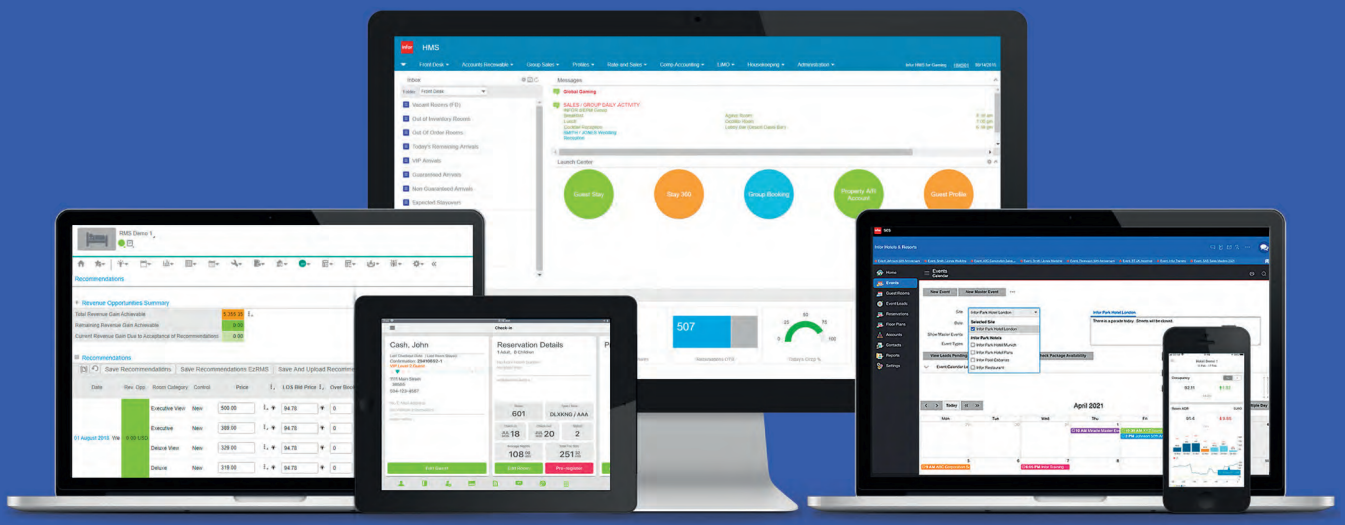

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UNLEASH THE POWER OF EPOS

Elly Earls explores how EPoS systems have helped hospitality operators respond agilely to the challenges brought by the pandemic and pinpoint where they can improve business

The past 18 months have posed one challenge after another for hospitality businesses. Lockdowns finally gave way to looser restrictions, but the combination of Covid-19 and Brexit meant even tighter margins as a result of reduced capacity and price hikes in food and utilities. And if that weren't bad enough, staff shortages have also begun to bite.

Operators have therefore had to rethink how they do business and drill down into what works and what doesn't, and where efficiencies can most easily be found. For many, electronic point of sale (EPoS) systems have been able to help by providing a level of insight into revenue that goes beyond the old till systems.

Jane Pendlebury is chief executive of Hospa, a not-for-profit group focused on helping hospitality professionals keep up to date with industry trends and developments. "Business performance is largely affected by how much you understand your transactions," she explains. "By processing input data, the software can help generate in-depth reports on revenue and sales, which helps operators to make more informed business decisions.

"Detailed reports from EPoS can act as the key ingredient when making decisions to help cut costs. And with monthly or even weekly comparisons of revenue and sales, you can properly analyse your performance, helping you take the requisite steps for improvement."

STOCK MANAGEMENT INTEGRATION

EPoS systems come in many different shapes, sizes and levels of complexity. The most advanced are able to integrate with stock management systems, ensuring that businesses have enough stock available to meet demand. This can be taken a step further by linking stock levels to specific recipes, allowing for a more thorough understanding of inventory.

"This removes guesswork and is an easy way to ensure that not only do you not order too much but you don't run out of anything important either, helping reduce the amount of food going to waste," says Alison Vasey, group product director at EPoS provider Zonal.

Over the past 18 months, independent chain the Jolly Good Pub Company has extended its use of PointOne's EPoS system to reduce stock and the cash tied up in it. Tom West, the owner of the chain, says: "These changes are here to stay and have helped the profitability of the business going forward, reducing wastage across the board. Our integrations with technology have helped to reduce the running costs of our business. As many of the trading periods and costs are fragmented at the moment, it's difficult to quantify and formulate a forecast in such a fluid landscape."

Cornish burger joint HubBox has also benefited from the stock module of Access, its EPoS provider. "It gives you real-time data for everything," says Jade Ramage, operations manager at HubBox Truro. "You can see sales, you can see patterns, you can see spend per head. You can track everything really easily."

In the kitchen, the software helps HubBox to efficiently manage its ordering process, cutting waste, improving margins and allowing for better forward planning – it saves an estimated two days a week. They can also build menus in advance, using the engineering tools to predict how new dishes will contribute to the overall theoretical GP.

"We can control which specific products are available to sites in our markets, and also link the same product via multiple suppliers to

> "You can see sales, you can see patterns, you can see spend per head. You can track everything really really easily"
> **Jade Ramage, HubBox**

ensure our stock is correct regardless of which supplier was used," says the company's commercial manager Jonny Findlay.

CONTACTLESS

QR codes have become a hospitality staple since lockdown was lifted, allowing guests to order and pay for food and drink at the table on their mobiles and reducing physical contact between guests and servers. These and other types of mobile order and pay apps can be integrated with EPoS systems and are increasingly expected by guests to be part of the payment process. "Not offering a contactless system leaves your establishment at risk of looking behind the times," warns Pendlebury.

The TBC Pub Company, which has three sites in Scotland, decided to develop a mobile app with Zonal in response to the changing consumer behaviour and new health and safety requirements brought by Covid-19.

"Over the past 18 months, operators have needed to switch on multiple ordering channels in multiple locations – pre-orders, delivery, click and collect, and more," says Vasey. "This means that the point of sale is no longer a fixed till on a counter. Moving forwards, operators should take this into consideration."

In-room EPoS

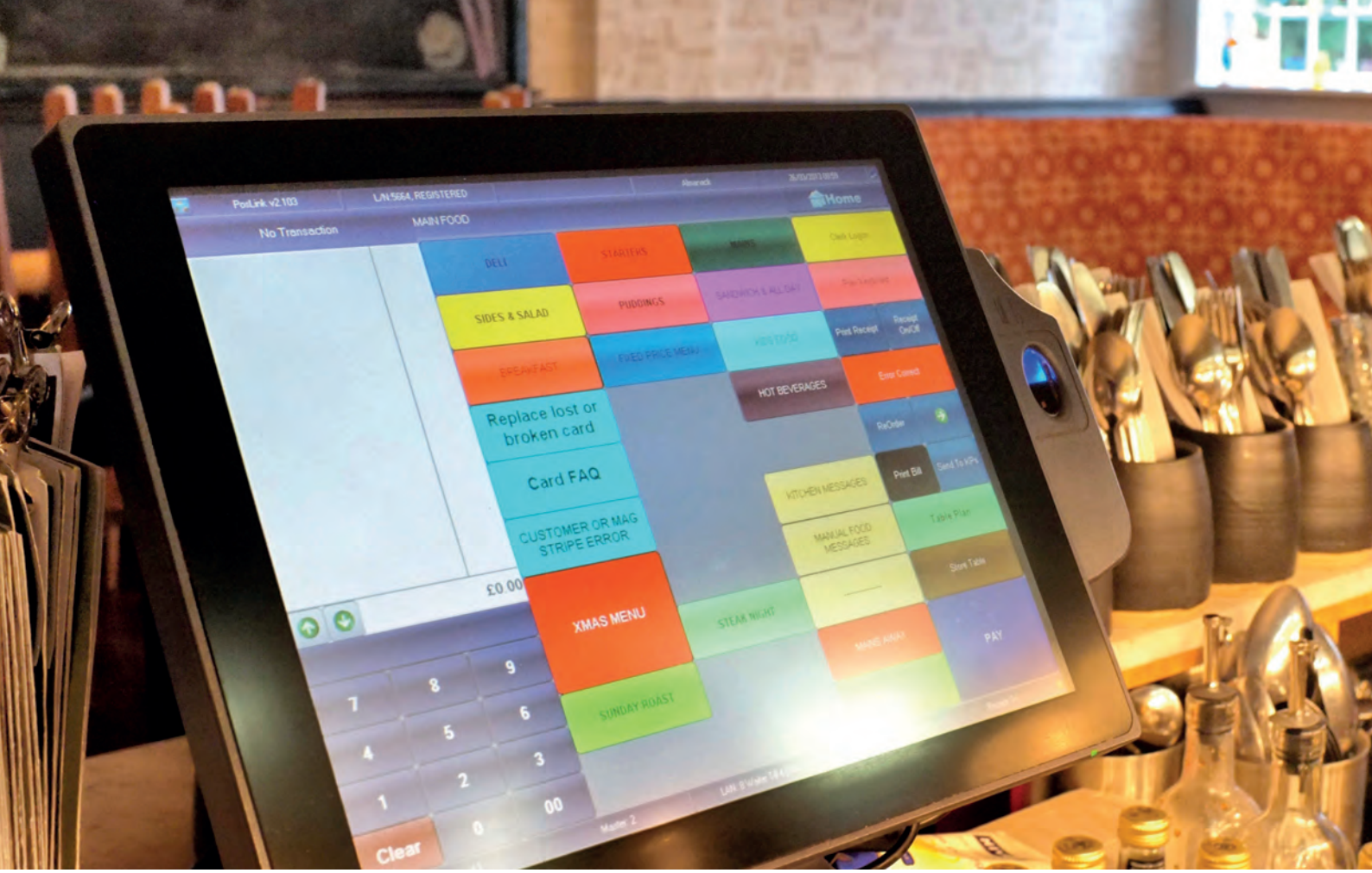
For hotels, EPoS technology can be applied differently for different aspects of the business. For example, EPoS can be implemented as a separate system for a restaurant, which can be particularly effectively when making F&B decisions.

Sarova Hotels is a group of independently owned hotels and health clubs in the south of England, which has had to change its practices over the past 18 months to provide a safe but profitable environment.

Director Rajesh Vohra explains why change was necessary: "Post-pandemic, there is a significant trend towards room service as opposed to dine-in. Therefore, it was vital for us to have a functional and user-friendly digital platform in our hotel rooms."

Sarova decided to implement a QR code payment and ordering system from Ordamo, which has multiple EPoS integrations.

"Since using Ordamo's contactless ordering and payment systems, we have seen a significant rise in transactions across our venues," says Vohra. "It is great that, amid uncertainty, we know that we can consistently deliver our customers an excellent service, as we always have."



TBC's mobile app, which is integrated with the Zonal EPoS, has allowed it to process contactless orders online through its venues. This has boosted orders in its outdoor spaces as well as opening up a new takeaway revenue stream.

Jolly Good Pub, which also recently introduced digital ordering through PointOne's app, has seen some unexpected benefits. "Brand loyalty and familiarity between our venues have meant customers can move between the pubs and use the tech easily," West explains. "The more mature end of our customer base is determined to learn this online ordering technology – they like the challenge."

STAFF BENEFITS

Other new EPoS integrations include staff management – working hours, performance and progression. Henry Seddon, managing director of Access Hospitality, which provides this type of integration, reckons this has been the biggest change in the conversations he's had with hospitality businesses over the last year. "Increasingly, operators are looking at using their EPoS system to provide additional benefits for staff rather than just focusing on the customer journey," he says.

He adds that operators are actively looking at EPoS to make staff more productive and overcome any gaps in their workforce. "Instead of relying on a general manager to run multiple reports at the end of the week, EPoS is being used to give everyone with decision-making responsibility access to the same data in real time," he says. "This removes the worry and labour associated with importing and exporting data. It also provides improved visibility and enables responsive business decisions to be made with greater urgency."

> "EPoS can provide valuable information on dwell time, ordering patterns, visit preferences and so on, which is what helps build successful CRM campaigns"
>
> **Henry Seddon, Access**

Seddon points out that EPoS features are also being used to motivate staff. Incentives for upselling, cross-selling, hitting or improving GP targets, for example, can be implemented more effectively with EPoS data.

TBC Pub has captured some of these benefits with an integrated system from Zonal. Because data is shared automatically between the different systems, staff can work more efficiently. For example, orders are processed quicker, reducing wait times and allowing staff to spend more time front of house.

BOOSTING LOYALTY

With hospitality closed to the public for much of the past 18 months, businesses have had to focus on maintaining the loyalty of their existing customers. That's something EPoS has also been able to help with. Research from

Tech-enabled table service

When independent pub chain the Jolly Good Pub Company reopened after lockdown, seating capacity was halved and the brand's service model was turned on its head.

"Our pubs are known for their busy bustling ambience, with crowded bars and cosy seating. Social distancing changed that, so we had to reinvent the theatre that we create in the pub. Rather than four-deep at the bar, a more European model was adopted," says the chain's owner Tom West.

A new way of operating meant the company had to think about new ways it could increase its profit margin. Technology played a key role here. "We integrated an online ordering app, allowing customers to order at tables, reducing labour. This meant we had to retrain the teams to handle other tech-related questions," West explains. "This service was initially difficult to get the customers to buy into, but once we got the pitch right, our customers appreciated how much quicker it made our service."

Paul Berryman, sales and partnership manager at PointOne EPoS, says: "Like many of our clients during the past year, Tom wanted to implement our mobile order and pay app so that his chain of pubs could quickly adhere to the social distancing rules, keep his staff and customers safe, and make it really easy for customers to order and pay for their drinks and meals. We were able to roll out our app quickly and get Tom and his team up and running and taking vital revenue between the lockdown periods."

PICTURES: SHUTTERSTOCK/ZAPP2PHOTO; RAWPIXEL.COM

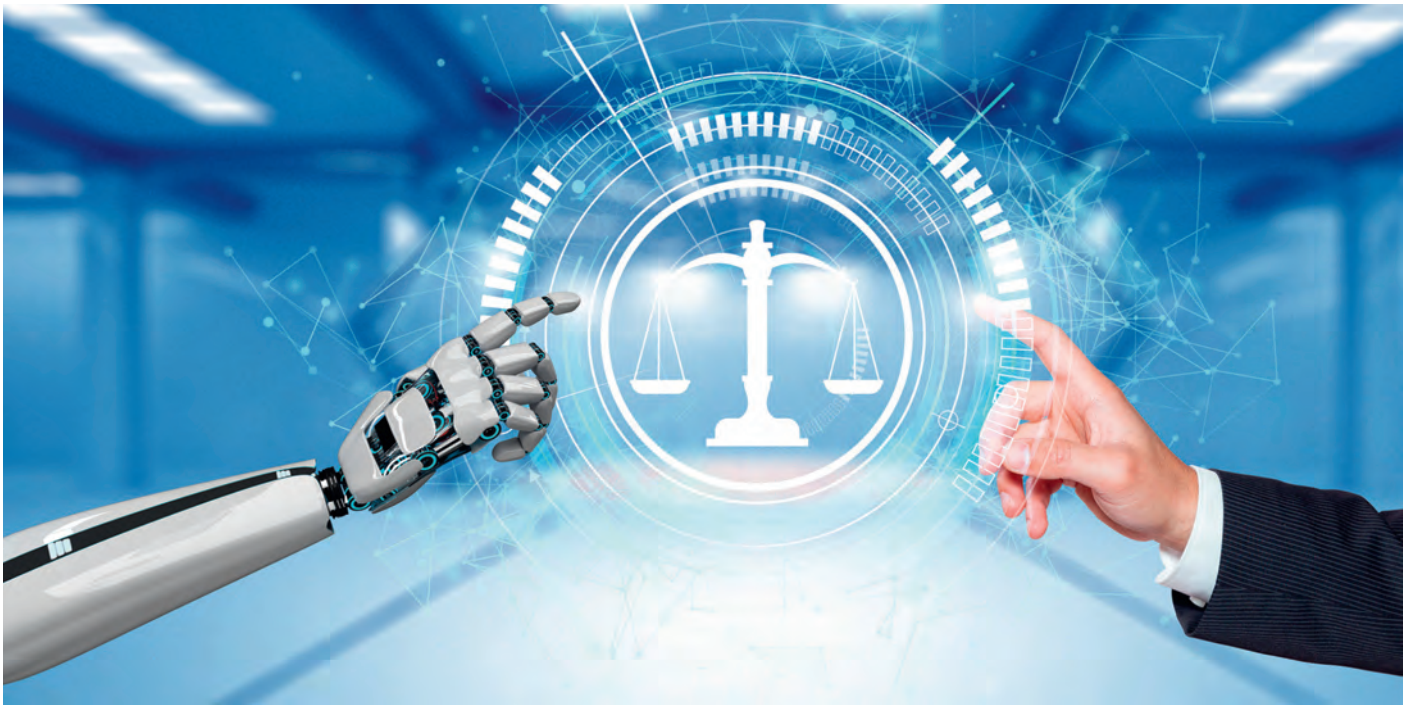
Zonal's Go Technology report, in partnership with CGA, showed that half of consumers are attracted by hospitality loyalty schemes.

"Being able to coordinate data gathered from multiple channels, including WiFi login and social media activity, can provide valuable information on dwell time, ordering patterns, visit preferences and so on, which is what helps build successful CRM campaigns," Seddon explains. The most effective tool for such campaigns, according to research by CGA for Access Hospitality, is a personalised email based on a recent visit or interest. Of those surveyed, 35% said this would be the most effective channel to encourage them to return to a venue.

Pendlebury predicts that social media will become a more important part of this picture. "EPoS data can be used to determine the most popular dishes or drinks, which can then be used to create vouchers to appeal to particular target markets, for instance," she explains. "This helps operators promote items that people are genuinely interested in, driving revenue as a result. Although in its early stages, this could become a staple feature of many operations across UK hospitality."

While the pandemic had a devastating impact on hospitality, it has also encouraged self-analysis, with businesses assessing their processes from top to bottom and pinpointing areas for improvement. As Pendlebury stresses, the businesses that did this most successfully were those with a clear paper trail of success and failure. This, she says, is where EPoS technology has helped the most. "With margins as tight as they've ever been, incremental measures to improve their offerings are key to recovery. We need to continue focusing on the minutiae to help improve the whole."

HOW TO BENEFIT FROM TECHNOLOGY WITHOUT LOSING THE HUMAN TOUCH



PICTURE: SHUTTERSTOCK/ALEXANDER LIMBACH

There is often a perception that the use of technology, particularly in customer-facing hospitality, can take away the much-needed human element of customer service and equally a fear that technology will replace the jobs of hospitality staff.

The reality is of course that technology, rather than making people obsolete can actually help them do their job better. Restaurant staff fully understand this, with 94% of those polled in a recent survey from pointOne and KAM Media agreeing that technology can significantly help them in their job. Equally, as many as two in three customers surveyed did not consider technology as something that diluted the customer experience but rather welcomed digital solutions such as digital menus and order and pay when dining out.

ASK THE RIGHT QUESTIONS

To get the best return out of any tech investment, it's crucial that it not only answers a definite need within the business but that you have complete buy-in from your staff and your customers.

FOR YOUR CUSTOMERS

- Does it solve a common pain point of the customer experience like waiting to order/pay the bill?
- Would its implementation enable your staff to offer a more personalised service to your customers?
- Do the features offer something extra for customers which in turn enhances the customer experience, i.e. customer loyalty incentives?

When given the opportunity customers will embrace technology if it can show them instant benefits, such as time-saving, convenience or exceptional customer service. As evidenced from our survey, 66% of customers welcomed being able to order food and drink with their smartphone or via a digital screen, and 66% welcomed the use of digital menus to provide an enhanced level of information about the menu, such as allergens, nutritional data and sourcing data.

FOR YOUR STAFF

- Does it help your staff work more efficiently and effectively?
- Does it have a positive impact on how they do their job and help increase their job satisfaction?
- Does your EPoS and the new technology integrate intuitively without the need for excessive training?

BENEFITS OF INSIGHTFUL TECHNOLOGY

Within the current climate of staff shortages, you can lean on technology to help with a variety of automation, such as:

- streamlining the ordering and payment aspects of the customer journey to free up staff for welcomed customer interaction.
- providing empowering employee management tools to incentivise and help promote staff wellbeing.
- use powerful stock control and kitchen management integrations to help your staff achieve food waste targets and be proud to work for a sustainable business.

If you look after your staff, they will have the time and incentive to do what they do best (and what they enjoy best) which is looking after your customers.

To see the full results of pointOne and KAM Media's recent survey and read the resulting white paper, 'Merging People + Tech: A New Era of Customer Experience in QSR', go to pointone.co.uk/insights

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ARRANGE A DEMO TODAY

FLEX YOUR REVENUE

Businesses with revenue management software were able to respond rapidly and effectively to hospitality market changes during the pandemic, as *Elly Earls* reports

Sponsor's comment: IDeaS

IDeaS, a SAS company, is the world's leading provider of revenue management software and services.

With over 30 years of expertise, IDeaS delivers revenue science to more than 16,000 clients in 144 countries. Combining industry knowledge with innovative, data analytics technology, IDeaS creates sophisticated yet simple ways to empower revenue leaders with precise, automated decisions they can trust.

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Revenue managers rely heavily on two things: data and instinct. Yet both have been impossible to trust over the past 18 months. Historic data, insight tools and algorithms lost almost all their weight, while the past markers of success that revenue managers would usually have called on to predict future patterns simply weren't there any more.

Different properties were affected in different ways and at different points. The initial national lockdown still allowed for business travel and opened the opportunity to support the NHS and key workers with discounted rates. That meant many city centre properties could remain open while regional, leisure-focused venues had to shut down.

But in the long run, it is the corporate-led city-based hotels that have suffered most. Remote-working policies, the rise in video-conferencing and the shift from physical to virtual events means that many business travellers no longer need to get on a train or plane as frequently as they used to. A rise in demand for coastal and rural stays has also impacted the leisure market for city centre properties.

What's more, demand has shifted in favour of properties with self-catering and more socially distanced options. That's something that may not have previously been in a hotel's competitive set or even on its radar.

"Many hotels had to start again, almost as if they were opening a new property in a new market," says Rachel Parker, business development manager at Profitroom, which provides online booking systems, marketing automation, search engine optimisation and websites for hotels. "They had to offer something more in tune with a new market. And with both national and regional lockdowns to factor in, the landscape could change almost overnight, leaving hoteliers to handle mass cancellations, throwing everything into disarray.

"Even without this, cancellations have become more prominent, with people having to isolate. New holiday markets have opened up under the green light system, causing people to alter plans. For revenue managers, agility in the face of rapid change has been key."

This has certainly been the case at boutique hotel group Surya Hotels. Revenue director Paul Lingard-Kay explains: "We are fortunate in that we have never fully closed. We took the decision at the start of the pandemic to stay open but, that said, the past 18 months have certainly been different. Like everyone, we have had to adapt across our 13-strong portfolio and within our head office function."

PICTURES: SHUTTERSTOCK/EVERYTHING POSSIBLE; BLUE PLANET STUDIO; DEN ROZHNOVSKY

"The software can play a crucial role in helping hoteliers strike the right balance between fixed and dynamic pricing strategies"
Bethany Ryan, Guestline

Once the group made the decision to keep its hotels open, its focus was on reducing price to capture as much of the market as possible. However, demand was higher than expected, because in many cases a Surya hotel was the only hotel open in the area.

"As a result we had to quickly reinstate and reapply many of our revenue management strategies, so having the flexibility and agility to respond quickly to changing market demands was critical," says Lingard-Kay.

The group uses IDeaS revenue management software, which is fully integrated with Guestline's property management system Rezlynx. Changes were a lot more straightforward to put into effect because of that integration, says Lingard-Kay.

TOTAL REVENUE MANAGEMENT

According to Parker, one of the positives to have come from the pandemic is that revenue managers have put more emphasis on being creative and collaborating with other departments to reimagine their spaces on site and keep their audiences engaged online.

"It created a more holistic approach," she says. "With margins so tight, hotels simply couldn't afford for one aspect of their offering to underperform against another. Everything was constantly reviewed and tweaked. Departments worked together and created innovative ways to use their spaces, stock and staff during the pandemic: veg boxes being delivered, gourmet dinner boxes with wine pairings, and bars turned into co-working spaces."

At Surya Hotels, a total revenue management approach, rather than a focus just on accommodation, has always been key to operations. But this strategy became even more important during the pandemic because of the need to diversify and change the offer.

"All our functions including F&B, reservations and housekeeping had to adapt. Because we are a smaller, more agile business, this was arguably easier for us to achieve than perhaps some of the larger groups," Lingard-Kay says.

"It has been so important for revenue management to collaborate with other disciplines. As a small company, without that collaboration and the ability to take on the responsibility of, and work with, additional functions such as sales, marketing and distribution, we would not have had the success we have had." ▶

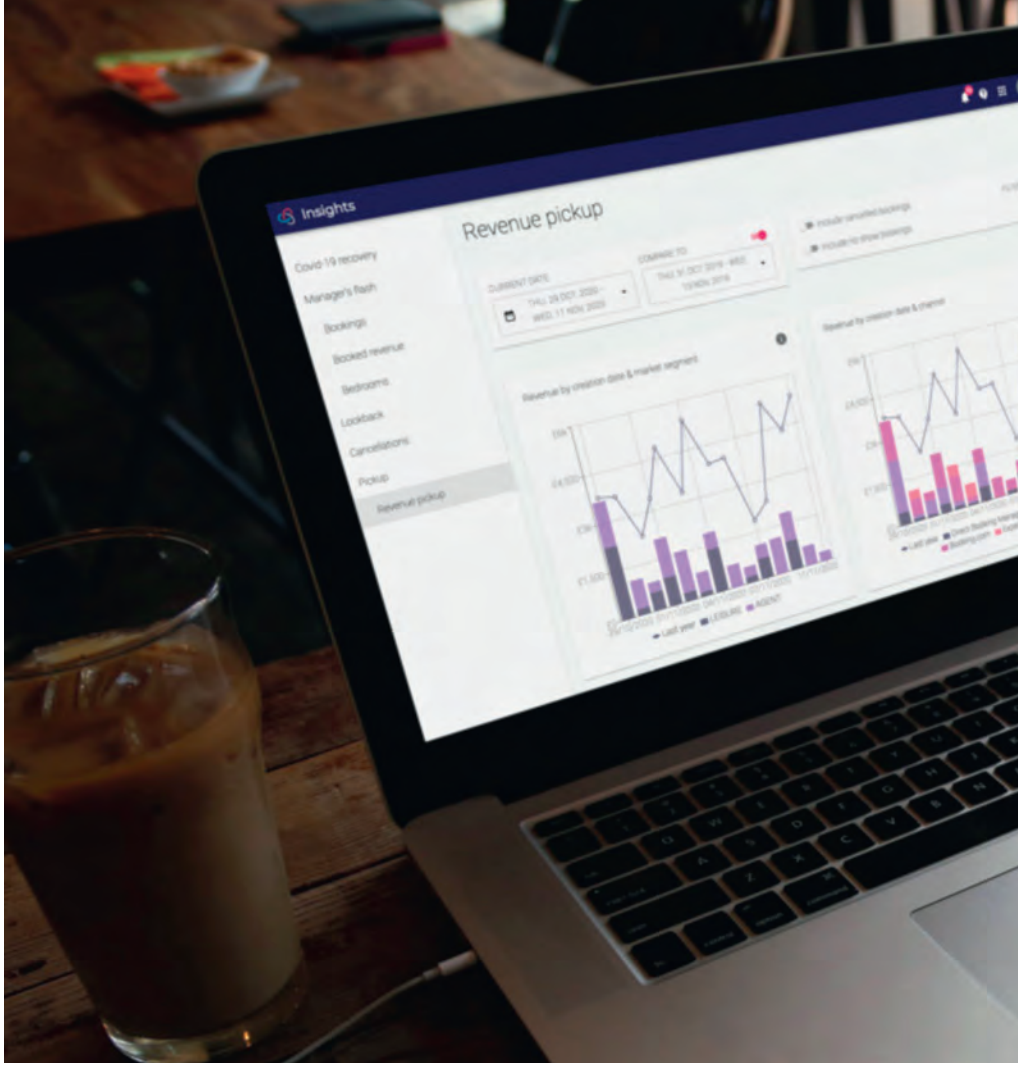
Accuracy on auto

Revenue forecasting for Radisson Hotel Group's EMEA portfolio had become a major obstacle to the hotel chain achieving its goal of greater organisation-wide efficiencies and its vision of making total revenue forecasting possible.

"It is quite difficult to manually collect data and be sure you have the right data every day to create accurate forecasts," says Hélène Guillemoto, Radisson Hotel Group's director of revenue management projects in EMEA. "We wanted to have something fully automated to reduce the significant amount of time spent on forecasting every week by each revenue manager."

"RevPlan allows us to be nimbler than we ever could be with manual spreadsheets, and the tool integrates very well with IDeaS G3 RMS," says Matthieu Lafaurie, Radisson Hotel Group's head of the Club and revenue projects.

It has also freed up considerable time for revenue managers. Gianni Di Fede, Radisson Hotel Group's senior vice president of revenue management, BI and distribution in EMEA, explains: "We now only have to focus on the exceptions and calibrate as necessary. This gives us more time for strategy, and more time for strategy means more profitability."



INTEGRATED SYSTEMS

Lingard-Kay says he and his team wouldn't have been able to navigate the pandemic so effectively without a revenue management system that integrated with its property management system (PMS) and other functions.

"Ensuring we had a full 360-degree view of not only our operations and demands but also our revenue management meant we were able to re-engineer and reinvest and bring other people on board to continue to drive our offer forward, even against the backdrop of the pandemic," he explains. "Not only can we continue to operate, but we have the flexibility and capability to trial new approaches. Likewise, it means we can set up and manage our revenue strategy centrally and build a unified approach to revenue management across the group."

He believes working with a standalone revenue management system would have limited Surya as a group. With its current set-up, however, it can amend the revenue management for any hotel, which is then automatically uploaded to the PMS in real time.

"Rather than manually and laboriously replicating restrictions or minimum lengths of stay, it is already there for the reservations team to see and work with. Having that live, real-time visibility has proven extremely beneficial," he says. "What the last 18 months have shown us from a revenue management perspective is it has an important role to play, but that role becomes even more powerful when integrated with other hotel functions, particularly when you are working to realise your own ambitions for growth in revenue and bookings in what has been an extremely challenging market."

> "Many hotels had to start again, almost as if they were opening a new property in a new market"
>
> **Rachel Parker, Profitroom**

The most advanced revenue management systems can also integrate with guest review sites. Guestline's strategic account and revenue manager Bethany Ryan says that can pay real dividends in terms of managing and harvesting guest data. And the ability to offer guests the option to book meals or spa treatments online with integrated reservation systems can all help upsell and generate more revenue.

She adds: "Revenue management software has previously only been accessible to

Tech ticklist

Rachel Parker at Profitroom looks at what hoteliers should be doing on the tech front.

• Autumn and winter is an ideal time of year to review your tech stack and partners. Find the technology that can allow your strategy to succeed rather than build your strategy around the tech limitations you already have.

• Look at your full user journey online – from meta and Google ads to your direct website, online booking engine and pre- and post-stay communication with guests. Is it all as automated and efficient as it can be? More than 80% of people who find you via an online travel agent will look at your website, which provides you with the perfect opportunity to convert them into a direct booking. Make sure it's as easy and enticing as possible.

• Open and load your room availability and rates so that they have a longer lead time. Often hotels have a maximum 365-day window for booking, but demand following the pandemic is now pushing reservations out to more than a year in advance.

• Review your competitive set. This may have changed in the past 18 months with the rise of serviced apartments and self-catering options, so reviewing who you are up against is essential if you're to get yourself ahead.

• Packages are something we've seen paying dividends. Think creatively to incorporate new things into your offering – be that local attractions or other parts of the hotel. Pre-Covid there was already an increase in experience-led travellers looking for activities and memorable moments with added value over discounted offers. This has become even more popular in the past 18 months, so you should be offering at least five, if not more, packages including on- and off-site activities.

In association with IDEAS™ A SAS COMPANY

"The 360-degree view of our operations and our revenue management let us continue to drive our offer forward"

Paul Lingard-Key, Surya Hotels

larger hotels and chains due to its high price. However, access to data is now more widely available, so the ability to provide revenue management systems to a wider range of hotels is happily becoming more achievable. As they become more affordable, small- and medium-sized hotels can now take advantage too, allowing them to compete and respond far more competitively with larger hotels."

UPDATING PRICING STRATEGY

The hospitality market is still dealing with a lot of uncertainty. It remains hard to rely on historical data and future forecasts. But, according to Parker, there is one thing we can be sure of. "The appetite is there," she says. "We can be certain that if we react quickly to government announcements and have our website, booking engine and offering optimised to maximise conversion, then once demand picks up after the traditionally quieter winter period through to January, operators can focus on enhancing average daily rate, length of stay and total revenue per available room."

She recommends monitoring demand through 'lookers' rather than 'bookers'. For example, Profitroom has a 'demand analysis' feature that allows hoteliers to see when people are searching for particular dates. "This is really empowering as it enables you to modify your strategy ahead of your competitors and beat them to the punch," she explains.

She also stresses that revenue management software relies on human input and suggests modifying reporting to compare 2021 with 2019 rather than 2020 for a fairer picture of your business. "You can also update your pricing rules to the new market we find ourselves in – for example, by automatically reducing your advance purchase rate discount when you are over a certain occupancy level."

Ryan agrees. "Pricing hotel rooms right is important if you want to succeed in this competitive industry. Whether it is your off-season bookings or expanding your offerings to newer markets, pricing plays a vital role. In a period of such significant change, revenue management software can also play a crucial role in helping hoteliers strike the right balance between fixed and dynamic pricing strategies."

Lingard-Kay says the revenue management system Surya Hotels has in place has given him and his team the time and the scope to be able to react to shifts in demand, which is how the hospitality market has been characterised over the past 18 months. And while Surya still isn't in a position to commit to long term-plans and strategies, it expects to take a more strategic approach from 2022.

Meanwhile, Parker predicts the industry will continue moving towards more automated ways of working, allowing revenue managers to save more time. "Not only have hotels had to evolve and display agility, so have auxiliary suppliers," she says. "Tech providers have sought to innovate to suit new requirements. This has seen new solutions spring up, such as contactless check-in and myriad apps, as well as entirely new providers appearing in the market. Tech, by necessity, develops at a rapid pace, and we see this continuing despite the pandemic hopefully slowing down."

MAKING THE TOTAL REVENUE FORECASTING DREAM A REALITY

By Neil Corr, Director of Emerging Innovations, IDeaS

Emerging innovations in the hotel revenue management tech space are now focusing not just on AI and machine-learning to advance demand management, pricing and inventory strategy, but have had to adapt and address the need for tools and solutions fit for the post-pandemic landscape.

Food and beverage (F&B) and other income streams are ripe with revenue potential but have been held back by the lack of forecasting technology. In fact, for many full-service hotels, non-rooms business makes up over half of their total revenue, making it just as important as guest room sales. So, why should the rooms revenue department get all the cool tools?

You may already be familiar with IDeaS' best-in-class revenue management solutions, but now we have a tool for operational forecasting that gives you the ability to produce accurate forecasts and budgets across all revenue streams in a matter of minutes.

IDeaS RevPlan was designed as a standalone solution to save you time, streamline the forecasting and budgeting process, and increase the accuracy and precision of the final budget for the entire hotel. With RevPlan you can easily start a forecast or budget with the data you want already pre-populated at as granular a level as you report and ensure all departments work off the same numbers with an integrated total revenue forecasting platform – one version of the truth!

RevPlan's power is in the 'one-stop-shop' concept – broad horizontal functionality, expanding automated, scientific forecasting to multiple functions beyond rooms:

- **F&B** – Eliminate dependencies on spreadsheets and time-consuming manual work to build an accurate forecast or budget for sales and catering and by F&B outlet.
- **Finance** – Assemble precise revenue forecasts and budgets for the entire business in accordance with fiscal policy.
- **Operations** – Confidently plan and make staffing and purchasing decisions for the entire business using an accurate and precise forecast.
- **C-Suite** – Instill an organisational discipline around forecasting and budgeting while gaining a holistic view of all revenue streams.
- **Owners** – Increase profits with smarter planning and more agile forecasts
- **Rooms** – Create and maintain multiple versions of the operations forecast or budget to plan and strategise for multiple scenarios.

As we reopen the doors of hospitality once more, operational efficiency is more important than ever, with tight margins and the measured rebuild of our bottom line. Total revenue forecasting has been talked about long enough as a dream by the industry. It's time automated technology turn that dream into a reality.

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SUPPLY CHAIN BRAIN

Product shortages, a labour crisis and a host of other supply chain issues are throwing up a wall of costs for hospitality businesses. Procurement technology can't solve the underlying problems, but it can help you navigate them better, as *Elly Earls* reports

The lack of product in the supply chain caused by extra cost and restrictions on imported goods as a result of Brexit combined with widespread supplier labour shortages has led to a situation in the hospitality industry that veteran procurement specialists have never experienced in their careers.

While the shortages of lorry drivers and hikes in fuel prices have put pressure on any item moved by road, the cost of shipping containers to move products by sea has also surged five-fold. What's more, the National Living Wage, which applies to many F&B service and kitchen roles, will go up by 6.6% in April 2022. Wage inflation above this level is also happening, as staff shortages drive up rates.

In association with access Hospitality

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Our hospitality business management suite covers reservations, ticketing, EPoS, finance, business intelligence, property maintenance, procurement, CRM, order and pay, work management, learning and development, and workforce management.

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SUPPLY CHAIN PAIN

This is all having a huge impact on how the supply chain functions. David Read, chairman of foodservice and hospitality procurement consultancy Prestige Purchasing, explains why the supply chain is so sensitive to the pressures: "You start with a farmer or a grower or a fisherman, then the product goes through one or two points before it hits the wholesalers. Perhaps there's a processor, who cleans or washes or slaughters, then a second level of intervention, such as butchering or manufacturing. Then a wholesaler will put it in store and deliver it to the caterer on the day.

"The problem is that every step in that chain is short of labour, which is squeezing availability of product. Plus, there are problems in distribution just getting products from the processor to the manufacturer and so on. There has been a lot of delivery failure. It's a huge game of 'whack-a-mole'. You hit a problem and the action you take to resolve that problem causes a problem somewhere else."

> "We have encouraged hotels to stockpile sensibly on important Christmas F&B lines so as not to disappoint customers"
>
> **James Kennedy, RBH Hospitality Management**

When you have a shortage of supply, it puts stress on pricing. Prestige Purchasing predicts that the inflation rate could be running at between 3% and 6% by Christmas and probably even higher in the New Year. The weeks commencing 29 November and 6 December are set to be particularly challenging for hospitality because schools and business and industry will still be ordering, and Christmas volumes will have started. "In nearly 30 years in purchasing in hospitality, I have never ever referred to weeks being dangerous," Read says. "This is a very unusual set of circumstances."

On top of this, many rent holidays that were negotiated to help businesses through the worst of the pandemic are coming to an end, while VAT has risen from its temporarily lowered rate of 5% to 12.5%. It's set to be back at 20% by March. "Every penny that goes on the price is a penny off the operator's margin unless they move their prices," says Read. "They are going to have to pass on price increases to diners. There's a wall of costs coming their way. If they don't put up their prices, most operators won't survive."

Ali Mubarak is the founder of Sania Group, a franchise brand partner of Pizza Hut delivery units and German Doner Kebab, and a master ▶

"It's a huge game of 'whack-a-mole'. The action you take to resolve one problem causes a problem somewhere else in the supply chain"

David Read, Prestige Purchasing

franchisor of Café Barbera and You Me Sushi. He expects 18%-20% cost increases throughout the business over the next six months. While he is not planning any immediate price rises, he says Sania may well have to consider them soon. "If things continue to spiral, then all businesses in the retail and food sectors will have to give it serious consideration as there will be a crossover point," he says.

REDUCING COMPLEXITY

One thing F&B businesses can do to mitigate the cost challenges is reduce the complexity of their operations. Many have big menus that require hundreds of ingredients, which can sometimes change on a daily basis.

Read explains: "There are lots of decisions made without too much thought – for example, frequency of delivery. If you get offered a delivery every day, then you take it but, of course, putting complexity and additional service into the inbound supply chain raises costs. If you have enough storage in your kitchen to have only three deliveries a week of a particular product, then that's going to be more economical for suppliers."

Similarly, it's a much less expensive affair to run a restaurant with a menu that uses only 50 ingredients rather than one that uses 500. "Of course, one should never adjust one's menu in order to suit the supply chain – it should be about the customers. But it's also important to ensure you don't put so much choice on your menu that it doesn't add value to the customer while costing you a lot," Read says.

James Kennedy, head of group procurement at RBH Hospitality Management, says his group is now looking with renewed vigour for areas where they can drive down costs and consolidate delivery schedules to further reduce cost and delivery issues. "Communication has been key to understanding specific issues and risks to act more proactively," he says.

"Furthermore, we have been liaising with our suppliers on a specific Christmas strategy whereby we have weekly communications about any products being out of stock while listing several alternative products on our system to ensure continuity of supply. We have also encouraged hotels to stockpile sensibly on important Christmas F&B lines so as not to disappoint customers, and to be flexible with menu descriptions."

Arya Razi, the founder of Mexican-inspired restaurant and bar Caldera in London, has also been doing what he can to mitigate any price rises. He has, for example, reduced the size of the menu and taken advantage of seasonal ingredients to keep prices low and is closely monitoring wastage for both environmental and cost-reduction reasons.

"We're listening to what our guests want to make sure we are offering food that they enjoy, but also looking at wastage insights to improve our offer," he says. "Delivery platforms have also helped us, as we are able to include promotions for dishes which need to be sold on the day, and this really allows us to avoid throwing the food away. We're at a point now where we would much rather have sold out of a dish on the menu – even at the weekend – than have it in stock and then have to throw away at the end of the night."

PICTURES: SHUTTERSTOCK/GREENBUTTERFLY;TRAVEL MANIA

Bottom-line boost

Family-run Cairn Group owns and operates 33 premium hotels and 28 bars and restaurants around the UK. Before the business implemented Access Procure Wizard, manually entering a single invoice into the accounts system would take up two minutes. With 150,000 invoices passing through head office a year, streamlining that process has saved a huge amount of staff time and driven profitability as well as employee and customer satisfaction.

Before, Cairn could find it difficult to generate an accurate report on spending at individual sites and to understand where efficiencies could be made from co-ordinated purchasing. Now, the team can pull consumption reports from Access Procure Wizard, which give an accurate picture of what has been spent on what product and where, helping to streamline the contract tendering process, as well as boosting consistency and quality across the group.

Embracing technology has also had an impact on Cairn's bottom line. Around 5% of all invoices raised include an overcharge. Before the procurement software was introduced, capturing these inconsistencies would have involved manually checking every line on every invoice and highlighting any discrepancies. Within 12 months of using the new system, the group had saved £185,046 through credits that may previously have slipped through the net.

PURCHASING 101

While purchasing technology can't solve the underlying challenges facing the hospitality sector, it can help businesses navigate them much more effectively than if they were simply picking up the phone to suppliers.

"Good procurement relies on high-quality data," Read stresses. "If you're going to buy something, you need to know where you're buying it from, what price you're paying for it, what volume you're buying, how frequently it's delivered, and what the spec of the product is. That's purchasing 101. Yet we are still in a position where there are some operators in the market who don't have any form of ordering platform of their own."

RBH uses Access's Procure Wizard, which has helped ensure its F&B procurement sticks to approved price lists and authorised suppliers only. "This ensures compliance to products that have previously been approved by the procurement department," explains Kennedy.

"All products are allergen-compliant, which is monitored by the software, ensuring we comply with Natasha's Law and adhere to relevant health and safety requirements. This has been an especially challenging period, as we have had to onboard several new suppliers to deal with delivery issues. When supplier increases do come through, all prices can be increased with a few clicks of a button, which makes things much more efficient."

RBH finance director Stuart Houston, adds: "Managing the addition or amendment of suppliers and products for all properties in the estate centrally via one platform, enabling changes to be made and implemented with a few clicks of a button, makes the process more efficient. Changes – which have been irregular and far more frequent than normal trading due to the fulfilment pressures our suppliers have been under – can be reflected in the master supply list and cascaded to all units."

INTEGRATED SOFTWARE

According to Read, there is an increasingly important role for technology around stock management. "Having your procurement system linked to your stock management system is purchasing 101 right now," he says.

The other part of the picture is ingredient and recipe management. "Best-in-class operators manage their menus using technology that gives a single version of the truth in terms of what the recipe looks like and what the ingredients are," Read says. "That then joins up with the stock system and with the purchase-to-pay system, and is completely visible and accessible to everyone in the organisation who is authorised."

It's also possible to integrate stock management with an electronic point of sale (EPoS) system. Sania Group has invested in a new PoS to enable the business to do this. "One feature that really stands out for us, in operational terms, is the ability to integrate stock controls with our online ordering portals, meaning that if we do have stock issues or short deliveries, then we can immediately inform the customer at all points of purchase," Mubarak explains. "This gives a far better experience to the people who are ordering, our staff in providing better customer service, and our business, as we can immediately see electronically what the stock levels are in each store."

TECHNOLOGY TRANSFORMATION

The technology transformation we will see emerge over the next few years will be around ingredient-level data, according to Read. Procurement systems can already hold information on allergens and frequently used food standards. This kind of data could evolve to include estimated carbon footprints, and eventually, over the next five to 10 years, actual carbon footprints, which Read says will have a much more profound impact.

If you look at the information about a chicken breast in a supplier's catalogue today, for example, you will likely find its country of origin, weight and water content listed, and perhaps an association with an organisation like Red Tractor. In a few years, you may also be able to see more granular detail about its carbon journey, including the farm it was reared on, which processor cut it and how it was transported. "There could be an absolute avalanche of data enabling operators to say, 'I managed this really well and my carbon footprint looks exactly like this'," Read predicts.

"The two big things burning in consumers' minds are provenance and climate change, and they are increasingly aware that food is the generator of over 30% of greenhouse gases and has negative health impacts. There will be a relentless focus on creating data that will expose good practice and bad practice in the food system. That's going to drive change."

access ProcureWizard

Have you got the right technology for procurement in 2022?

Purchase to pay technology has seen a huge growth in the last twelve months.
The pandemic has accelerated the adoption of digitial technology in hospitality businesses as operators look for more efficient, cost-saving solutions to support their businesses.

While many conversations centre around the adoption of order and pay and booking systems, what about your back of house?

While supply chain challenges look certain to continue for some time yet, the right technology can help you navigate these and reduce the impact on your business operations.

The ability to gain full transparency over the procurement process in your business through data will give you the advantage of pinpointing issues quickly by identifying cost trends, supplier changes and other data trends across multiple sites supporting efficiency, accessibility and sustainability of purchasing decisions.

"Access Procure Wizard has transformed the dynamicof our group purchasing for the better."

Edel Conran, Finance Project Manager

access ProcureWizard

Finding the right technology partner

Access Procure Wizard has been the go to purchase to pay solution for hospitality for over 10 years... and for good reason. Designed to address the daily pain points experienced by operators, our customers are able to gain full control and visibility over costs. We deliver real results and ROI for all our customers with benefits including:

- ***Reduce direct costs*** by 10%
- ***Syncs*** with your accounts package
- ***1.5% increase*** in credit capture
- ***ROI*** within 6 months
- ***3% increase*** in GP
- ***4% reduction*** in waste

Our solution encompasses **purchase to pay, inventory management, budget control, recipe & menu management linking directly to allergen and nutritional data**. We are uniquely integrated with both national and local suppliers enabling operators to trade with over 3500 companies.

APEX HOTELS · Peach · DE VERE · VILLAGE HOTELS · SILVERSTONE · BESPOKE INNS

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TECHNOLOGY PROSPECTUS

YOUR COMPREHENSIVE GUIDE FOR THE YEAR AHEAD