

## Tech Impact Report

# How upgraded tech can enable housekeeping efficiencies

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An increase in safety and sanitation measures has motivated hoteliers to streamline housekeeping efficiencies through updated property management systems, apps and SMS messaging.



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REPORT FROM THE U.S.—As hotel companies began to [roll out more rigorous safety and sanitation measures](#), some hoteliers realized the need for upgrades in technology to help housekeeping crews maintain daily requirements and limit in-person contact with guests.

Jeff Parker facilitates a workgroup at HTNG that includes hoteliers who have identified key pain points their staffs are facing in the COVID-19 environment will likely face in the future.

He said the biggest hurdle, for staff or guests, is communication. He noted many tech solutions, both heavy-weight and light-weight, exist to assist with messaging and keeping track of tasks. But some hotels are more equipped than others to roll something out.

Owners must also weigh the cost and return on investment, he said, noting many will be hesitant to invest even if it's cost neutral. Everyone is looking to reduce costs, he said.

“Marriott (International), for example, they’ve already got an app; they’ve got a website. They’re ready immediately to jump into messaging with guests. But if you look at independents, they might not have all of that—so how do they get to where they need to be?” he said.

Parker said tech solutions, for example, can help sync a property with the General Property Checklist from the American Hotel & Lodging Association's Safe Stay Guidelines.

The ability to roll out a tech solution also depends on the hotel's readiness from a device standpoint. A lot of these solutions require staff to have a tablet or other handheld mobile device, he said.

Messaging is also an essential part of the entire the guest journey, he said.

"What we've talked about in the workgroup ... is (if) guests are getting housekeeping service on a Tuesday, (they) reserve that with an app or with SMS. ... The housekeeper now knows where to go and now you're improving your efficiency," he said.

The guest could then confirm in the app they have left the room and it is safe for the housekeeper to enter, he said. Once cleaning is complete and approved by a supervisor, the guest will be alerted that they can return.

"Very high-tech, high-end systems automate all of this (like with panic buttons), or you can do it pretty low-tech," he added.

#### **GM's takes**

Danny Hristoskov, GM at the Hilton Garden Inn Cartersville in Cartersville, Georgia, said his property's management system has been upgraded in response to the pandemic and to meet the demand for increased cleaning.

"When housekeeping generates their daily reports (on) which rooms need to be attended and serviced, it will show this particular guest has requested only check-out service or this particular guest requested every other day or every day," he said.

He said his property also uses additional applications that help employees, department heads and managers communicate that information better.

Hristoskov said upgrading technology in this arena has allowed his team to monitor and ensure that nothing is forgotten as one person passes on information to another when changing shifts.

"Using applications for internal communications was a big factor where (making sure) concerns or guest requests were not left behind," he added.

Hilton also has an app that will update guests directly about the company's CleanStay initiative, he said.

In terms of investment, he said it's currently less expensive than 20 years ago since customers already have ownership of the hardware through their mobile phones. Now, it's up to hotels to invest in software.

"Investing in technology is crucial," he added, especially to keep up with competition.

Charles DiClemente, GM at the Doubletree Downtown Tulsa in Tulsa, Oklahoma, said his property uses a housekeeping optimization software app that tracks the housekeeping crews' time inside a guestroom and allows them to store a digital checklist.

The app "also helps us communicate with the housekeeper to let them know if we need a room on a rush," he added.

Because his team already had this software pre-COVID-19, the only new training required for housekeeping staff was how to utilize the checklist, he said.

Prior to using that tool, it came down to locating the housekeeper in-person and communicating face to face, which was not ideal in a COVID-19 environment or in terms of productivity, DiClemente said.

"By using this tool, we now are able to communicate back and forth and get the acknowledgment from the housekeeper (on) where they're at," he said.

He said if guests have a Do Not Disturb sign on their door, the hotel staff will message the guest through the Hilton app and ask which housekeeping services they might want.