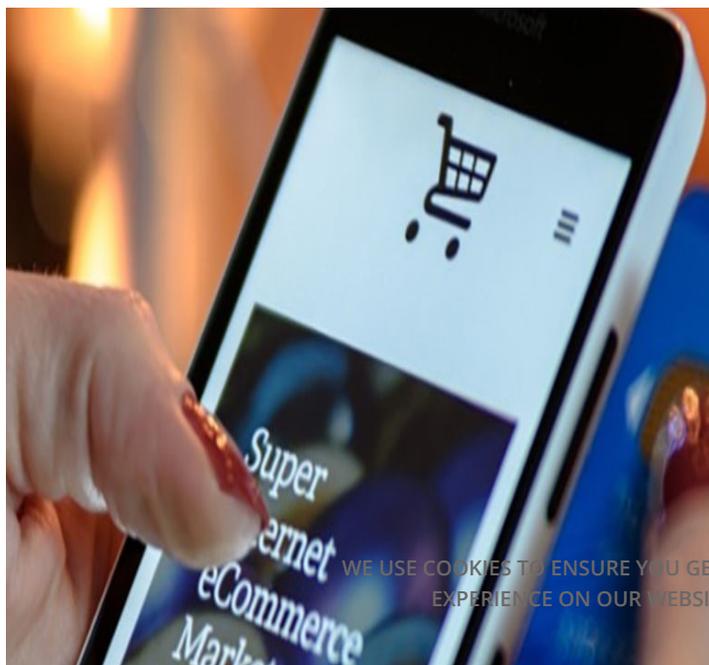OPINION ARTICLE   28 September 2018

Hospitality Technology's Moment of Truth: Who Will Transform the Booking Experience?

By **Craig Weissman**, CTO and Co-Founder at Duetto

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Can you name three great enterprise technology companies in hospitality? Or even one? The answer is likely "no," because most people have never been terribly impressed by the typical experience on a hotel's website.

Where are the Salesforces, SAPs or Adobes of the hospitality world? What is hospitality technology missing that these kinds of platforms provide?

It's not just that those firms have moved entire industries to the cloud — though I admit that job is a heavy lift, especially for an industry like hospitality where there's a long legacy of in-house, on-premise systems. I think an essential technology company has to empower the best possible user experience for the end customer. Hospitality technology, on the other hand, has always been built to optimize transactions.

There is a real opportunity for hotels and casinos to transform not just the booking experience, but the entire guest journey, and bring the best elements of modern e-commerce to an industry that already prioritizes taking care of people to earn their loyalty.

Hospitality is hardly alone in this difficult transition from on-premise to the cloud.

Take financial services. Customers largely prefer to do most of their shopping, banking and bill paying online. They don't even need to get cash from ATMs, much less interact with a human bank teller or balance a checkbook on paper. The whole sector has had to move online quickly to make it easier and faster for customers to manage accounts.

Hotels and casinos seem to be falling further behind as an industry because they tried going it alone on the technology front for decades. It's very complicated to build one system, let alone the many you need, to handle pricing, distribution, payment security and the management of customer data. As a result, it's even harder to make shopping for a hotel room online easy (or enjoyable, for that matter).

Even for properties trying to buy the right PMS, CRS or other systems instead of building their own, interoperability is a huge issue. There are so many of them. And integrations among all the disparate pieces in a hotel's tech stack are incredibly difficult, not to mention cost-prohibitive, to build.

Rethinking Integrations and Data

At a typical hotel that's been muddling through changes in the hotel technology landscape for the past few years, some systems might be on-premise and some might be in the cloud on a software-as-a-service model. But new solutions simply get bolted on

All the data a hotel would need today is severely fragmented as well. Crucial information like reservations and folio spending reside in the PMS, CRS and a sales and catering system. Guest data is stored in a separate CRM system, and more is available from third-party analytics sources. Even more could be ingested into an RMS algorithm for better pricing and forecasting, like reputation scores from review sites and market data points like rates your competitors are publishing.

Leaving Legacy Technology Behind

When I left Salesforce to start Duetto with Patrick Bosworth and Marco Benvenuti, we focused on that core challenge of integrating hotel technology systems and data in the cloud. It was a huge undertaking, but we knew it would allow us to solve the fundamental pain point: Typical revenue management systems can't price dynamically enough to maximize a hotel's profitability.

We're proud of the work that went into our first application, GameChanger, and its ability to analyze all the data available to hoteliers and leverage it in the Open Pricing philosophy Duetto pioneered. Starting with pricing and operations prepared us for the important work to come.

With the foundation in place, we made a critical shift nearly two years ago to fulfill the potential of a fully

We're focused on truly personalizing the hotel booking experience, in particular the booking path, as a potential guest is navigating a hotel's direct channels like the online booking engine. Through dozens of integrations and APIs, the Duetto Revenue Strategy Platform connects our customers to the best vendors in the industry and unifies all the data flowing from a property to its tech stack and back.

The guest's experience on property is central to everything a hotel or casino brand stands for. The experience that person has at every touch point along the way, from the time she starts researching a destination to the point where she's browsing your booking engine and finally converts to a reservation, should be just as good and just as important.

The process of securing travel accommodations should be equal to, if not better than, what consumers expect from companies like Amazon or Apple. Once you pull up a hotel's website or app, there should be a natural flow of options you're presented with: a personalized price, your preferred room type, and package options that reflect your past behavior and your value to the property. You should be recognized everywhere you go, from different properties or brands under the same hotel company umbrella or from a hotel's marketing partners.

Properties benefit in this scenario by keeping a greater amount of profit from the guest's direct booking, rather than paying out a high commission to an OTA. That money can be reinvested into the

The technology firm able to empower this customer-focused strategy in the hospitality industry is the one that will earn a place next to companies like Salesforce or Oracle. That's what motivates me, and the entire team at Duetto, every day.

The Complicated Hotel Technology Landscape

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About Duetto

Duetto is hospitality"s only Revenue Strategy Platform. A powerful suite of cloud applications addresses the industry"s complexity in distribution and technology, providing solutions that increase organizational efficiency, revenue and profitability.

The unique combination of hospitality experience and technology leadership drives Duetto to look for new and innovative solutions to the industry"s greatest challenges. Duetto delivers software-as-a-service to hotels and casinos that leverage dynamic data sources and actionable insights into pricing and demand across the enterprise, enabling a holistic and more profitable Revenue Strategy.

Duetto"s fully deployed hotel clients using GameChanger have recorded an average RevPAR Index lift of 6.5%. More than 2,500 hotel and casino properties in more than 60 countries have partnered to use Duetto"s applications, which include GameChanger for Open Pricing, ScoreBoard for intelligent reporting, PlayMaker for personalization, and BlockBuster for contracted-business optimization.

For more information, visit http://duettocloud.com.