



01 AUG, 2022

TOP TECH IN '22

Hotel Management, National

TECHNOLOGY

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HOTEL TECHNOLOGY IS ADVANCING AT PACE TO PROVIDE GUESTS WITH CONVENIENCE AND COMFORT DURING THEIR STAY. *HM* SPOKE TO THE EXPERTS TO UNCOVER THE LATEST TECH INNOVATIONS SHAPING THE GUEST EXPERIENCE IN 2022.

1

ROBOTIC FOOD DELIVERY

SoftBank Robotics recently launched a new tray delivery robot in Australia known as Keenbot, in partnership with Germii Australia.

The AI-powered, collaborative robot (cobot) is designed to automate food service, alongside humans, at a time when hotels are struggling to recruit enough staff. Keenbot can deliver four dishes at one time, freeing up wait staff to manage other tasks.

A pre-launch trial of Keenbot took place at the Sheraton Grand Sydney Hyde Park.

"We have been using robotic technology and solutions in our business to increase our productivity, and now we have introduced Keenbot to our customer-facing food service operations," said Sheraton Grand Sydney Hyde Park Director of Food and Beverage, Joe Poovaiya.

"At first, it was quite a novelty, but staff and customers have quickly adapted and welcomed Keenbot. We do not expect these cobots to replace the total human element in our service, but rather, we hope for these cobots to further complement and enhance our service efficiency."



A new robot is supporting food service at venues in Australia



Philips MediaSuite Hotel TV has a range of new features to meet guest demands

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HI-TECH TELEVISIONS

When it comes to in-room technology, Philips MediaSuite Hotel TV has reinvented itself with all new features built in, including casting capabilities and the ability to launch steaming apps via the TV for those not familiar with casting.

"In 2022, we are still the only commercial hospitality TVs that offer an Android platform that is upgradeable for free, Chromecast built-in, official Netflix embedded as part of our MediaSuite range and support Google PlayStore for app access," said Westan Australia Head of Commercial Product, Richie Cheng.

"We haven't even talked about the Google Voice Assist that is linked to our remote control that only listens when you press the special Goggle VA button."

Philips MediaSuite Hotel TV supports guests to watch their own content via a casting solution such as Chromecast; provides access to a variety of content that is tailored for the guests, via Google PlayStore; and gives easy access to the hotel's facilities and services.



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3 VOICE CONTROL

Hotels are expected to embrace new technology that allows guests to use their voices to control devices in the room. Leading tech companies Nomadix and Telkonet have introduced a combined solution through which guests can ask in-room voice assistant 'Angie' to set Telkonet's smart thermostats to their preferences.

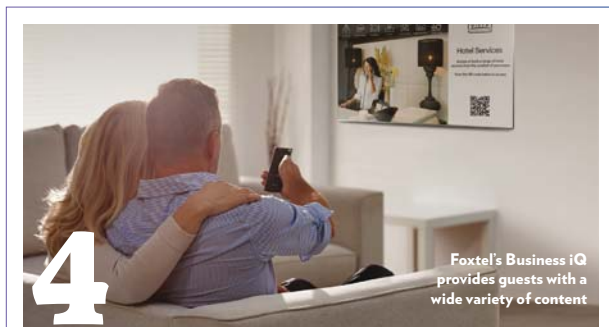
The Angie Spark 7 combined with the Telkonet Touch Combo thermostat is designed to enhance a property's energy efficiency and features the top wireless protocols, Wi-Fi, and Bluetooth in one device.

"Focusing on a building's energy efficiency is important for the hotelier because it results in economic savings, but equally important it improves guest experience, optimising in-room comfort for the duration of their stay," said Telkonet Chief Technology Officer, Jeff Sobieski.

"As hotels look to optimise their operations, smart in-room technologies are an important factor in driving cost savings, efficiencies, and meeting new guest expectations."



Guests can now set the room temperature using their voice



4 ALL-IN-ONE ENTERTAINMENT

Foxtel's state-of-the-art Business iQ platform, which offers an extensive range of TV and movie content, services and cloud technology, is continuing to be embraced by the accommodation industry.

"The Business iQ transforms the way hotels provide entertainment and information to guests," said Foxtel National Manager - Accommodation, Scott Wiedemann.

"The entertainment is all housed in a customisable platform allowing hoteliers to add information about their hotel, local attractions and connect their guests with transactional assets such as in-room dining ordering, restaurant and spa booking sites, or rewards programs. The ability to add in their own custom promotional channels and send personalised messages to guests ensures that hoteliers can capitalise on promoting their products and services."

Mercure Doncaster recently installed Foxtel's Business iQ ahead of opening to provide guests with a variety of over 90 channels, a huge video-on-demand library, digital compendium, and concierge, as well as connection capabilities that makes guest interaction a premium and streamlined experience.

"I strongly believe that our guest rooms would not be the all-encompassing experience of comfort, convenience and indulgence without the inclusion of Foxtel Business iQ," said Mercure Doncaster General Manager, Glen Erickson.

"We don't expect guests to bring their own linen, shower or kettle, so why would we expect them to bring their own television content?"

According to Wiedemann, the technology is constantly evolving.

"We update our Video On Demand library four times a day," he said.

"We're bringing more and more 4K content onto the platform. And we're constantly updating and evolving the technology, which has seen us integrate an auto QR code creator into the platform this year as well as develop wireless install capability."

5 HAIRCARE INNOVATION

Dyson's industry-leading hair technology is being embraced by boutique hotels that want to deliver a luxury but homely experience for guests.

The Dyson Supersonic hair dryer, engineered to protect hair from extreme heat damage, and the cordless Dyson Corrale straightener have both been designed for easy at-home and in-hotel use making them a popular addition to guest bathrooms.

QT Hotels and Resorts has become the first hotel group in ANZ to offer Dyson's Supersonic hair dryers in all of its hotel rooms.

"The Dyson Supersonic hair dryer is not your ordinary bathroom accessory, they are the leaders in hair technology that's backed by science and the best in market," said QT Perth General Manager, Lisa Parker.

"I firmly believe these iconic hair dryers set us above our competitors. Gone are the days of bathroom boredom, from hair products to low voltage hair dryers that rely on excessive heat to style hair."

Dyson's hair technology is being well received by hotel guests





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Meetings, hotel tours, and events will soon be possible in the metaverse

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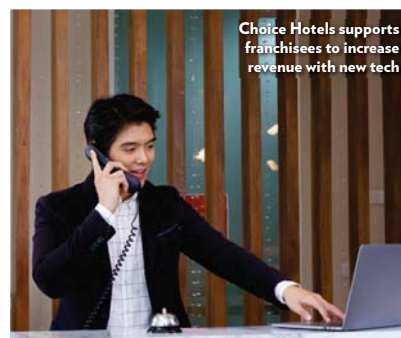
MEETINGS IN THE METAVERSE

RendezVerse is building a community in the metaverse for the hotel and events industry with the aim of facilitating meetings, site visits and, eventually, events through the use of VR technology.

The company is currently bringing together venues, buyers, service providers and event specialists inside digital twins of some of the most famous hotels in the world, including InterContinental Paris le Grand, Atlantis Palm Dubai and Madrid Marriott Auditorium.

"RendezVerse clearly has the innovative and immersive metaverse platform and business model to unlock huge opportunities in the hotel and MICE industries," said RendezVerse strategic advisor, Michael Cohen.

RendezVerse will launch globally in the northern hemisphere Autumn 2022. By the end of 2023, RendezVerse will host over 1,000 hotels and several thousand buyers across the leisure and MICE industries.



Choice Hotels supports franchisees to increase revenue with new tech

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AUTOMATED REVENUE MANAGEMENT

Choice Hotels Asia-Pacific has rolled out an automated revenue management tool to its franchisee network to help franchisees effectively manage hotel room rates, channels, and inventory.

The ChoiceMAX Revenue Management System, developed exclusively for the group by Ideas, was awarded a Hospitality Technology Hotel Visionary Award for enterprise innovation in January 2022.

The mobile-enabled system uses pricing and inventory management algorithms to help hotels optimise their pricing structure, which may ultimately increase revenues. It is currently live across more than 5,000 Choice-branded hotels globally.

"Over the past quarter, our revenue managed properties have enjoyed significant gains in RevPAR over the market competitor set," said Choice Hotels Asia-Pacific CEO, Trent Fraser.

"In Q1, our revenue-managed properties in Australia saw RevPAR up 14% on their market competitor set, which is a significant gain during a tough recovery."

In New Zealand, these properties achieved RevPAR that was 88% higher than their market competitors in the first quarter of 2022.

Australia's leading website, booking engine, and channel management provider, Levert, has also released a new Auto Rate Management (ARM) feature that automatically adjusts rates based on occupancy and lead time.

Occupancy levels are determined by the property and can be based on property level occupancy, room type occupancy, or a combination of both.

Rates are updated every 30 minutes, 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

"Traditional revenue management systems update irregularly or during the day when the Revenue Manager is at work, hence many opportunities to increase rates are missed over weekends or during the evening," said Levert's Managing Director, Ian Simmonds. "They are also expensive."

Levert can assist with the setup or can offer the services of an experienced Revenue Manager to advise at a fraction of the cost of having a full time Revenue Manager.

7

DEDICATED HOTEL APPS

Apps are becoming a powerful addition

to the hotel experience, providing a wide range of services to guests both in and out of the hotel room.

Quest Apartment Hotels, in collaboration with Liverton, has introduced a digital key function to its app, allowing guests to independently access their room when it is ready, bypassing the traditional check-in desk.

Careful not to lose its personal touch, Quest sends every new app user a welcome email from Quest Group General Manager, Adrian Turner, when they sign up. Guests can then use this email address to provide any feedback or to ask questions.

"The addition of this technology will allow a Quest guest to access the property and their room seamlessly, especially after hours," said Turner.

This digital key is now live at Quest Highbrook and will soon be introduced to newer properties that support the technology, including Quest Palmerston North, Quest Takapuna, Quest Mt Eden, and Quest Queenstown.

At all other Quest properties, locking systems will be upgraded in due course to take advantage of this technology.

Ovolo Hotels is also using apps to improve the guest experience. Ovolo South Yarra in Melbourne and Mamaka By Ovolo in Bali both have an app that guests can use to order food, book hotels services such as massages, room cleaning and wake-up calls, and communicate directly with reception. Additionally, guests can also access maps and directions, what to see and do nearby, transportation and more. Ovolo is in the process of developing an app for each of its properties, a spokesperson told *HM*.



Quest has introduced a digital key function to its app



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9 PROCURE-TO-PAY INNOVATION

Procure-to-pay platform FutureLog is soon to release its anticipated Business Intelligence (BI) tool, offering real-time, customisable reporting across all FutureLog modules on both desktop and mobile applications.

Hoteliers can create customisable reports and robust analytics for all data across FutureLog's suite of solutions. Dynamic graphs will allow them to gather insights quickly while the visualisations will help support their decision-making processes.

"Because all our solutions have been designed with hotels, restaurants, clubs and venues in mind, there is also a strong F&B focus within the FutureLog platform," said FutureLog Oceania Vice President Operations, Benjamin Krieg.

"Among the new technology we've developed recently is an automated feature to connect with thermometers and weight scales to record the weight and temperature of goods at receiving in our mobile application, and since its release earlier this year, it has already proved an invaluable asset in the e-procurement user journey."



AUTOMATED OPERATIONS

Automated hotel operating system Hub OS is designed to offer a 360° view of hotel operations, and the platform is gaining momentum in the APAC region with Kimpton Margot Sydney, Hotel Indigo Brisbane, and voco Melbourne all using the technology.

Hub OS is a modular platform that can support front and backend operations, allowing customers to customise a package to their specific needs.

Kimpton Margot Sydney Director of Rooms, Mitchell Morrow, says the extent of Hub OS' functionality made it the most attractive option.

"The user-friendly interface, detailed data and property-wide integration capabilities has allowed us to optimise every aspect of our Rooms Division operations," Morrow said.



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VingCard Novel is manufactured using sustainable practices



Hub OS is designed to offer a complete view of hotel operations

DIGITAL DOOR LOCKS

Digital door lock technology is constantly developing and a leader in this space is Assa Abloy.

The company's VingCard Essence door locks were introduced at the recently opened Aiden by Best Western Darling Harbour. The security system is integrated with Telkonet's energy management system as well as Liverton's mobile app and self-check-in kiosks to offer operational efficiency and energy savings.

The tech company has also just released its latest innovation, VingCard Novel. Manufactured using sustainable practices, VingCard Novel includes scalable hardware components in the door handle that will support seamless integration with third-party platforms as well as include full mobile access compatibility.

"With hotel technology needs evolving at an ever faster pace, VingCard Novel is designed to serve as an adaptive and long-term door lock solution that can keep pace with new industry trends and expectations, while streamlining operations and presenting guests with a secure, yet convenient hotel stay experience," said Assa Abloy Global Solutions Senior Vice President and Head of Hospitality, Li Wang.



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CASTING CONTENT ON THE RISE

Chromecast continues to be a leading trend in consumer viewing patterns and something that hotels are increasingly adopting in their properties.

Guests can cast content, via their own devices and subscriptions, to the hotel TV allowing them to continue watching the shows and movies that they want.

“Guests are travelling with their own content,” said HoneyBadger Technologies Director, Heinrich Saayman.

“If you look at the younger generation, it’s all about Netflix, YouTube and more.”

HoneyBadger Technologies was the first company to deploy casting in Australia, according to Saayman, and it has witnessed the rise in demand for the service.

“When we came to Australia with Chromecast over five years ago, some of the leading hotels started using it, and the uptake has slowly increased,” said Saayman.

“Now, post COVID, we’ve seen quite a big explosion in companies and hotels requesting casting services because it’s now a proven model in the market.”

Casting offers a fantastic return on investment, according to Saayman, with a significant cost saving to be made over the life of the product.

“The hotel does not have to buy any subscription services [like Netflix and more] per TV or per room to provide content because the guest already has that subscription,” he said. ■



Many guests opt to watch content via their own streaming subscriptions in hotels