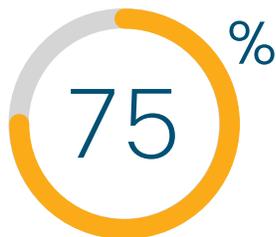


Casting your net wide for digital hospitality



Which is more important to offer if you run a hospitality business? Special rates or free Wi-Fi? More importantly, which matters most to your guests? 75 percent of travelers surveyed chose free Wi-Fi over any special rates.¹ In another poll, free Wi-Fi again emerged on top out of 33 desired amenities.²



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As the global digital community grows, travelers expect to have seamless access to digital technology, regardless of where they are. Small and medium-sized businesses (SMBs) in the hospitality industry have no choice but to respond to their guests' evolving needs.

This technology imperative is made even more critical by the success of Airbnb, which uses technology to level the playing field against traditional hospitality players.



Where can you start to get your business on track? Here are some areas for you to consider.

First things first

A 2017 study by Hotel Technology magazine³ suggests that hoteliers are responding to guest demands for Wi-Fi, with 45 percent of respondents saying that they will invest in the upgrade and rollout of guest Wi-Fi, with an additional 5 percent planning to switch to a new supplier.



of respondents say that they will invest in the upgrade and rollout of guest Wi-Fi, with an additional 5 percent planning to switch to a new supplier.

But guest expectations aside, some reports also suggest that providing free Wi-Fi helps a budget hotel to differentiate itself from a luxury property.⁴

Your hotel can strive to give guests a frictionless digital experience, with Internet access, emails, and an “immersive, personalised experience like never before, from geo-location and push notifications based on their location and personal preferences to simplified check-in/checkout and a more ‘homelike’ experience while they’re traveling.”⁵

This means giving your guests access to a high-speed Wi-Fi network that allows them to use their digital devices regardless of where they are—in their rooms, at the swimming pool, or even in the basement carpark. A stable and reliable network that’s powerful enough to support a guest’s multidevice needs will definitely differentiate your hotel from competitors. However, some hotels have budget constraints and limit Wi-Fi access for each guest to a certain number of devices. That is a business call you have to make.

Connectivity aside, an increasing number of hotels are also providing digital self-service options for busy guests who are tech savvy and dislike spending time waiting in queues at reception.^{6,7}

With technology, some boutique hotels can even get by with only a few staff to manage the whole property. Guests check in using tablets and they check out using the room’s touchscreen TV. Hyatt Hotel guests, for example, have multiple check-in options: They can use an iPad to check in with a staff member, use a self-serve check-in kiosk, or simply stick with a traditional front desk.

To do all this and more, your wireless network needs the support of switches (they create networks), routers (they connect networks), and wireless access points (WAPs) to integrate and connect. Buying the right switches and routers—and the right number of them—ensures that your network connectivity is smooth and works seamlessly wherever your guests are. The right combination of technology translates into a “surf anytime, anywhere” experience for your guests.

And don't forget about your employees. A powerful network can provide your staff with a more effective and efficient work environment. They can be alerted to guest requests via their personal mobile devices and no longer need to respond only to landline calls from housekeeping. Maintenance teams will be able to respond to alerts sent to them wirelessly from digital dashboards that monitor and relay issues—again, without the need for human intervention or a middleman. Every issue, job, and guest request is recorded digitally and tracked for further issues or closed off and archived. Over time, your hotel will amass a huge amount of data—big data—and you will be able to analyze and predict how to better exceed your guests' expectations. By tracking your guests' personal preferences—even after they've checked out—your hotel will get better at offering the optimal experience, at the right moment, to the right guests.

Strong cybersecurity is critical for the digital ecosystem

If a solid Wi-Fi network is what forms the backbone of your hotel's digital ecosystem, then a strong cybersecurity system is its spinal cord.

You want to exceed your customers' expectations with the best Wi-Fi experience when they check in to your hotel, but you may end up disappointing them if you have a weak security infrastructure.

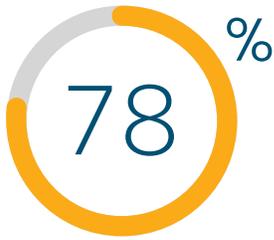
A Morgan Stanley report suggests that, worldwide, cybersecurity spend is expected to hit \$128 billion by 2020.⁸ And for good reason, as the cost of cybercrime is expected to hit \$2 trillion by 2019.⁹



For SMBs in the hospitality business, cybersecurity goes beyond protecting your corporate digital assets and customers' personal data. Just as your guests expect you to look after their physical safety when they are staying in your hotel, they also expect the same when they tap into your wireless network. Thus, it is sound business sense to invest in a strong cybersecurity defense system as cybercrimes become more rampant.

A strong cloud service completes the experience

Lastly, no discussion on an integrated approach to your hotel experience is complete without a word on cloud services. Cloud services are described as any services made available to users on demand via the Internet from a cloud provider's servers as opposed to being provided from a company's own on-premises servers.



of U.S. small businesses will have fully adopted cloud computing by 2020.¹⁰

According to a Forbes report, 78 percent of U.S. small businesses will have fully adopted cloud computing by 2020.¹⁰

This is because, besides offering a cost and scalability advantage, cloud computing levels the competition for smaller businesses by offering them the same IT advantages as larger organizations. The cloud removes hurdles to owning high-end IT infrastructures and enables smaller companies to play big like their larger competitors.

It does not take much to exceed your guests' expectations, even before they set foot in your hotel. The use of mobile technologies for geo-location, hotel bookings and payments, and mobile apps will allow you to know your guest preferences beforehand to help you personalize their experience. Not to mention the use of technology for your guests to plan itineraries and blog about their experiences, anytime, anywhere. All of this rides on your hotel's wireless network.

Talk to a Cisco Start expert today about how you can differentiate yourself from the competition by providing a superior guest experience with a robust network infrastructure.



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