

# The Overview: In Depth

Spring 2022

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# Welcome to THE OVERVIEW

Taking an in depth look at the trends and issues facing the hospitality sector.

For so many months over the last two years we have had our best-laid plans snatched away, or been discouraged from having them at all. The day to day became a repetitive grind, compounded by the inability to plan to escape. The release when drinking in gutters was allowed was palpable.

And now, two years later, all is possible again. The sector knows that everything has returned to 2019, because any hint of government support is long behind it and it's back to doing everything on its own.

And, of course, one can't help but notice that it's not 2019 and that there are more issues around trying to build teams, with extra pain like energy bills, VAT, two years of debt to support closed businesses, the planet, in short, plenty to think about. Like as not at 3am.

We want you to sleep better. We want you to bound into work fresh

faced and jubilant, excited to work in hospitality and hopeful about the future, not regretting turning down that job in Big Pharma. Which is why this issue of The Overview is taking a look into everyone's crystal balls and seeing not only what might happen, but what's happening now to ensure that we're all in great shape when we get there.

We'll be hearing about innovations in technology which can help both team members and customers think more warmly about you, about how to address energy usage for the good of costs and our future. We'll be looking at the return of events and how the leisure market can compensate for the lack of the corporate guest. And we'll be addressing your stress, because without a sound mind, the whole house comes tumbling down.

So the future, now we have it back, looks pretty decent after all.



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# Hospitality creates demand from guests - now it must do the same for teams

It doesn't need me to share with anyone that, as an industry, we're currently undergoing a staffing crisis. Most of us are experiencing these problems first hand and know full well the issues we're faced with.

**A**t HOSPA, we do what we can to support the industry to help try to alleviate these problems, using our own experience of the sector and our countless conversations with hospitality professionals to determine what's important and if there's anywhere our influence can assist.

A key theme that comes to the fore time and time again is that of the outward perception of hospitality from those looking in. Too often, we're seen as a short-term solution – a stop gap as people move onto bigger and better things.

It was in trying to counteract this sentiment that we launched our #ShareYourSuccess and our #WhyILoveHospitality campaigns –

hospitality, as well as talking about their career achievements and successes, as we try to get that message back to students in schools and universities, which are essentially our grassroots. It's from these talent pools that we'll find our willing and energetic potential leaders of the future – and we need to try and make our presence felt before they're lost to other industries!

Not only do we, as a sector, need these people, but hospitality offers them enormous opportunities too – providing them with the platform to enjoy successful, far-reaching careers.

There are so many reasons to encourage people to join our industry – and no limits on who can join. Anyone with a smile on their face and a desire to help guests have a great experience will get a job in

I've said it many times before, but you really can go from the bottom rung of the ladder to the very top, with people having done just that throughout the industry.

There really is something for everyone too, with a huge range of skills and specialisms to diversify into. There's no set route you need go down. Those who join can change direction, with all hospitality roles in need of committed employees to fulfil their needs – allowing people to embrace and learn different skillsets and capabilities.

Those of us who have dedicated our careers to this industry understand and appreciate the benefits, yet we still struggle to attract enough enthusiastic people.

From time to time, we have employed people within HOSPA who have not come directly from hospitality and – certainly in my time as CEO – all of them have commented on what a welcoming and friendly industry it is. The negative stereotype of austere chefs ruling their kitchen kingdoms with iron fists really isn't reflective of reality! The reality is, it's about people – people getting on and enjoying each other's company to deliver a memorable service.

Hospitality is all about opportunity. The opportunity to travel, to meet new people, to taste good food whilst working in flexible jobs and learning a vast array of transferrable skills.

That's the reality those of us working in the sector know to be true.

We just need to champion it and showcase this. I implore you to join us in doing so and help the uninitiated realise what a wonderful industry hospitality is.

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through which, we have high hopes of helping to improve hospitality's wider image (we look at the campaigns in greater detail on page 19).

The campaigns aim to encourage everyone to shout about why they love

hospitality. It really is as simple as that. And, once they are in and working, the chances of rapid promotion, which goes hand-in-hand with increased responsibility, are probably second to none when compared against any other sector.

# HOSPA's membership structure overhaul prompts 15% jump in members

The Hospitality Professionals Association has seen a 15% jump in its membership since its recent structural overhaul – with more and more hospitality specialist leaders recognising the value in career-long networking and the learning opportunities offered by HOSPA.

**T**he restructure saw HOSPA break its membership down into four distinct tiers – Member, Fellow, Associate and student.

Seeking to make its offering more accessible, the revamp has caused a clear spike in membership numbers, which is primarily made up of senior figures within the hospitality industry.

Commenting on the increase, which has occurred since October 2021, Jane Pendlebury, CEO of HOSPA, said: "It's fantastic to see that our reworked

covering an array of specialisms and abilities – so it's great to see that it hasn't encouraged an increase in one particular area, but across all. The main thing that sets HOSPA apart from other hospitality associations is the seniority of its membership – with the bulk of them being high level operators within the sector, and that's something we want to continue. This is something that's tallied up with what we've seen within our new members."

The four tiers of HOSPA membership

- Exclusive invitations to private events and forums.
- Access to unrivalled educational material to support careers, including best practice guides, industry reports and analysis.
- Access to webinars and masterclasses, and regular news updates covering the major industry topics.

Jane Pendlebury concluded: "With the industry seemingly going from crisis to crisis in recent months, many of us are seeking help and support from peers to properly understand the lay of the land. At HOSPA, that's essentially what we're about – creating a network of professionals who can help and guide one another, with an authoritative voice at its heart helping to guide best practice and approach. It seems that more people than ever are turning to us for our support, which is great to see and very rewarding for us."

Recognised as one of the UK's foremost authoritative voices in the hospitality industry, HOSPA's influences reaches thousands of individuals from various strands of hospitality. The new membership structure aims to increase its current membership base, while simultaneously improving the experience of its existing members.

**"Those who have joined recently have come from really diverse backgrounds within the sector, covering an array of specialisms and abilities – so it's great to see that it hasn't encouraged an increase in one particular area, but across all."**

structure has caused such an uptake in membership – and it's evidence that it's a change that's appealed. Ultimately, we want more people to be able to access and benefit from our services and, so far, it seems to have done just that."

The interests of those who have recently joined the organisation are split across the association's main communities of finance, revenue management and technology, while a quarter have an interest in asset management and general management. Other joiners are either in commercial or academic roles.

Jane commented: "Those who have joined recently have come from really diverse backgrounds within the sector,

consists of Members, who are operators entitled to complimentary membership, Fellows, who are the most senior influencers in the hospitality industry, Associates, who are suppliers and consultants, and students, who are those starting out on the first steps of a career in the industry.

The revised structure caters to all aspects of the hospitality industry and whether a supplier or an operator, in a senior role or an up and coming, aspiring leader of the future; an array of new features looks to improve the experience of active contributors to HOSPA, while the wider benefits of HOSPA's services include:

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# What the sector needs is...

**Eric Hallerberg, Vice President EMEA Sales, Oracle Hospitality, talked to us about how technology can make operations more efficient and drive guest loyalty.**

## **HOSPA: How has technology evolved during your career?**

When you look across 18 years, it's not only in the hospitality sector, it's what's happening across all industries, and how hospitality embraces that and brings in best practices. I think that what's been really interesting over these past two decades, is that you've got this combination of technology advancements and changes in consumer behaviour.

It's a major change in how we are share in our lives and open with our information and data, and rapidly evolving technology really highlights this. With new tech and the behaviour changes, it creates some really interesting opportunities for hoteliers and their tech partners to provide great experiences for their guests.

## **HOSPA: Do you think hotels understand the guest journey?**

How do you define the journey? Is the journey the actual journey itself? Or is it a much broader spectrum? When I think of what I call the Hospitality Value Chain, I start at the beginning, when the guest is thinking about where they are going to travel, or the corporate traveller who is thinking about where they have to go for a meeting. At this point, I think hotels do understand this. But there is always room for improvement.

I think it's important to also look at how travellers interact on a daily basis with other businesses and individuals. What channels do they use? How do they make their buying decisions? What do their actions say about their priorities and how their preferences are formed?

Guests don't develop their preferences when they walk through the front door. They bring with them their collective experiences and outlook on how they interact and enjoy the world. So I think the more that hotels can learn about their guests when they're outside their properties, the better they can provide that world class service when they're on property.

**HOSPA: Is technology a way to create true loyalty?** You can use technology to drive loyalty but technology for technology's sake doesn't have any value. It's how you apply that technology.

That's not to say loyalty programmes don't matter, but it's really about the guest experience. What did the guest feel during their stay, what is their lasting impression as they walk out to get into the car and go back to the airport, or train station and go back home? Was there one moment that will stick with them and influence when they book their next trip?

It's also about what kind of staff experience you provide. If the technology is providing a great staff experience, that's going to translate into a great guest experience. And so yes, technology can play a role. But you've got to think about it holistically, because it doesn't matter how great the program is, or what kind of great incentives you have, or even your brand, it's what did the guest experience during their stay, and what's going to pull them back.

**HOSPA: Where can technology help with service?** I think about service in

three different ways: personalisation, mobile, and artificial intelligence. With personalisation, the better that you know your guests, the better you can provide a great custom-tailored experience. Profile systems and loyalty programs have been around for years, but there's a great opportunity to enhance all ready existing programs by incorporating additional data. You've got to look beyond their basic preferences related to the hotel or related to their rooms.

What kind of booking experience do they like? How are your guests interacting with the hotel when they make a booking? What kind of interaction with staff do they prefer? Do they prefer to check in contactlessly or be greeted at the front desk?

And related to that is mobile. Don't ask the guest to come seek out service, take the hospitality to the guest. Put your staff where they can easily interact with guests in the guest's preferred space, so that check-in doesn't necessarily have to involve a desk. Maybe I want to go and sit in a comfy chair in the lobby and have a drink and mobile-enabled staff can come over and check me in. Make it easier for your staff to provide that great guest experience in line with the guest's preferences.

We are already seeing Artificial Intelligence used with chatbots, which have shown to provide enhanced service. How does talking to a robot provide enhanced service? Because you're sharing information in a much more efficient way - no one's getting on a chatbot to have long conversations. People are asking whether they can extend their stay or what the new COVID restrictions are in place at the hotel.

In addition to these efficient conversations, you're going to see more advanced applications of AI in observing guest behavior. That may sound a little bit big brother, but it's really about collecting information that will influence great service. We are used to sharing information about ourselves, and especially when we know it's going to provide some value back to us. Discovering travelers' preferences helps the staff to share relevant offerings that enhance the guest experience.

So outside just the everyday hotel interactions, there is value in knowing



how does the guest actually interact? Do they use WhatsApp to order food delivery to my room instead of room service? Do they prefer to go to a retail shop and shop there instead of getting something from a delivery service? These things are important and they're not specific to a guest staying in a hotel, but they can inform hoteliers about how best to interact with those guests.

I think about three ways that technology can address staffing challenges. The first is automation. Any kind of repetitive low-value tasks, you can automate. If you take staff away from doing those tasks you make them more customer facing.

The second one is revenue optimisation. The better that hotel is in providing added value to guests, the more efficient the interactions become and the

guests and staff, and by looking at how and where hotels are providing value to their guests, they're going to better understand what skill sets and what staffing levels they need for any kind of occupancy levels they have, or any kind of event. No business in the world is over-resourced right now. But in the hospitality sector, is really squeezed. Hoteliers need to make sure they have the right people working at the right time, while still providing a great guest experience. It's easier said than done. But it is doable. And I think that using technology and better understanding your guests will really help with that."

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**HOSPA: How can technology help with staffing?** This is a challenge that the sector has been facing for a long time and continues to be an ongoing issue. Hotels have always looked at how they can make their staff more efficient, and it's not about headcount, it's about taking away the tasks that are low value, or don't involve guests interaction, so that staff can spend more time focusing on the guest experience. Even at higher staffing levels, this is important because the real value is that interaction with the guest.

more self-sufficient guests become. If a guest walks into a hotel having already purchased add-ons – a room upgrade, maybe - and they know that there will be more such opportunities, the hotel has reduced staff interaction and enhanced the guest experience all while driving more revenue.

The last area is resource allocation. Big Data can mean a lot of things, but hoteliers have more information than ever before, on operations, on demand for services, on interactions between

**HOSPA: Are technology companies selling correctly into the hospitality sector?** The key here is to focus not on the technology, but how it enhances the travelers' experience. No matter where you sit in the Hospitality Value Chain, we all have a common customer – the guest.

So we should be really focused on how we're making it easier for hoteliers and their teams to provide top guest experience, and staff with the tools and the systems and the ability to provide that. Oracle hospitality focuses on how we can enable staff to provide a great guest experience, because that's really what it's all about.



# To Hell With Lonely; It's Very Stressful at the Top

Long working hours, tough decisions, uncertainty, and the pandemic have taken their toll on the mental health of business leaders...

At the end of last year, I gave a presentation on executive stress at the Hospitality Professionals Association (HOSPA) annual conference, HOSPACE. It was a topic that garnered much attention.

Sadly, I doubt many of those that recognised themselves in that talk went on to do anything about it, which is a tad worrying, as the statistics for executives and mental health are a little grim.

A recent Bupa report found that 78% of business leaders had experienced poor mental health during the pandemic. The research, which was conducted by Bupa Global as part of its Executive Wellbeing Index, also found that six out of 10 executives (64%) had turned to potentially unhealthy coping strategies to help with their mental health (or lack thereof) and that 38% of business leaders had turned to alcohol and recreational or over-the-counter drugs to cope, whilst others had turned to cigarettes, vaping, excessive exercise, under or over-eating and gambling.

If you're at the top of your company's hierarchy, executive stress doesn't mean that you have earned a special type of stress that those beneath you aren't privy to, it means that you have stresses and strains specific to your role within the company.

Executive stress even has a definition in the American Psychological Association's dictionary of psychology: the strain experienced by management personnel who are responsible for major decisions, the effectiveness of subordinates, and the success of the company as a competitive organisation.

That definition is encapsulated with idioms such as 'it's tough at the top' or 'it's lonely at the top,' and 'the buck stops here.'

Think about that last phrase. Everyone else in your organisation has a line manager, someone to talk to, someone to guide them, someone that can approach and say, "hey, I'm feeling a little overwhelmed and finding my workload stressful at the moment, can we please do something about it?" But, if you're at the top of the chain, who do you turn to, who advises you on your work/life balance and suggests strategies to help mitigate said stress? Chances are that – unless you are part of a 'Stressed Out CEOs WhatsApp Group' – it is no one.

Wharton professor, found that stress affected CEO aging and mortality. Unless you are careful, you age fast and die younger if you don't have practices in place to help manage your stress.

Another study, this time commissioned by the World Health Organisation (WHO), found that long working hours killed 745,000 people a year. Meanwhile, research from the Harvard Business Review found that, on average, CEOs work 62.5 hours a week.

We all experience stress at work. Stress is the number one cause of staff absenteeism (at any level). Stress can

Executive stress even has a definition in the American Psychological Association's dictionary of psychology: the strain experienced by management personnel who are responsible for major decisions, the effectiveness of subordinates, and the success of the company as a competitive organisation.

And, if you're not careful, you can pay a heavy price for the burden of leadership.

CEOs work long hours, make high-stakes, potentially costly, decisions that can affect everyone else in the company, initiate layoffs and selloffs, are closely monitored on, and criticised for the business' performance, and deal with change and upheaval on a daily basis.

All these things have been compounded by the pandemic, which forced hospitality to close overnight and exacerbated all the factors mentioned above. How did you deal with all those decisions? How did you react to the ever-changing rules, regulations, openings, and closures that Coronavirus brought?

A 2021 study, co-authored by a

manifest as anxiety, anger management issues and depression. You can suffer from insomnia, irritable bowel syndrome (IBS) and skin conditions such as psoriasis because of it. Stress can cause you to turn to unhealthy coping strategies such as junk food, alcohol, and drugs (prescription and recreational) instead of healthy coping strategies such as good food, exercise, and meditation. If left unchecked, your stress can become chronic, and it can lead to burnout syndrome – a purely occupational phenomenon, characterised by feelings of energy depletion (or exhaustion), increased mental distance from your job (or feelings of negativity and cynicism about it) and reduced professional



efficacy – that was not officially recognised until 2019.

Healthy eating, exercise, and building a better work/life balance all help you to manage your stress more effectively. So too does mindfulness, rational emotive behaviour therapy (REBT) and hypnotherapy – two forms of psychotherapy and coaching that I provide in my practice – cognitive behaviour therapy (CBT), counselling and more.

Staff wellbeing and work stress mitigation have been placed front and centre of all industries (including hospitality) because of the pandemic. That there is a mental health crisis is a given. People are turning to professionals for advice and to therapists for help. But, typically, those at the top don't like to admit to their problems.

Part of the problem is the perceived stigma that comes with reporting a mental health issue. Common fears include damage to reputation (if it became known they were struggling) and the impact on their personal and professional reputations (if they asked for help).

However, admitting you have a problem isn't a sign of weakness – quite the opposite in fact – it takes strength to admit that you need help. Plus, if you want a strong and robust wellbeing culture in place in your organisation, one where staff off all levels feel empowered to talk about their problems, you are going to want to lead by example. As for doing something about your stress, well that's just plain common sense.

But, if you really don't want your business known, therapists and coaches operate according to a policy known as 'client confidentiality.' So things can be kept very hush, hush. You just have to reach out to the right people.

**Daniel Fryer is a mental health and wellbeing consultant and the author of *The Four Thoughts That F\*ck You Up (and how to fix them)* out now from Penguin Random House imprint, Vermillion. He helps both individuals and businesses and specialises in anxiety disorders and work-related stress.**

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Continued on page 13 →

# New Chairman for HOSPA as Barclay's Bob Silk takes over from Chris Upton

The Hospitality Professionals Association has appointed a new Chairman, as Bob Silk takes over from previous incumbent Chris Upton – who has stepped down from the role.

Following eight successful years in post, which has seen the association expand its remit to incorporate a broader swathe of hospitality professionals, Chris, recognising the time had come for some new impetus at the helm, has decided to take a step back and will be greatly missed by the HOSPA team.

The new chairman, Bob Silk, is Relationship Director with Barclays Bank's Hospitality & Leisure Team, where he specialises in funding multi-site hotel, restaurant and pub businesses.

As Chairman of HOSPA, Bob will be looking to bring his experience to bear, while injecting new energy into the association as he seeks to build on its growing profile within the sector. Having worked in/around the sector for 24 years, Bob brings with him a wealth of connections.

Speaking of his appointment, Bob Silk, said: "HOSPA is a fantastic organisation doing important work within hospitality. Its educational aspect, combined with its work as a voice for the sector sees it stand as one of the pillars of our industry. This is a reputation that the team at HOSPA and I will seek to build



further, going forward."

Jane Pendlebury, CEO of HOSPA, said: "We're thrilled to welcome Bob as new chairman. He'll bring a sense of renewed vigour to what we're trying to achieve as an association. Chris has been an enormously important asset to HOSPA and has done an excellent job in expanding our remit in recent years. I'd like to put on record our immense gratitude for his contribution."

Speaking of his departure, Chris Upton said: "My time as chairman has been a tremendously rewarding period and I'm very proud of the work we've been doing over the last eight years. I leave the role in

extremely capable hands though, as Bob is a real expert in his field and will bring a fresh take to the association's approach, helping to maximise HOSPA's contribution to the efforts of the sector."

Recognised as one of the UK's foremost authoritative voices in the hospitality industry, HOSPA's membership consists of senior industry professionals hailing from various strands of hospitality.

**For more information  
about HOSPA and the  
work it does, please visit  
[www.hospa.org](http://www.hospa.org)**

# HOSPA launches sustainability toolkit

The kit will help hotels prepare for a more climate conscious world.

**H**OSPA is to champion sustainability as it launches a toolkit to help hotels overhaul their processes – with a view to creating a more environmentally friendly and socially conscientious offering.

The toolkit provides both environmental and societal resources including simple guides, downloadable reports, practical advice and links to other useful websites – with the overarching aim of challenging the climatic and social impact of traditional hospitality processes.

Expert consultancy will help businesses reduce energy costs, as well as consumption, with HOSPA's partner Inspired Energy providing a complete utilities solution to support companies at every stage of their net zero journey.

The service launched on Friday 13th August and for a limited time will be available to anyone visiting the HOSPA website, but this will then eventually become exclusive to HOSPA members.

Jane Pendlebury, CEO of HOSPA, commented: "As we continue to recover from Covid, we must look to build a better and more resilient hospitality industry that's fit for the future. And as part of that, it's not just about financial recovery – it's clear that sustainability must be at the heart of the rebuilding process. After all, that's what sustainability is: the ability to continue in the long-term. This toolkit is our way of helping to guide our members and support them in their long-term sustainability journeys."

With an estimated contribution of around 2% to global carbon emissions, the magnitude of hotel emissions is significant and in need of collective, informed solutions. To achieve Net Zero, the industry must reduce its carbon emissions per room by 90% by 2050 (66% by 2030) – an ambitious

"The toolkit though is a work in progress – and probably always will be, which means HOSPA is open to ideas and new interpretations. We want this to be a collaborative effort and are actively looking for people or organisations with specific areas of understanding, so if you think you have something to add to the toolkit then do please reach out and get in touch."

yet attainable target. \* Source: UK Green Council and Sustainability Hospitality Alliance.

Jane continued: "Collaborating with sustainability experts such as Sarah Duncan of Sleeping Lion, who has been instrumental in creating the toolkit, has helped us develop an approachable guide to greener hospitality practice. At HOSPA we understand the climate crisis can be a daunting prospect, but we strongly believe that with the help of our new toolkit, progress can be achieved in a pragmatic but motivating way."

An internal survey of HOSPA members indicated that the majority of its members take sustainability seriously but recognise they have a long way to go. A comprehensive toolkit focussing on ethical and sustainable behaviour will help hotels get on the right path towards a greener future, which will naturally align with the wider environmental and

societal objectives of the UK.

Designed to help simplify this highly complex area and help companies make sustainability work for them, the toolkit understands that each business is unique, therefore a holistic approach is paramount, to ensure sustainable practice is accessible to all its members.

Sleeping Lion is a consultancy run by Sarah Duncan (author of The Ethical Business Book) which provides advice and guidance on ethical and sustainable business practices. Sarah's advice has helped shape the toolkit to ensure it meets the requirements of hospitality businesses thanks to her diverse experience in the sector.

Sarah Duncan, of Sleeping Lion, said: "Sustainability is a wide and complex area – and nobody is perfect. One of the biggest challenges is knowing where to start, and this is where the toolkit can help. It gives you a starting point to help you on the journey towards genuinely sustainable business practices."

She added: "The toolkit though is a work in progress – and probably always will be, which means HOSPA is open to ideas and new interpretations. We want this to be a collaborative effort and are actively looking for people or organisations with specific areas of understanding, so if you think you have something to add to the toolkit then do please reach out and get in touch."

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# That'll never catch on: A look at the current trends everyone needs to get into

Tristan Gadsby, CEO & founder, Alliants, the customer experience technology specialists, looks at the current state of the tech sector and why there's nothing to fear.

**T**he message from the pandemic has been that customer experience is at the centre of hospitality and that, against previous thinking, it can be aided and improved by the use of technology. Before customers were calling for service to be at arm's length for health reasons, the conventional thinking was that only people could create memorable experiences, particularly at the luxury level.

"Guests are used to being connected to all their services in their daily lives, there is no reason why hotels can't also do this and benefit from it. Guests expect seamless service, across the hotel segments, not just in the luxury brands. They want to see the digital and physical experience connected and then supported by communication on their preferred channel.

"The use of messaging gives venues the opportunity to deliver on the long-sought-after seamless experience. Not only can it help deliver a better guest experience, messaging is also a key enabler in driving ancillary revenues - we found that there was a 90% increase in spend for users of messaging. Messaging helps to create that relationship with the guest which drives lifetime loyalty, but on their terms.

"We expect to see more adoption of messaging, from an experience point of view but also because it helps venues to operate more efficiently, at a time when team members are at a premium.



If someone can book a service or order a new pillow using automation, it's one less thing for a member of staff to do, one less tedious task. This is an area where AI can be used in a number of ways, from translations to automated responses, suggested responses, as well as routing conversations to the right departments."

Alliants worked with one leading luxury chain to help them achieve the number one ranking for their digital experience by L2-Gartner. The experience was overhauled and delivered an integrated property and brand platform encompassing Chat, Mobile, Tablet, In-Room Dining, Concierge, and Residential.

The results were: 8% increase in guest satisfaction and improved engagement with a 30% increase in engagement, 13 million messages in 75+ languages across 10 messaging platforms - platforms the guest chose themselves - as well as growing the mix of direct bookings faster than any other channel including OTAs

"Automation should be used across an operation, with guests able to fill in their own details, meaning a better experience when they arrive at the hotel. There's no need to queue up to check in and be asked loads of questions about their address, about their credit card number. Instead it can be a warm welcome, the change to cement the relationship you've started to build before the stay, by offering a favourite drink or information about a local event which you know fits with the guest's interests.

"It's better for the guest and it's better for the team member if they're not stuck doing mind-numbing jobs but can instead concentrate on what we all want: a better experience. Staff retention can only improve if working in hospitality allows for more focus on human interaction and better use of everyone's time, guest and team included.

"Technology can also improve your knowledge of the guest and helps you to see them as individuals, which means not just personalisation, but recognition for their custom, what their preferences are and, if applicable, their loyalty.

"Guests are used to being connected to all their services in their daily lives, there is no reason why hotels can't also do this and benefit from it. Guests expect seamless service, across the hotel segments, not just in the luxury brands. They want to see the digital and physical experience connected and then supported by communication on their preferred channel."

People are used to sharing information about themselves and being rewarded for that and the hospitality sector needs to keep pace with those trends.

"Now, with trading starting to wobble back to more recognisable levels, may not seem like the time to invest in technology. Hospitality has been burned in the past by expensive systems, many of them still in place, which don't work as hoped, don't integrate with other systems and are difficult to use.

"Those days are thankfully behind us and improving your technology stack is no longer about months of ripping cabling out of walls and condemning your teams to weeks of mystifying training. Products are now in the cloud and much more intuitive than ever before.

"But it's not just enough to just improve the technology in your venue, it is part of how guests perceive the hotel and how they relate to your brand. So if you implement systems, your execution must be on brand: tools can lay the foundation but implementation can be the differentiation."

**Alliants works with companies including Four Seasons, Mollies and DHL, on delivering loyalty-garnering experiences.**

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## BDO

BDO's Leisure and Hospitality team provides accountancy and business advisory expertise. Our experienced specialists understand the unique challenges and opportunities that hotels, restaurants, and bars face.



## Amadeus

Amadeus' award-winning portfolio of solutions equips hospitality organizations of all sizes with the technology needed to drive profitable demand, increase operational efficiency, and deliver memorable guest experiences.



## FM Recruitment

FM Recruitment is a global search company, based in London. Part of Hospitality People Group, they specialise in Finance roles across the hospitality industry.



## Percipient

Percipient's cloud-based finance solutions are ideally suited to the hospitality sector, helping hoteliers to improve efficiency and drive innovation from the heart of the business.



## Infor

Infor Hospitality provides end-to-end scalable cloud-based solutions to serve hotels including PMS, RMS, Room Pricing, Sales & Catering, financials and analytics. Your trusted hospitality tech partner.



## RSM

RSM is a global provider of audit, tax and consulting services. Our specialist teams work with international hotel brands, family-run boutiques, serviced holiday accommodation providers and holiday resorts.







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# A thirst for events

Peter Heath, founder, Venue Performance, looks at what the events business has learned and what the future holds

**W**e've all had an absolute shocker during the pandemic, but we have come together, we have supported each other and we have realised that we can right the wrongs and do things better.

"We found that when we went to government as an industry to ask for help, there was very little coming our way and, in part, that was due to lack of proof. If you go to your boss wanting a pay rise they will want to see proof of your achievements.

"The government ignored us because we didn't know what was going on in our own industry and we suffered for it. But as a result, our sector has woken up to data and so now, if anybody should ask a question, whether it's a boss, or whether it's a government minister, then we can go back to a data source that is accurate and robust.

"So what is the data telling us? It's telling us to stop looking at 2019, because that's



that pond when the water is flowing, when you've travelled with your bottle full, you're probably not going to drink as much water because you didn't need replenishing. And that's what we expect to see with events

increases in costs and the other issues, companies will prioritise events.

"Conversely, this will probably mean the severe dampening of the sector's need (and desire) for virtual events. They are so depressingly ineffective and morale sapping (not to mention the cost), that they will be dropped like a hot stone. If we look at data for the number of events that have a virtual element, that have confirmed for 2022, they are dropping off a cliff early in the year.

"It won't disappear completely, because it has merits when you are operating internationally, but those big conferences will not be replaced by virtual events. Apple's latest product launch will be streamed, but not the networking and there will still be masses of people in the room. Everyone wants THAT invite.

"This year let's enjoy that pent-up demand. In all likelihood 2023 will be a slower year, but if history has told us anything, let's not look too far ahead. Let's drink from that pond today."

"This year, the analogy I like to give is of someone walking through a desert. Think about the heat and the sun and how, after two days without water, you suddenly come across a big pond. It's not a mirage, it's real water. And you're going to drink disproportionately from that pond.

gone; the world has changed, prices have changed, everything's changed. So if you're writing your budget based on 2019, that's possibly not the best strategy you should write your budget based on what you need to achieve in 2022 and beyond.

"This year, the analogy I like to give is of someone walking through a desert. Think about the heat and the sun and how, after two days without water, you suddenly come across a big pond. It's not a mirage, it's real water. And you're going to drink disproportionately from that pond.

"Now in 2023, when you think about

and this year the pent up demand is going to lead to unprecedented levels.

"In 2019, the average size of events was 59 people, in 2022 it's 81. That's a 37% increase. The average price in 2019 was £80 per head, in 2022 it's £109 per head, so a 36% increase. What those numbers show is that the world wants to meet again, we all want to meet again, we all want to do bigger and better than ever before. If you haven't had a party for years, when you do have a party, you're going to make it a good one. It's like we haven't met for years. Let's go crazy and even with all the

**Venue Performance provides whole market trends that enable you to instantly compare the key metrics of your establishment with the sector in general.**

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**A unique set of competitive benchmarking metrics specific to your business**

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**Performance Radar™ (a revolutionary tool that immediately surfaces areas of performance that stand out and deserve further attention)**

# The Metaverse: Will you be ready?

Craig Warner, a 25-year veteran of Hospitality IT, shares his vision of how hospitality could operate in the Metaverse.

It's an interesting question: will you be ready for something that for the most part is still hypothetical? It is difficult to think of let alone have a meeting about. To try to help you I'm going to use the iPhone as an analogy.

I can recall watching an interview of the late, Steve Jobs, the Apple CEO at the time, trying to explain to a reporter what the iPhone would become. This was three years before the iPhone launched, it was tough, the reporter couldn't see any appeal outside of enthusiasts. But Mr. Jobs knew his vision would shape the future and put the Internet Version 1.0 into all our pockets.

This is much the same when we try to imagine what the Metaverse will bring to our lives in hospitality. An easy way to think of it is sitting on the sofa at home with a cumbersome Virtual Reality headset

your favourite restaurant, hotel, or leisure venue, you invite friends to join you for an evening in/out, in the Metaverse and order a takeaway (food chains in my version of the future will bundle food delivery into the subscription).

The sophisticated wearables have come a long way from the headsets of today. Think of popping on a pair of sunglasses or swapping your contact lenses, dress in comfortable clothing with integrated real feel technology, and leave the physical world. You are now at your favourite restaurant brand or leisure venue. The 'Augmented Reality' software has blended your physical world food, cutlery, and drink seamlessly to the virtual world, your mind is completely convinced you are there, you can eat your physical food from the digital plate. Your friends arrive, what are they wearing? 'Clothing'

skin when you step off the plane, what if you could swim with dolphins and feel their skin with your hands? Stay away anytime with all your friends from anywhere in the world, all for a monthly subscription at the end of the cold dark day in February. All without physically leaving your home - a great step forward for sustainability too.

Turning to Meetings and Events, being involved in a very large property for the best part of 25 years I've seen tremendous change, I've seen first-hand that the traditional, four walls conference room is very much a thing of the past. You need to appeal to the demands of this generation of employers, employees, and their working environments and reflect and enhance this to attract them to somewhere different, somewhere that looks good on their Instagram. Right now, this costs a great deal and needs continually updating. Physical walls need knocking down and rebuilding, furniture must be replaced and then when finished it needs maintaining and is never quite as stunning as day one.

Imagine this. In five years you look at your venue space and the design meetings don't revolve around décor, artwork, and are the screens big enough, you are discussing the atmosphere processor, and I don't mean re-creating a night club, I mean creating an atmosphere in the venue space that can make the delegates feel the heat as they hold their sales meeting on the tropical island, or feel the crispness of Everest for their board meeting, or experience both on the same day! Some venues have invested vast amounts and indeed created amazing meeting rooms inside aquariums etc. As stunning as this is, every time you go back there you are twenty feet down in the same fish tank.

**Why are there so few big theme parks in the UK?**  
Because they take up so much space and are incredibly expensive to build and run. You could offer this, but you could offer this as just one of a hundred group participation options; parachuting, Grand Prix driving, wandering through the Amazon, the virtual world is only limited by our imagination.

on, feeling a little nauseous virtually walking into your hotel room in Dubai before your trip next week, or looking around a conference room, exhibition hall, or wedding venue. But all this is available now and is only scratching the surface. We need to open our minds much further.

Firstly, let's imagine this: you come home from work on a cold, dark February evening. You don't make your dinner and sit down to your TV streaming service, but instead, through a subscription to

that is not possible to manufacture in the physical world. From there the rest of the evening/weekend is down to you and your group. Hotel stay somewhere hot? OK, finish your meal and let's go.

For most the foreign holiday in the warm weather is at best an annual event, but what if you could visit your favourite destinations staying with your Leisure Brand of choice anytime, what if the wearable technology was so convincing that you could feel the warmth on your

Why are there so few big theme parks in the UK? Because they take up so much space and are incredibly expensive to build and run. You could offer this, but you could offer this as just one of a hundred group participation options; parachuting, Grand Prix driving, wandering through the Amazon, the virtual world is only limited by our imagination.

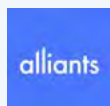
Back to my analogy. Steve Jobs never imagined that he and other smartphone manufacturers would transform photography from a hobby to a part of everyday life, he didn't know that social networks would develop specifically for everyone to share these photographs, indeed the iPhone was launched without the App Store.

I can't predict the future any more now than then and what you've read is just my thoughts on the many ways the Metaverse could develop but what I do know is that a lot of Science Fiction has turned into science fact over the last 22 years since we worried about the Millennium bug. And I believe this industry will be a very big part of the future both at work for business and the way everyone's free time is consumed. The vast majority of customers will want to be online in the Internet Version 2.0 and if your business is not there too, you'll be at a disadvantage.

As such the Metaverse really should be part of your long-term strategies, if only for now as monthly brainstorming to begin to understand and leverage the out-of-the-box opportunities the Metaverse will bring to Hospitality, Leisure, Meetings, and Events.

Imagine this. In five years you look at your venue space and the design meetings don't revolve around décor, artwork, and are the screens big enough, you are discussing the atmosphere processor, and I don't mean re-creating a night club,

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## Alliants

Alliants has helped some of the world's most respected luxury hotel brands transform their entire digital guest journey to deliver exceptional customer experiences.



## 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 18,000 clients in 145 countries.



## Oracle

Oracle Hospitality brings over 40 years of experience in providing technology solutions to independent hoteliers, global and regional chains, gaming, and cruise lines.



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The award-winning Profitroom platform is more than just the highest converting booking engine on the market - it's a powerful marketing automation tool, advanced channel manager and website builder all in one.



## Medallia

Medallia, the global leader in experience management, enables the hospitality industry to deliver personalized experiences and boost guest satisfaction through real-time insights and engagement.



## Bizzon

Bizzon is transforming the hospitality industry with the most agile end-to-end restaurant management platform for hotels. We replace POS, digital 'order and pay' and payment gateway with one solution.

Continued on page 21 →



# Energy Market Update from Inspired Energy

UK energy markets are currently experiencing growing volatility, with prices rising at a rapid pace. In this article, HOSPA member Inspired Energy provides an update as to what the main factors are, and what options you should take into consideration to protect your hospitality business.

## What is happening in the market?

Even before the Russian invasion of Ukraine, UK energy prices had hit record levels due to a raft of factors including post-COVID recovery and unfortunate weather conditions. However, the war in Ukraine and the possibility of disruptions to important Russian energy supplies has resulted in increased market premiums.

The Ukraine crisis has also affected the Nord Stream 2 pipeline. The 1,200km undersea pipeline, meant to ferry natural gas directly from Russia to northern Germany does not yet have an operating licence - and Germany has now put this on hold.

Traders anticipate that these issues will persist for some time, causing price premiums to extend far into the future. Europe has also introduced more stringent requirements to hit

90% gas storage by Winter 2022, increasing demand and prices for this coming Summer.

On-top of this, there are changes to the non-commodity (third-party) element of energy bills with the upcoming Targeted Charging Review (TCR) and introduction of the Green Gas Levy to consider.

## Could prices rise further?

Markets have reached this level of volatility without any disruption to supply. If actual disruption of EU supplies occurs, the markets will undoubtedly experience a further extreme reaction (at least initially), as parts of Europe would have trouble meeting demand from other sources. How the European gas market reacts to the ongoing political tensions will be critical to pricing going forward.

## What should I do if I have a renewal this year?

With current energy procurement buying challenges, it's a crucial time for decision making, as the cost of fixing at the wrong time could cost your business thousands.

It's always best to speak to an expert to access the right advice and strategy for your business. We recommend that you don't wait and hope that prices will come down for a fixed renewal, even if the renewal is not until October. Inspired Energy's experts offer a clear view of the market and work with you to understand your business' requirements to ensure you're protected, now and in the future.

**For more information, please contact Wayne Brown, Partner Account Director [wayne.brown@inspiredenergy.co.uk](mailto:wayne.brown@inspiredenergy.co.uk)**

# #WhyILoveHospitality

A huge contributor to the UK economy, not only does it provide jobs to hundreds of thousands of people, but it also delivers a service for the public that practically everyone enjoys and experiences.

And the wonderful thing about this is that most of the time (business travellers excluded!) people are doing it purely for pleasure. They're simply out to relax and to do the things they enjoy in life.

Given this then, it's tremendously rewarding to be able to say you work in a sector that offers so much joy to so many people.

It's something though that's often overlooked when it comes to our industry's reputation. We've talked many times before about how, all too often, hospitality is regarded as a steppingstone or a stop gap on the way to bigger and better things. We're seen as a temporary fix – something to sustain people in pursuit of longer-term career plans and goals. Or as a part time option to fit around other life commitments.

However, the truth is, that hospitality should be the long-term plan. There is an enormous wealth of opportunity within the sector. But, not only that, there's an enormous opportunity to spread joy.

Hospitality, more so than most industries, provides the chance to really make a difference to someone's day. Special occasions, landmark events, milestone birthdays – people turn to us to celebrate the things in life that are the most important to them.

But, despite this, we're beset by recruitment and retention issues. Many people left the industry during the pandemic, whilst others have been hugely impacted by Brexit, with a lot of workers returning to continental Europe – a situation compounded by the fact it's one way traffic. Workers are leaving, but we've no influx to replace them.

Given all the other pressures associated with the last few years of the pandemic and with margins tighter than ever, a recruitment crisis is yet another strain on our already embattled sector.

At HOSPA, we want to help. And, with all of the above in mind, we're encouraging people to shout about why they love hospitality via social media using the #WhyILoveHospitality hashtag.

What makes this industry such a good one to work in? How did you start out? What brings happiness in your daily role? What have you seen that brings you joy?

By sharing this on social channels, we're hoping to help create a groundswell of positivity about what makes hospitality such a wonderful industry to work in. By fostering a narrative built on the positives, we hope to make it a more attractive prospect for those considering their career path.

We've already had several hospitality professionals share short videos with us – and we'd love it if you'd do the same.

## Share Your Success

In a similar vein to #WhyILoveHospitality, another campaign we're seeking to push is that of Share Your Success.

Hospitality is that rare beast, where you can genuinely rise from the lowest rung of the ladder to the very top. People, having started as a part time pot washer in their teenage years, can go on to become general managers and even higher. The sky really is the limit in hospitality when it comes to career progression.

But we don't just want you and others to take our word for it. We want those who've done that very thing – achieved success in the industry – to share it with others. Have you risen from humble beginnings? Or have you, perhaps having initially regarded hospitality as a short-term solution, found your true calling and realised your potential?

People across all sectors often stumble unexpectedly onto a career

path and hospitality is no different. However, what we're hoping to do is guide people and at least point them in the right direction.

Within the Share Your Success campaign, alongside sharing individual's stories through HOSPA's channels to hopefully inspire, we'll also be seeking to reach out to their former schools.

If we're ever to be regarded as a bona fide career option for young people just starting out, we need to ensure we're approaching grass roots and helping them to appreciate the truly excellent opportunities available to them in hospitality.

By showcasing real world examples and saying "Look, 15, 20, 30 years ago, this person was in your place now – and this is where they are now" we can make that appear like a genuinely achievable prospect by making it relatable.

At HOSPA, as an organisation that specialises in personal development, we know how far people can go in this industry. We just want more people to understand that.

So please, join us in both sharing your success and in showing why you love hospitality.

Let's create an outpouring of positivity from those who know the industry best – those who already work in, and love, the sector. By showing everyone just why it's so great, we can help to convince people to join us.

**To Share Your Success with us, please visit the HOSPA website via [www.hospa.org/share-your-success](http://www.hospa.org/share-your-success) and fill in the form. To share why you love hospitality, simply post on social using the hashtag #WhyILoveHospitality and tag us in using @hospatweets on Twitter, @HOSPAUK on Facebook or @HOSPA on LinkedIn and we'll share in turn.**

# Top Predictions for CX in 2022

If we've learned one thing from 2020 and 2021, it's that the world has changed and we are not going back to the way things were.

As we look ahead to 2022, it's clear that customer and employee experience have become the most critical functions - disciplines, philosophies, technologies, strategic approaches, levers, you name it - that organisations can use to drive growth.

These are the foundation for both business operations and strategy. And you, as customer and employee experience professionals, are on the frontlines leading this charge.

To get - and to stay - ahead in this new world, brands must understand who their customers and employees are and how they are interacting across all of their key journeys and touchpoints. It's how organisations can best adapt and innovate to meet rising expectations, overcome unpredictable market conditions, and deliver seamless experiences.

To help you on this critical journey, we've tapped our leading customer and employee experience experts within Medallia to get their thoughts about what to expect in the coming year.

Here are their big, bold claims about what experience leaders may encounter in 2022 and beyond.

Let's dive in and take the future of experience to new heights with our Top Five.

Customers frequently prefer to communicate by speaking rather than typing - look at the investments companies like Google and Amazon have made in voice assistants - and so speech solutions can open up a valuable seam of additional insights.

## What we expect to see in 2022 and beyond across industries and experiences

### 1 Customer and employee experience will achieve even greater influence over c-suite.

Following their meteoric rise to the top during the pandemic, customer experience and employee experience have a seat at the executive table in a way a lot of us hadn't seen before. I expect both to continue to gain prominence within the C-suite over the next year.

Both functions truly enabled companies to pivot, reinvent, and evolve - driving innovative efforts like curbside pickup programs and initiatives to reskill physical branch employees into contact centre agents to support a new business model.

The question for 2022 is: How do we use this newfound prominence of employee and customer experience to help our companies innovate around experiences going forward?

For one example, let's take the case of how companies can optimise experiences in real time leveraging the right data. This will look different across industries, but I predict top category leaders of the future will be those that figure out how to tap customer data to solve and enhance customer experience in the moment, versus simply using their CX and EX programs for backward-looking measurement and analysis.  
*Elena Hutchison, Strategy and Product Marketing EVP.*

### 2 We will see the dawn of a new values-driven era.

Every customer and employee experience will incorporate and reflect individual values. There won't be any agnostic experiences anymore. Even the ice cream that we buy from the trucks rolling through the neighbourhood will reflect

humane treatment of animals, clean air, and community giving. Or, maybe it will reflect personal freedom, religion, and national pride. Every brand will seek to embed the expression of values in every experience that also reflects what that brand stands for. More and more, a person's choice of experiences will become part of their personal identity and expression of values, such that experience and identity will be two sides of the same coin. *Dan Brousseau, Financial Services Solution Principal.*

### 3 Customer signals will be the new customer survey.

While brands have long used surveys to capture customer feedback, in the future, brands won't have to ask customers how they feel - they will be able to understand it and know it by picking up on customer signals and behaviour across every touchpoint and interaction. *Sarika Khanna, Chief Product Officer.*

### 4 New voice and video technologies will fuel customer experience programs and help organizations reduce churn.

I expect to see video and voice playing an outsized role in organisations' customer experience programs, on account of the opportunities they offer for two-way communication. Customers frequently prefer to communicate by speaking rather than typing - look at the investments companies like Google and Amazon have made in voice assistants - and so speech solutions can open up a valuable seam of additional insights. We're seeing organisations tap into rich, AI-powered speech and video insights at scale, and this can really help them to generate



After all, the pandemic highlighted employees' amazing ability to keep things running, even in extremely challenging circumstances, such as shifting to home-based work or becoming frontline workers responsible for customer health.

intelligent interventions to mitigate churn risk and guide actions to optimise customer experiences. *hristopher Colley, Emea Solution Principal.*

## 5 Leading brands will treat their employees like customers.

In 2022, top companies will stand apart by turning their customer playbooks inward to design and manage critical employee journeys, capturing employee feedback much more often than once a year, and unlocking employee observations to continuously improve and innovate.

Taking these steps will be the new imperative. After all, the pandemic highlighted employees' amazing ability to keep things running, even in extremely challenging circumstances, such as shifting to home-based work or becoming frontline workers responsible for customer health. And now the great resignation is highlighting how tenuous companies' hold on their employees can be. *Elena Hutchison, Strategy And Product Marketing EVP.*

The talent crunch won't be going away any time soon, and the winners will be those that can recruit, develop, and retain the best teams. That's why 2022 will be a time to dial up the people side of the equation, truly make employee experience as important as customer experience, and take a fresh look at the entire people puzzle: leadership, power, politics, structure, culture, compensation, people development, empowerment and enablement, and DEI. *Dan Brousseau, Financial Services Solution Principal.*

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## LiBi

LiBi - Love it. Buy it - is an innovative, new ecommerce platform that makes hotels shoppable - a stock and hassle-free incremental revenue stream.



## BT

BT Wi-Fi has been at the forefront of BT Group's connectivity services since 2002. We are the UK's leader in wi-fi, with over 5.5 million public hotspots and more than 1.6 million daily users.



## Yooz

Yooz provides the smartest, most powerful and easiest-to-use cloud-based Purchase-to-Pay (P2P) automation solution. It delivers unmatched savings, speed and security with affordable zero-risk subscriptions.



## Keystep Solutions

Keystep Solutions is a globally supplier of commercial access control solutions, specialising in contactless electronic locks, digital key and access management systems for Hotels and Resorts.



## Wifirst

Wifirst provides Fully Managed WiFi as a Service. Increase your guest satisfaction and benefit from financial peace of mind. No capital required, low monthly cost.



## Harri

Harri is the end to end employee experience platform for hospitality. From hiring staff, to scheduling, payroll and training, Harri supports the entire employee journey.

Continued on page 24 →

# Dakota Hotels Styles Digital Transformation with Sage Intacct and Percipient

10 week deployment builds scale, cuts costs and drives sustainability for boutique hotel group.

Starting its journey with two unique hotels on the outskirts of Edinburgh, and Eurocentral near Glasgow, Dakota Hotels has since expanded to provide luxury accommodation in Glasgow, Leeds and Manchester.

Built around an ethos of doing the simple things brilliantly, Dakota Hotels' luxury lifestyle brand is synonymous with style; impeccable service; sociable dining experiences; and a belief that it's the detail that really matters.

From a sincere greeting, and crafting the perfect gin and tonic, to perfecting beds with the finest linen, Dakota puts the substance into style.

## Creating Room for Growth

Its acquisition of two new hotels in Leeds and Manchester in 2020 expedited Dakota's need for a new business platform, as its existing Sage 50 solution could no longer keep pace with the needs of the business.

With a business model that sees individual hotels running their own P&L, the new platform needed to be cloud-based, and support a multi-entity model, providing autonomy while delivering consolidation, reporting and intelligence at a group level.

Dakota Hotels selected Sage Intacct based on its ease of use, dashboards and reporting, value and scale, while Percipient was chosen on the basis of its impressive credentials in hospitality, and as Sage's Intacct's UK partner of the year.

As members of HOSPA, Percipient's synergy and understanding of the industry shone through and the strong

cultural fit across the teams was evident from the start.

## Expediting Time to Value

Dakota went live with Sage Intacct in June 2021 following a rapid deployment which took just 10 weeks.

"Percipient really did bring so much value to this project," Sam Hartley, Finance Director, Dakota Hotels, comments. "The team's knowledge of the hospitality industry and experience of similar Sage Intacct deployments meant that we were incredibly focused on our project goals, and went live

non-financial employees are now able to view key business and financial insights as needed.

Month end can be done at the click of a button rather than the time consuming manual re-keying of data which was standard practice previously. Dakota Hotels can now run this in a matter of hours rather than days, and has information at its fingertips to make adjustments on the fly where needed.

"Using Sage Intacct, we can manipulate data by an inordinate number of categories, by hotel, department, floor, room or time period," Sam explains. "At any given point we

"The setup of the system was fairly straightforward, helped hugely by the cloud deployment model. And Percipient's Cloud Connect API-led integration technology, which allowed Sage Intacct to easily integrate with Dakota's other core systems, including PMS and procurement platforms, was also key."

within just a few months."

"The setup of the system was fairly straightforward, helped hugely by the cloud deployment model. And Percipient's Cloud Connect API-led integration technology, which allowed Sage Intacct to easily integrate with Dakota's other core systems, including PMS and procurement platforms, was also key."

## Elevating the Role of Finance

Now live, Sage Intacct represents a real game changer for the company, as even

have access to one version of the truth, and can spot anomalies, patterns or opportunities. The value of this real-time insight is that problems can be headed off before they become business risks, and opportunities can be leveraged to drive increased service or profitability while the window is most open. We also have a live group position which was difficult to achieve before, as the process relied upon input from each of the hotels. "

"The time savings we've accrued have freed up resources to focus on value generation, idea creation

and innovation, allowing our finance professionals to move away from number crunching to become value creators.”

A good example of this value in practice is around Dakota Hotels’ labour planning KPIs. Labour challenges as a result of both Brexit and the pandemic have resulted in the group having to be creative in the way resources are deployed. Live visibility of rotas mean that the management team can prioritise, redeploy and bridge gaps in order to uphold services and maintain standards which is vital for a brand built upon service and sincerity.

## Energy for Change

One of Dakota Hotels’ most innovative, and fundamental ideas to be facilitated by Sage Intacct is around energy usage across its portfolio of hotels.

“We viewed the recent lockdowns and associated drop in demand for our hotels, as an opportunity to better understand our energy costs and consumption, and establish a benchmark from which to make improvements,” Sam comments.

“Using sensors and meters, we

collect data from a range of areas, and Sage Intacct contextualises and presents this insight to key roles around the business, from maintenance team personnel to hotel managers. The granularity of this information means that we can compare trends, review both our electricity costs and consumption, and make adjustments, which benefit both the bottom line and our sustainability credentials.”

“As well as being able to demonstrate our initiative to an increasingly environmentally-conscious consumer, we have been able to reduce our energy bills by tens of thousands of pounds each year. At a time where costs are under close scrutiny this has been incredibly welcome as both a short term saving as well as a long term one. As we move increasingly towards renewable energy usage, the system will be crucial in evaluating its value against other sources.”

## Unleashing Potential

“Sage Intacct has quickly become the backbone of our business, and going forward, we’re looking forward

to leveraging its capabilities to further automate and innovate,” Sam concludes.

“While the cloud has undoubtedly become pivotal in modernising and innovating in 2022 and beyond, people really are the heart of our business. Sage Intacct will be key to helping our employees to unleash their potential, deliver value and become more strategic going forward. This ability to focus on our ethos and guests, rather than spending time looking for data, will accelerate our journey and underpin our future growth plans, and we look forward to embracing this with both Sage Intacct and Percipient as key partners.”

### Award-Winning Business Partner

**Percipient specialise in giving hospitality businesses a clear view of their performance using the latest cloud-based finance technology. For more information or to book a free, no-obligation demo, call the team on 01606 871332 or email [info@percipient.co.uk](mailto:info@percipient.co.uk).**





# Lookers to bookers: How to convert website traffic into guests

Samantha Williams, Commercial Director at Profitroom, a provider of SaaS technology and hotel marketing services, looks at how hoteliers can convert website traffic into guests.

Direct bookings are becoming increasingly important for hotels, with many choosing to make real investments in order to drive website traffic. With ever more crowded OTAs, hoteliers are not only fighting to stand out — but they are also missing out on a significant proportion of revenue per booking. Reinventing your booking engine then, is a great way to solve this issue. Many hotel marketers though are often

and tourism market in 2021 and this is forecasted to rise exponentially.

Direct bookings are a key step to maximising your revenues and with commission rates typically obtained by OTAs lying between 15% and 30% of the total booking cost, many more hoteliers are looking to technology solutions to solve the problem.

It takes a lot of skill and technical know-how to produce a high performing website

contacts to its database to drive £100k in revenue per year. Once the guest is on your website then, the last thing you want is for them to leave because they've found a better deal elsewhere.

Special sign up discounts are a great way to encourage the transfer of personal contact data, especially if applied immediately in return. For example, offering a newsletter sign-up option to the guests and applying a discount instantly to the new subscribers, is a great way to obtain this information.

**“With such an alarming shopping basket abandonment rate of 82.7% in the hospitality industry, hoteliers now, more than ever, need to consider the potential impact that a data-centric approach to hotel marketing could have on their business.”**

guilty of focusing primarily on website visitors, rather than focusing on the final steps of a hotel's booking funnel and those prospective guests that are most likely to convert. The hotel industry has a whopping 82.7% shopping basket abandonment rate, meaning more than 4 in 5 online shopping orders will typically be abandoned. But how do you make sure this doesn't happen?

## Lost opportunity

Website and basket abandonment impacts not just immediate revenue, but also long term revenue. Statistics show that OTAs accounted for a 66% revenue share of sales channels of the global travel

and it's important you make sure your hotel website is not just unique, but also easy-to-navigate. Your website is an opportunity to make your brand shine within a highly competitive online landscape - preventing those lost opportunities.

## How to recover abandoned revenue opportunities. It's about give and take

When a guest books with you, they provide invaluable data that you can utilise in order to bring them back. In fact, our analysis shows that a hotel with an average ADR of £200 and an average stay of two nights just needs to add 12,000 new

## Content is key

High-resolution images and video capabilities are hugely important in creating a great website. A good image is worth a thousand words and a good video is worth even more. Despite this, a staggering number of hotels still don't have professional imagery and even fewer have video content for their properties. People look across multiple platforms to build their confidence in your property – and imagery is integral in building that.

## Wow them with extras

Most OTAs are focused on selling rooms and that's it – so why not focus on offering packages and extras? Many hotels, unfortunately, resort to discount voucher websites to boost their ancillary services sales, however, guests are increasingly looking for unique experiences. Having a spa or other leisure elements at your hotel

is a valuable asset, so get creative in how to maximise the impact of these facilities on revenue. Furthermore, offering additional customisable add-ons can present a real opportunity to increase revenue – for instance, champagne on arrival.

### Personalisation is key

When you combine CRM segmentation and automated messaging with powerful data-driven insights, this will help to drive revenue, grow guest engagement and nurture long-term relations. Easy-to-use tools can make personalisation simple and enable you to effortlessly maintain contact with guests by using their data to automate relevant offers and content.

In this increasingly digital age, there are still instances when your guests will prefer a phone call — either looking for more information on the hotel or planning a slightly more complex itinerary. In all cases, this is a great opportunity to build a relationship and wow the guest. Yet, in the vast majority of these cases, the hotel staff are juggling multiple balls at the same time, especially during out of office hours or weekends – which is coincidentally when many guests might have more time to plan their travel and therefore make the phone call.

Only a very small percentage of hotels will ever confirm an over the phone quote in writing, let alone attempt to upsell or follow up on their offers. So doing this can really help you stand out, while also enabling you to highlight attractive upsells that might pique their interest and increase your revenues.

Samantha Williams, Commercial Director at Profitroom, commented: "With such an alarming shopping basket abandonment rate of 82.7% in the hospitality industry, hoteliers now, more than ever, need to consider the potential impact that a data-centric approach to hotel marketing could have on their business. At Profitroom we have refined our technology to optimise direct bookings and streamline your automated marketing — all with the universal aim of increasing profits. With the financial impacts of the pandemic still being felt across the hospitality industry, optimising revenue streams is becoming a priority for many hotels and Profitroom have all the tools to help turn those lookers into bookers."

# The Overview Sponsors listings



## RMS

The fastest growing Property Management System in the world, RMS Cloud is renowned for leading technology solutions for the global hospitality industry.



## Aruba

Aruba is redefining wired, wireless and WAN access for today's intelligent edge mobility and IoT requirements in the global hospitality industry.



## Sky

Sky offers hoteliers a range of flexible products and solutions to keep guests entertained. With an unrivaled choice of channels in rooms to unmissable sports action.



## Crave

Crave Interactive are experts in creating outstanding digital service solutions for hospitality businesses worldwide. Our solutions range from intelligent mobile order and pay to multi-service hotel solutions.



## FreedomPay

The award-winning FreedomPay Commerce Platform operates on a single, unified technology stack across multiple continents allowing enterprises to deliver an innovative Next Level experience on a global scale



## Nonius

Nonius provides the most complete Guest Technology solutions portfolio for a Digital Guest Journey. All solutions are built in-house allowing highly integrated and competitive offers.

Continued on page 29 →

# HOSPA celebrates outstanding learners at its annual awards ceremony

HOSPA has announced its 2021 'Learners of the Year' for its Professional Development Programmes in Financial Management, Revenue Management and Asset Management – with the winners revealed at an awards ceremony hosted at The Savoy Hotel in London on Tuesday 8th February.

An annual event, the ceremony celebrates those who have gone above and beyond their programme requirements, acknowledging those who have stood out in their field, with the winners determined via ongoing assessments held throughout their course.

The top three learners for 2021 in their respective Professional Development Programmes, were:

## REVENUE MANAGEMENT LEARNER OF THE YEAR

Samantha Delmont, Revenue Manager, Headland Hotel and Spa.

## FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT LEARNER OF THE YEAR

Samantha Short, Financial Reporting Analyst, MGallery Hotel Collection.

## ASSET MANAGEMENT LEARNER OF THE YEAR

Penn Chai, Digital and Operational Project Lead, Heyward Group.

The three winners received trophies to mark their achievements, as well as complimentary day delegate passes for HOSPACE 2022 – HOSPA'S annual conference, which will be held at the Royal Lancaster London on 17th November 2022.

## EMPLOYER OF THE YEAR

Right Revenue.

Alongside the individuals who picked up awards, HOSPA also recognised the Employer of the Year. Right Revenue won the award this year, as the firm was commended for its outstanding commitment to professional development.

The programmes provide the skills and knowledge for those hospitality professionals who are seeking to excel in their careers in hospitality finance, revenue or asset management.

With both introductory and advanced levels available, the course modules have been specifically written for the hospitality sector by specialist educators and industry leaders. Moreover, they recognise the need for learners to continue full-time work whilst studying. The Financial Management, Revenue Management and Asset Management programmes are offered in three separate certificates, with each taking five months to complete.

Samantha Delmont, Samantha Short and Penn Chai all received a glass trophy to mark their achievements, with the trophies kindly sponsored by FM Recruitment and Edwards & Finn – the overall sponsors of the event – while those in attendance were also able to enjoy The Savoy's famed afternoon tea.

The highest achieving learners at the 2021 HOSPA Professional Development Learner Awards were:

## SEPTEMBER COHORT 2020 WINNERS

### Revenue Management Level 1

Rachael Crossan - Da Vinci's Hotel Derry

### Finance Management Level 2

Lucy Cole - BDO Consulting

### Revenue Management Level 2

Rachel Ironside - Raithwaite Trading Company Limited

### Finance Management Level 3

Simon Grech - Domus Zamittello, Malta

### Revenue Management Level 3

Emily Cox - EC4 Hotels Limited - T/A Cedar Court Hotels

## MARCH COHORT 2021 WINNERS

### Finance Management Level 1

Pedro Delgado - SBE

### Revenue Management Level 1

Stephanie Gillingham - Vine Hotels

### Revenue Management Level 2

David Kneeshaw - Surya Hotels  
Inna Nekrassova - Four Seasons Hotel Collection UK



### **Finance Management Level 3**

Lucy Cole - BDO Consulting

### **Revenue Management Level 3**

Kirsty Kelly - Right Revenue

Alice Valle - The Beaumont Hotel

### **SEPTEMBER COHORT 2021 WINNERS**

#### **Foundation Certificate in Hospitality**

##### **Finance Management**

Robert May - Guestline

James Surridge - Guestline

#### **Foundation Certificate in Revenue**

##### **Management**

Tara Scully - Windward Management

#### **Professional Certificate in Operational**

##### **Revenue Management**

Amanda Brady

#### **Professional Certificate in Operational**

##### **Hospitality Finance Management**

Samantha Short – Queens Hotel

Cheltenham

#### **Foundation Certificate In Asset**

##### **Management**

Joseph Hardiman – Valor Hospitality

Commenting on the awards, HOSPA Chief Executive, Jane Pendlebury said: "Our learners, as ever, have worked so hard over the past year – and it's wonderful to be able to celebrate their achievements face-to-face again. HOSPA's educational courses are an enormously rewarding step on the career path but completing them needs serious commitment given they go hand-in-hand with working life. The learners recognised today though, have gone beyond that – excelling in their respective fields and really demonstrating an understanding of their specialism that sets them apart. A

"The past two years have, more than ever, shown us the value of talented individuals within our industry. Hospitality has faced enormous challenges and it's the people - talented individuals within talented teams - who have seen us through."



huge well done to all of them for their endeavours."

Jane added: "As ever, we would also like to thank our sponsors, Edwards & Finn; and FM Recruitment, for their continued support this year."

Speaking at the event Harry Murray, HOSPA President, commented on the importance of education, saying: "This is always a very special day of celebration presenting the awards to the outstanding learners and highest achievers of the year in HOSPA's Professional Development Programme. The hospitality industry is facing huge staffing challenges & it is important that hospitality leaders invest in their people and offer career paths. Apprenticeships, learning on the job, opportunities for

all, diversity, inclusion and work life balance is the positive way forward. I applaud HOSPA & thank their sponsors for leading the way with their highly successful online programmes."

Michael Heyward, Head of Professional Development at HOSPA and CEO & Founder of the Heyward Group, said: "The past two years have, more than ever, shown us the value of talented individuals within our industry. Hospitality has faced enormous challenges and it's the people – talented individuals within talented teams – who have seen us through. At today's ceremony, we've been recognising the next generation of talent, who will, I'm sure, all contribute enormously to our sector. Not just the award winners themselves, but all of those who've embarked on a HOSPA Professional Development Programme, have shown tremendous commitment and dedication to self-improvement – self-improvement that will help hospitality as a whole move forward. A huge well done, and thank you, to them all."

# Nothing lasts forever

“I keep predicting the death of Mag Card, but hoteliers just won’t turn off life support, so it’s been taken out of their hands by the electronic lock suppliers”

For a decade I have been predicting the end of mag card, but it just never seems to happen. I thought Covid would tip everyone over the edge, but I was wrong. So, what Covid couldn’t do the electronic lock suppliers have done and they have all ended support for mag card systems. This has left many hoteliers in a precarious position with lock systems that are decades old, no spare parts and no support.

One thing the Covid-19 crisis has exposed, as if we didn’t already know? is how slow the hospitality sector has been to embrace new technology. The crisis exposed fragmented standalone systems, magnetic card locking systems, PMS, in room technology (a TV and Phone) that are decades out of date and almost no deployment of mobile apps for guests across the sector.

Although there have been massive leaps in the technology the magnetic key card is still king and used by most hotels in the UK. The reason being that it is incredibly expensive to change every lock in a hotel for a newer system and will continue to be a barrier to advances such as guests using their mobile phone

to open their hotel rooms.

The next generation of hotel door locking solutions such as “Opendoor” enables the use of guests Smartphone’s to gain door entry. The Locks read keycards and guests Smartphone’s without the need for any direct contact with the lock itself. For guests weary of long queues at reception after a lengthy journey or business travellers on a tight schedule, Smartphone Access to their rooms is the silver bullet that can allow them to save vital time and ensure their satisfaction.

If you think guests don’t care about the locks on the bedroom doors, during a recent installation of our “Opendoor” Lock Solution regular guests asked for rooms that had been converted to our RFID locks as there were so fed up with the old Mag Card locks failing. From a guest satisfaction point of view, it really made a difference to them!

The industry is about to be forced to deal with some challenges that have been ignored for the last decade, failing legacy mag card systems with no upgrade path, the end of support for Windows 7 and rising guest expectations means that operators who have managed with their old mag card system

will almost find it impossible to operate their hotels within the next 3 years if they don’t make the move to the next generation of RFID locks. Senior decision makers need to start planning for the capital expenditure and implementations they will have to carry out over the next few years. It may be slow to start, but there is going to be a rush to the exits!

In the past one large global company has dominated the door locking sector for decades with magnetic card lock systems, but with no easy upgrade to RFID and eye watering costs they have lost their hold on the sector. More agile and service driven companies like Keystep Solutions have taken the lead in developing RFID solutions from the ground up instead of clinging to the past.

As a primary method to strengthen relationships with today’s increasingly technologically minded guests, mobile technology’s multiple advantages are becoming increasingly obvious. What merits further analysis, however, are the specific services and features that a property should strongly consider making available on a mobile app.

With consumers demonstrating that they are willing to retry an app only once or twice, it is becoming even more imperative that hoteliers implement a solution which is seamless, and which provides guests with the tools they seek in order to streamline their hotel-stay experience. The overall result is that many hoteliers are beginning to take investment in mobile engagement much more seriously.

iOS 15 and watchOS 8 now has the ability to add hotel room keys to the Wallet app on the iPhone and Apple Watch, allowing you to gain access to your hotel room by simply tapping your iPhone or Apple Watch against a card reader. Apple’s announcement is only the start of something new. In



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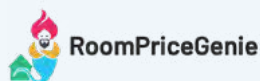
fact, Apple's facial recognition security feature makes these digital keys even more secure than physical keys or digital apps. Google will quickly follow Apple's lead; this technology will open new doors for the future of hotels.

As if that wasn't enough, digital hotel room keys will be able to use the new UWB protocol, opening the door without guests even needing to take their phone out of their pocket! This will really make it feel like the future of the hotel room is here.

It will take some time before Apple and their partners roll out these new solutions and it will take even more time before hotels finally let mag card die, but in the end, it will be guests that decide which technology will prevail. I don't think it is too hard to see which option guests will choose. Once contactless and mobile enabled door locks start appearing on our front doors at home guests will want their hotel rooms to have the same functionality.

**Andrew Evans is the Chief Executive Officer of Keystep Solutions who is a specialist provider of IT Services, Access Control, Door Locking and Security Systems in the UK and Europe. Keystep Solutions are the leading supplier to the Hotel sector and are trusted to provide a comprehensive range of intelligent locking and security solutions. Our clients include a selection of the largest Groups, as well as many smaller independent operators. If you would like more information sales@keystep.co.uk**

# The Overview Sponsors listings



## RoomPriceGenie

RoomPriceGenie is an easy-to-use solution that connects to your PMS or Channel Manager, automates great pricing and increases your revenue.



## Sophos

Traditional security can't keep up with the constantly changing threat landscape. Sophos solutions deliver the world's best protection by combining the most powerful AI engine with unmatched exploit and ransomware protection.



## eproductive

eProductive is a specialist technology company providing EPS, the people management system for hotels, providing a bespoke and secure, cloudbased system.



## Kerry Roberts Associates

The Financial Recruitment Specialists to the Hospitality and Leisure Industries. Kerry Robert Associates are the specialist Financial Recruitment Consultancy to the hospitality and leisure industries.

The Overview is brought to you by:



The Hospitality Professionals Association

HOSPA is the association helping Hospitality's specialist leaders to develop their careers and network, as well as keep up to date with industry trends and developments. We offer a wide and growing range of opportunities for members, from networking meetings and webinars which address specific topics to extensive professional development programme and the latest industry data disseminated through a variety of mediums.



# Frontdesk: Q&A with Jane Pendlebury

Jane Pendlebury, HOSPA CEO, contributed to the The State of Hospitality 2022 insight report, published by Sommet Education. We catch up with her Q&A.

**K**ickstarting her career with a degree in Hotel Management, Jane worked with both chain and independent hotels. Thereafter, Jane spent many years assisting hotels with their technology decisions on Property Management, Point of Sale and Revenue Management, ending up as Vice-President and General Manager of Agilysys in Europe.

Her relationship with HOSPA was first as a sponsor and member, then after volunteering her time assisting with the HOSPACE Conference and Exhibition she was taken on as Head of HOSPA Membership and Events Office, before being promoted to CEO.

premium salaries. Given the impact of the pandemic on revenues, meeting these salary expectations is enormously difficult for many struggling operators.

**What are the reasons for this, and what initiatives are you taking to address these gaps?** Brexit, the pandemic and the overall industry image are all causes – creating an unfortunate cocktail of challenges to overcome. At HOSPA, we're very much aware of the issues and trying to do what we can to assuage them wherever possible. Recently we've launched #ShareYourSuccess – a campaign that seeks to encourage those who've achieved success in the

technology in particular, but practically every area is in need of an influx of talent. It's an excellent time for anyone to join the industry as the need is very much there.

**What is the role of, or the need from, education and training providers to support this?** Personal development is a key part of job satisfaction. If an individual feels like they're standing still and not achieving anything of note in the workplace it's all too easy for them to look to pastures new and a fresh challenge. By actively encouraging professional development and supporting staff in this, you help to ensure that there's a sense of reward and growth, but it also helps to tie employees in for a period of time. Those committed to a course of learning won't be keen to jump ship before it's concluded – helping you to avoid the downside of those keen to job hop. While it also positions you as an employer who's keen to foster personal growth – something that helps to build longer term loyalty with staff.

Personal development is a key part of job satisfaction. If an individual feels like they're standing still and not achieving anything of note in the workplace it's all too easy for them to look to pastures new and a fresh challenge.

**What are the main issues and challenges facing your members in terms of employment/skills shortages (including specific roles)?** The UK Hospitality industry has very much been impacted by the effects of Brexit on the labour market. Within continental Europe, Hospitality is often regarded as a 'noble' profession and something to be proud of – but UK attitudes tend to see it as a stop gap, a short-term option. With many EU workers having either returned home, or simply looking elsewhere for work, we've been left with a shortfall. Not only this though, good candidates are now spoilt for choice and can command

industry to celebrate and showcase this to encourage others to join us. Alongside this, we're actively pushing #WhyILoveHospitality as a concept, urging people to highlight and shout about just what it is that makes them love the industry. The problems outlined above were also big focuses at our annual conference, HOSPACE, with several sessions dedicated to the topic.

**What are the emerging talent areas that are needed?** It's pretty much across the board. Within HOSPA's specialisms though, we're seeing opportunities in finance, revenue management and

**What can be done by government, and other industry/ sector bodies, to help organisations attract, develop and retain talent?** Hospitality is one of the largest employers in the UK, contributing an enormous amount to the economy. It often feels this impact isn't recognised or indeed appreciated. I'd love for our contribution to be properly valued! Something that would have hugely helped was a reduction in VAT, which would have an enormous benefit on Hospitality operators struggling to stay afloat amidst the current financial climate.

# Reimagining the guest journey at Sea Containers London

Sea Containers London, managed by Lore Group, is an incredible hotel located in the heart of London. It surprises its guests with its brutalist architecture, incredible views over the River Thames, but especially with its flawless guest journey.

**N**onius had the honour of starting a partnership with the hotel and as a result of the pandemic, this relationship expanded to provide guests with a contactless experience.

## A use case for innovation, adaptation and cooperation

The Covid-19 pandemic created a huge challenge for hoteliers and Sea Containers London "Re-imagined the Guest Journey", developing a new operational approach to give guests confidence about their well-being, and increasing operational efficiency while at the same time returning to profitability. The hotel outperforms its competitor set in terms of occupancy and rate.

## Building a Special and Safer Guest Journey

Our portfolio of solutions is extremely complete and very competitive. Over the past year, we have implemented several of them at Sea Containers London, which had a positive impact on the hotel's operations and results.

We started by implementing Nonius Guest Internet Access to provide guests with high-speed Internet access. The solution was integrated with Unifi Infrastructure for seamless allocation of conference resources and with Opera using VIP status for an automatic tiered service.

Later, to meet the new cleaning and safety needs, the hotel chose to have its

App incorporating all In-room Collateral digitally, Mobile Key integrated with Assa Abloy; Bill and Express Check-out integrated with Oracle Hospitality Opera PMS; Digital Room Service and Guest Requests and a complete Tour Guide, among others. All built and implemented in just 4 weeks!

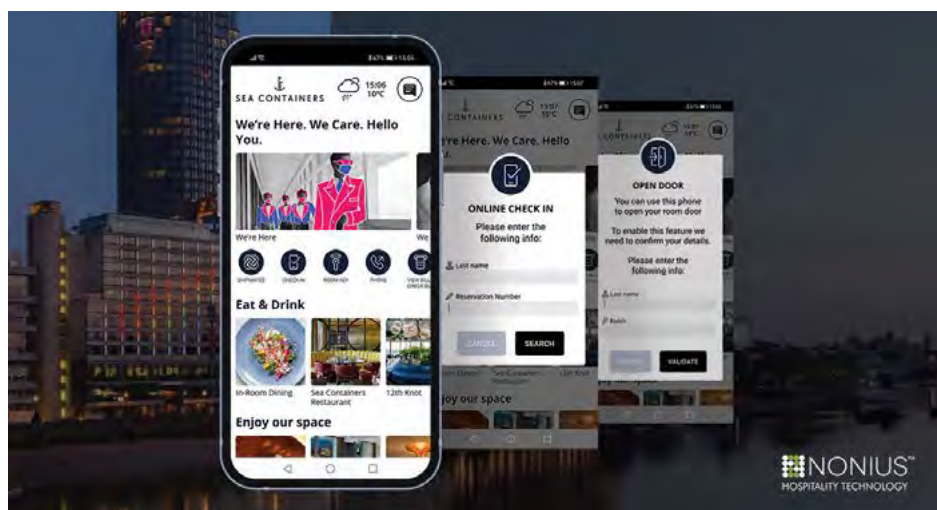
We also implemented the Online Check-in solution integrated with Oracle Hospitality through Opera OXI, the usage of which has already surpassed 50%.

In addition, we replaced the old PBX, voicemail and call recording systems of the hotel with the Nonius Voice solution. The savings on the support contracts for these legacy solutions resulted in a 2-year payback for the Nonius Voice investment. With the integration of the voice solution with Microsoft 365 staff productivity has improved and the ability to work from home was especially beneficial during

periods of 'lockdown'. The voice solution also allows the guest room extension to be provided in the hotel's App. Finally, we have also integrated our Loyalty Program into the hotel App to give guests access to a tiered membership card with multiple rewards and personalised offers.

Currently, we continue to develop our solutions together with Sea Containers London to bring new features that add value to both guests and the hotel. We are continually investing in technology to enhance the guest experience, improve operations efficiency and generate more revenue.

"The partnership with Nonius has been a great success and we are confident that we've made the right decision and look forward to working with Nonius for years to come." said Paul Rasche, IT Director at Sea Containers London.





# Hotel Britain 2022: Growing more sustainable

Hotel Britain is BDO's annual report on the UK hotel sector.

The hotel industry utilises the planet's natural resources to attract its guests. Yet, by continuing to operate with its current methods, it is endangering the very resources it relies upon. This year's Hotel Britain is therefore designed to raise awareness of the direct impact of hotels on climate change; and conversely, the influence of sustainability on the hotel industry. This reciprocal relationship means that all fields of the hotel industry, from stakeholders to suppliers, are now realising the need to grow more sustainable.

Hotel Britain 2022 will particularly celebrate those who have championed the growth of sustainability in the industry so far. Our feature, 'Sustainability Success Stories', will uncover the UK's most eco-friendly hotels, including an interview with Robert Godwin from Lamington Group, who has pioneered the world's first whole life net zero hotel. A variety of sustainability experts will also share their experience and advice, such as Ufi Ibrahim, Founder of Energy & Environment Alliance and former CEO of the British Hospitality Association, and Jonathan Hale, Partner and Head of ESG

Consulting at Knight Frank.

As ever, our report features additional insights from BDO's Leisure & Hospitality team, who share their guidance on the current commercial and financial issues affecting the hotel sector.

**If you would like to receive Hotel Britain 2022 and our regular industry reports on UK hotel performance, please contact [Lucy.Cole@bdo.co.uk](mailto:Lucy.Cole@bdo.co.uk).**

**We look forward to hearing from you.**

## Our Services

BDO's Leisure and Hospitality team provides accountancy and business advisory expertise. We understand that hotels, restaurants, and bars face unique challenges and opportunities. As a result, we have experienced specialists operating in each area, delivering valuable and actionable advice to clients. We can offer regulatory guidance, work with you to fine-tune your business model, or help you to overcome barriers to growth.

In addition, we recognise that the hospitality sector is dealing with unprecedented issues in the aftermath of the pandemic; therefore,

survival and revival is key for many firms. Inflation, rising energy costs, a build-up of debt, supply chain disruption, labour shortages, and lease negotiations are just a few of the many obstacles the industry is facing in this turbulent climate.

**If you are seeking guidance on any of the above, or wish to speak with one of our Leisure and Hospitality experts, please visit our website, [www.bdo.co.uk/en-gb/industries/leisure-and-hospitality](http://www.bdo.co.uk/en-gb/industries/leisure-and-hospitality), or contact Partner Mark Edwards at [Mark.Edwards@bdo.co.uk](mailto:Mark.Edwards@bdo.co.uk).**



# Love It, Buy It - A tech solution with a difference

LiBi, which stands for 'Love It, Buy It', is a new eCommerce platform that partners consumer lifestyle brands with a network of hotels and resorts. Marking a travel industry first, our app enables guests to buy products they see, try and love at the click of a button.

**W**e have devised an easy-to-use, frictionless mobile solution that can enhance a guest experience whilst critically adding incremental revenue to hotels. By combining immersive product experiences with instant retail reality, we enable guests to browse and purchase the range of items they've experienced during overnight hotel stays.

Coming out of tough times for the industry, we recognise the benefit of incremental income for hotels. Opportunities to sell great parts of a guest's experience back to them when they leave, with no need to have any stock on-site, is a low effort/high win opportunity.

Ranging from mattresses and beds to art and design, food and drink to consumer tech, and even sports and wellbeing items, guests can choose to purchase practically every element of their stay. This is achieved through QR code access, where individuals can scan the corresponding code to reveal details on price and availability, the supply chain, and the backstory behind the product and brand.

Guests can buy items that they like in their hotel room, their lodge or cabin, something they've spotted while they're eating or drinking or visiting the spa, something that's caught their eye whilst listening to music, or practising yoga. Our offering seeks to allow guests to purchase the objects that they've formed a connection with, creating long-lasting memories that help forge a bond between trip, product and brand. This adds an extra layer to the guest experience, embellishing their appreciation of the hotel environment and enhancing the venue's brand through storytelling.

We can showcase brands in various



**Hotel partners gain incremental revenue through commission on every sale, with no additional workloads for staff and teams..**

experiential ways and add depth to what each can offer new customers. Brands featured on our platform can package unique experiences, backstories and offers that can't be accessed through other channels, delivering an additional VIP retail experience. These could include virtual tours, 'meet the makers' content, live events and exclusive offers alongside visits to distilleries, wineries, mixology masterclasses, podcasts, and creative added value elements for any deal.

Initial brand partners to endorse and

support our initiative include Hypnos (mattresses), Comfort Zone (spa brands), Red Dog Glass Design, Pulseroll, Edmunds Cocktails, and Cotivision, alongside other notable local artists and producers.

Our platform is not only beneficial to brand partners - we also ensure that each hotel partner benefits from its own bespoke page that functions as a virtual boutique for all shoppable items. The commercial transactions flow through our drop-ship home delivery model, meaning hotels and resorts will not need to hold any inventory – the items will be delivered directly to guests' homes without any requirements from the hospitality venue.

Hotel partners gain incremental revenue through commission on every sale, with no additional workloads for staff and teams. They'll just receive a percentage of the sale – without having to do anything other than simply say 'yes' to LiBi and then ensure the QR codes on product partners are visible and easy to access. Once this basic infrastructure is in place, it offers the opportunity for the hotel to earn easy, passive income.

So imagine retail done differently, and new layers of guest loyalty and recall built in...

If you're interested in joining us on this new, exciting journey, please contact [suzanne@libiloves.com](mailto:suzanne@libiloves.com) or visit <https://libiloves.com/> for more information.

**Suzanne Mahoney is the co-founder of LiBi, a new eCommerce platform that partners consumer lifestyle brands with a network of hotels and resorts, enabling guests to buy products they get to see, try and interact with when away from home at the click of a button.**

# Hotels seek out of the ordinary

Hoteliers appreciate predictability. It aids in setting labour schedules, revenue management optimisation, food cost containment and as a hedge against a variety of other line items impacting hotel operations on a daily, weekly, monthly and yearly basis.

**T**he past two years have been anything but formulaic and the crisis in Ukraine could keep it that way. Hotels, at the mercy of the pandemic, have been bounced to and fro like a dinghy in the middle of a sea storm. Calmer waters may soon prevail, but data points to a recovery that is anything but gangbuster.

## Europe Alarm

In a worrisome sign, Europe profit in January fell into negative territory for the first time since April 2021, according to data from HotStats. After plateauing at €47.61 in October 2021, GOPPAR has fallen for the three months after, hitting €-5.08 in January, 119% lower than January 2019. The good news is that January is typically the poorest performing month for hotels on a seasonality basis, but the turn into the red is concerning.

All top-line indicators dropped, leading to total revenue of €65.37, which was €56 lower than at the same period in 2019. The drop in revenue was met by an uneven expense flow. Labour, still a thorn in the side of hoteliers, remains rather muted on a cost basis. At €35.85, total payroll on a per-available-room basis is €22 higher than it was at its nadir in April 2020. It remains around €15 lower than its normal traditional level.

Concurrent with the lower labour cost was a surge in utility expense. Utilities have rose to their highest level since 2018 and in January hit €7.36 on a PAR basis, nearly €2 higher than in January 2019. The largest cost, electric, is now three times higher on a PAR basis than in January 2019.

## U.S. Establishes Normalcy

Unlike Europe, the U.S. remained in positive profit territory, albeit substantially down in January from the previous month, but more a sign of seasonality than anything else. At \$23.65, it was down \$37 from December 2021 and still around three times less than in January 2019.

Most metrics moved in tandem with the seasonal dip. The decline in TRevPAR was a bit steeper than the drop in RevPAR, the result of a pull-back in ancillary spend. In regard to labour, payroll costs are up 166% since April 2020 and at \$60.91 in January were \$6 lower than December. Labour cost remains well off 2019 levels, down some \$33 on a PAR basis.

## Middle East Honeymoon Over?

The Middle East came back down to Earth in January after a monster December, which saw GOPPAR hit its highest level since March 2018. Much of the region's success is credited to Expo 2020, which runs through the end of March. Middle East GOPPAR was recorded at \$60.75 in January, which was \$38 less than in December, but only \$7 off January 2019.

In Dubai, host to Expo 2020, GOPPAR remained high but lower than October through December (Expo 2020 began in October), but at \$140, was \$15 higher than in January 2019.

Like other regions, labour costs in the Middle East remain muted against pre-pandemic years, hitting \$43 in January, \$10 lower than in January 2019.

## China a Cardiac Case

The recovery in China and across most of Asia has been choppy. GOPPAR in China in January was down to \$8.54, which was lower than May 2020, which was around five months into the pandemic.

In fact, the recovery in China has looked like the EKG of someone with a bad ticker: erratic. After GOPPAR hit \$44 in October 2020, which was amazingly on par with 2019 levels, performance swooned, and by February 2021, hotels in the country were just breaking even. By May, profit was back up to 2019 levels, but a summer surge in COVID cases squashed the momentum and by August GOPPAR was back to a breaking-even scenario. It's been up and down since, more down as of recent.

Labour costs in China were at their lowest in March 2020 and by October had surged to \$34 on a PAR basis, around the same as pre-pandemic levels. Since then, payroll has been relatively static, recorded at \$32 in January 2022.

Meanwhile, occupancy in the country was down to 37% in January, around 28 percentage points lower than its post-pandemic high in July 2021, when occupancy hit 65%. Though a drastic shift, it could be more a function of seasonality combined with the ongoing irritant of case counts. China, more so than other countries, has instituted draconian measures to stem the COVID scourge. In recent time, however, it appears the country is moving away from its "zero COVID" strategy, which could be a boost for its hospitality industry.

# A Recipe for Higher Profits: Advancing F&B Forecasting & Budgeting

Staffing uncertainty and operational inefficiencies have plagued the hospitality industry in the wake of the pandemic. Hit particularly hard has been the hotel food & beverage (F&B) business, yet trying to plan, forecast, and budget for F&B remains as challenging as ever.

Current methods of forecasting F&B can vary results by up to 25%10%, making the risk of poor planning and imprecise analysis particularly dangerous to hotel revenue. Because F&B is a largely un-forecasted and un-optimised field, too many hotels are missing out on opportunities to improve workforce planning, save costs, and drive incremental profit.

Methods of calculation can vary for channel of revenue, and with F&B, revenue comes in many forms: catering, room service, minibars, restaurants, and more. The culmination of these channels in F&B can generate up to ten times more data than rooms. This information can be overwhelming to process and understand manually, causing inaccurate decisions.

To better maximise revenue opportunities from F&B operations, hoteliers need to undertake a holistic approach and fold forecasting and revenue strategies into F&B areas. The science of revenue management can help with decisions driven by data, technology, and proven methods - rather than by guesstimates.

By applying revenue science to F&B forecasting and budgeting, for instance, hotels can improve planning and menu engineering, optimise pricing and revenue, streamline the forecasting process and reduce food waste, while also becoming more efficient with labor costs.

The results of this total revenue forecasting approach are undeniable:

- More revenue
- Increased profitability
- Reduced costs
- Improved portfolio performance
- Better organisational alignment
- Asset value optimization
- Visibility of restaurant, bar and outlet revenue performance
- Extended forecasting window for capture ratios, average check value
- Automated production of key F&B metrics/KPIs, like RevPASH

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As world travel levels increase once again, integrating a new system of total revenue forecasting becomes more important than ever. While the process is intimidating, the good news is that many hotels already possess the knowledge and skills to achieve the above results.

In recent years, rooms revenue management has evolved from tactical to strategic, from static pricing to dynamic pricing, and from

rooms revenue to total revenue and profitability. F&B forecasting and budgeting is the next frontier, and IDeaS has created a novel solution that is transforming the industry.

IDeaS RevPlan is a cloud-based solution that enables revenue managers, hotel leaders, and finance directors to plan and budget using automation and smart focusing. It is unique because its forecasting tracks performance for all facets of your hotel—including each outlet of F&B. RevPlan then provides an unprecedented amount of data and

recommendations that allow a hotel to make tactical and data-driven decisions with unparalleled accuracy.

- Forecast/Budget all F&B Depts (Outlets/Banquet/Catering) in one tool
- Highly Automated 'System Generated' Forecasts, reduce preparation time with more accuracy
- Powerful performance analytics provide F&B strategy decision support





# Food & drink inflation doubles in one month

The latest edition of the CGA Prestige Foodservice Price Index reveals food price increases accelerated sharply in January, with more price rises to come.

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The CGA Prestige Foodservice Price Index reported a sharp acceleration of price increases during January with year-on-year inflation of food and drink running at +7.9%, more than twice the rate in December.

For the first time since its inception in 2016, every category in the index showed a month-on-month increase, with food rising +4.4% across the board, compared with a month earlier.

Notable category movements month-on-month in January include oil and fats (+7.9%), milk, cheese and eggs (+6.8%),

mineral water, soft drinks and juice (+2.9%) and fish (+2.6%).

While the impact of COVID-19 on prices has begun to recede, the rising cost of energy, petrol and diesel now dominate. In Britain, Brexit policy has stifled the labour market leading to shortages of product and higher wage costs for food and drink.

The exclusive report notes that these unusually high levels of inflation were recorded before the Russian invasion of Ukraine, which is anticipated to prompt further price rises across a number of food categories including wheat, sunflower oil, barley, corn, potatoes and rice. Sanctions on Russia are likely to cause rises in oil and gas prices, driving food and drink inflation even higher.

Shaun Allen, Prestige Purchasing CEO commented: "Even before the Russian invasion of Ukraine we were predicting high levels of inflation during the first half of 2022. A protracted conflict, coupled with long-term sanctions on Russia's economy might well raise inflation to levels not seen for a generation. Operators can no longer take supply stability for granted and should take action to optimise their supply."

James Ashurst, client director at CGA, said: "Hospitality was starting to make a robust recovery from the effects of the pandemic and following a tough winter period. These inflation figures pose further challenges to businesses which are already squeezed by rising costs and pressure on supply chains."



# Managed groups' grow like-for-like sales by 3% in February, but cost stresses mount

The lifting of all COVID-19 restrictions helped Britain's managed restaurant, pub and bar groups to raise sales above pre-pandemic levels in February, according to the latest Coffey CGA Business Tracker—but high inflation continues to make real-terms growth elusive.

The Tracker, produced by CGA in partnership with The Coffey Group and RSM, reveals groups' like-for-like sales in February were 3% higher than in February 2019. This builds momentum from January, when comparative sales were 1% down, and a very challenging December 2021, when the Omicron variant pushed trading 11% below December 2019.

Restaurants increased like-for-like sales by 9% in February, just outpacing the 7% growth for bars, which benefited from the scrapping of requirements for vaccination passes in late-night venues. Pubs had a tougher month, ending down 1% on the pre-COVID-19 levels of February 2019.

While the growth figures are encouraging, they are depressed by inflationary pressures. Recent editions of the Consumer Prices Index have shown that inflation is running at 5% to 6% over the last 12 months alone.

Trading is also struggling to recover in London, the Coffey CGA Business Tracker shows. Managed groups' like-for-like sales inside the M25 in February were 4% below February 2019, compared to growth of 6% beyond the M25.

Karl Chessell, director - hospitality operators and food, EMEA at CGA, said: "These figures show managed groups are building momentum after two years

of turmoil. Delivery and late-night bars are particularly buoyant at the moment, and underlying demand for hospitality experiences remains strong. However, margins are being tightly squeezed by fast-rising costs, and the cost-of-living crisis is likely to dent consumer spending as the year goes on. Some businesses remain extremely vulnerable, and there's a powerful case for government support

watching the central London statistics very carefully over the next few months. Hopefully, the return of overseas tourists, which is so sorely missed, will have a marked and positive effect."

Paul Newman, head of leisure and hospitality at RSM, said: "The return to offices as well as an uptick in sales from Valentine's Day falling on a Monday – typically the most subdued trading day

"These figures show managed groups are building momentum after two years of turmoil. Delivery and late-night bars are particularly buoyant at the moment, and underlying demand for hospitality experiences remains strong. However, margins are being tightly squeezed by fast-rising costs, and the cost-of-living crisis is likely to dent consumer spending as the year goes on."

on tax and other issues to help them fuel the UK's post COVID-19 economic recovery."

David Coffey, chairman at The Coffey Group, said: "There were no surprises in the higher level of February like-for-likes compared to 2019. It seems the market is striving to surge ahead but is held back by external pressures. I am hopeful that the overall trading in all sectors will improve, but I am sure we will all be

of the week – gave a welcome boost to the hospitality sector in February. Despite storms Eunice and Franklin, Brits were keen to make the most of their social plans following the easing of restrictions. As the cost of living spirals upwards, operators will be hoping that consumers continue to favour experiences over 'things', especially as the key elements of COVID-19-related government support for the sector are set to fall away in April."

# Passing the pain point

There can be no denying that the sector is in pain right now, so HOSPA CEO Jane Pendlebury hosted a series of masterclasses which, we hope, provided some tips on alleviating the worst of it.

**T**he role of digital was one of the themes of the week. Addressing marketing, David Barrett, Managing Director, Pic PR, said: "Travellers have become a lot more digitally savvy in the last two years - everyone's online - so for us and for hotels, that means we really need to prioritise digital marketing."

Barrett talked about the move from being in print, to being online, and the growing importance of influencers. He said: "There are some people who will chance it for a free stay, but if you can get through to the right people, who have got a true audience, and there are some very good influencers out there, they will make a difference. It's not that clever - you're just inviting someone who's got influence to come and stay - but hotels aren't doing enough of it and it is the easiest way to get the best online coverage."

The issue of finding and retaining team members is one of the most pressing for the sector. Barrett pointed to the importance of making sure information was kept up to date online and that social media was also maintained. This, he noted, could also help attract new team members, critical during the current staffing crisis.

He said: "We suggest to a lot of our clients that they might try and make the front office role a bit more sexy and put people on social media. Try and build that following, get engagement going, and ultimately try and get bookings."

"It's a great way to highlight your culture, to try and get that message

across about how cool it is to work in the hotel, whether you're the chef or front of house. People want to see that. I think in the UK it's not seen as a career of choice, we get that. But it's weird because hospitality can be such a great career path and we need to get that message across."

Staffing was the subject of one of the other debates during the pain week. Linda Best, Consultant Sales Director, Swinfen Hall Hotel, said that the hotel had not seen a drop off in staff during the pandemic, but that she had wanted to look at how technology could be used to make the team "work efficiently and better together as a team".

She added: "Like in every hotel,

busy doing the functions that the operations would do."

Time is also freed up to deliver a better experience for guests. Rupert Gutteridge, Head Of Sales, Oaky, commented: "If there can be a silver lining to COVID, it is that the whole online experience is now a default, which has meant that the implementation of solutions has become acceptable online."

Discussing how well teams accepted a move into a more digital environment, Maria Macree, Head of Sales UK, iVvy, added: "We chose a system that is not too complicated, that makes sense how you work through the process from start to finish. Of course, it's different and

**"We chose a system that is not too complicated, that makes sense how you work through the process from start to finish."**

the processes were very manual, there was no digital product in place, that would take every function; from housekeeping to sales, right the way through to your operations. It was a manual system where you type on paper and walk it to a different department and put it on a notice board.

"So we found a digital solution which we have proven in the last three months can free up 30% to 40% of our staff time from manual tasks. And that's made the hotel and the operations a lot more slicker and smoother, and we've got time to go out and get more business because there are salespeople who are not

people have had to change the way that they work, but we haven't had any any resistance at all. Nobody's ever going to fall in love all at the same time and understand it, but it's knowing your teams and working with your staff and understanding their processes and adapting your timelines to make sure your people are comfortable."

Best concluded: "Adaptability is key, embrace change, don't be afraid of switching your strategy. I think it is important to review your tech stack and certainly the last few months, more than ever, have been a boon for technology. But you can't beat seeing people in person."

# Upcoming events

HOSPA's events are listed on [hospa.org/events](https://hospa.org/events).  
Please visit that page for up to date information and to register.



## HOSPA Members Event - The importance of Sustainability Hospitality Event Sponsored by Green Key and Marriott



**Date:** 26th April 2022, 6pm onwards  
**Location:** Marriott Regent Park, London

In association with Green Key England and Marriott hotels, HOSPA are delighted to host a networking event for senior leaders within the hospitality sector, focusing on the key issue of sustainability within the tourism industry. During the event we will hear from sustainability leads at Marriott hotels about their 'Serve 360' global sustainability strategy and 2025 goals. We will also hear from Keep Britain Tidy about the Green Key eco-label for tourism and hospitality facilities.



## BDO - Finance update



IDEAS | PEOPLE | TRUST

**Date:** 9th June 2022, 8.30am – 10.30am  
**Location:** 55 Baker Street, London



## Cyber security networking event with ISAC

**Date:** 21st June 2022  
**Location:** TapaTapa at Excel, London



## The National Hotel Marketing Conference 2022



**Date:** 28th April 2022, 10am – 4:45pm  
**Location:** The Hilton, St George's Park, Burton Upon Trent

Make your way to this fantastic national football centre on Thursday 28th April and get the injection of "marketing adrenalin" that you, your colleagues and your business need, to fully recover from Covid and to market your hotel successfully through 2022 and beyond.

This is your chance to mix with 200 marketing and sales managers, General Managers and hotel owners, to learn how your marketing can improve, update yourself on the very latest techniques in digital marketing, and see how your business can thrive in such a competitive marketplace!



## HOSPACE 2022 Building Future Prosperity



**Date:** 17th November 2022  
**Location:** Royal Lancaster, London

HOSPA's annual conference and awards gala dinner once again returns to The Royal Lancaster London. HOSPACE is the most established conference for senior leaders in the hospitality industry. Plenary sessions and lively panel discussions will be centred around HOSPA's core membership : Information Technology, Finance, Revenue Management, Asset Management, Marketing as well as discussion on current trends and issues in the industry. A limited amount of complimentary places are available for hospitality operators.

**For further information please visit [www.hospace.org](https://www.hospace.org) for exhibiting and sponsorship please contact [hospa@hospa.org](mailto:hospa@hospa.org)**





# HOSPACE<sup>2022</sup>

Building Future Prosperity  
Brought to you by HOSPA

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