

# GETTING IT RIGHT

What do hoteliers need to take on board to manage their properties in an increasingly connected world? *Donald Gasper* talks to some of the suppliers of property management systems

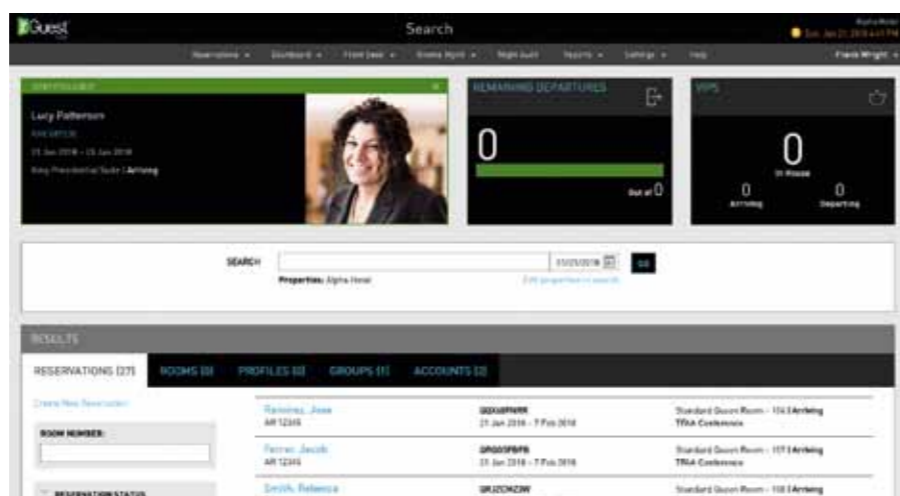
Traditionally, a hotel's property management system (PMS) was defined as a platform that allowed a hotel or group of hotels to manage front-office capabilities, such as booking reservations, guest check-in/ check-out, room assignment, managing room rates and billing. Hotel PMS delivered a software platform that replaced time-intensive, paper- and spreadsheet-heavy processes, explains a recent article by Oracle Hospitality, producer of OPERA, one of the most popular hotel property management platforms.

However, it says, hotel PMS technology has evolved and greater integration offers services that extend well beyond the front desk. Hotel PMS is now a critical business operations system that enables hoteliers to deliver a seamless guest experience. Hotel PMS now integrates with other on site services that have an impact on the guest's complete experience.

## NEW TECHNOLOGY

Over the past 20 years, many facets of the hotel industry have shifted to adapt to new technology and changing consumer behaviour. This has in turn changed how hoteliers conduct business. Facial recognition and open application programming interfaces (APIs) make for progressive PMS capabilities when it comes to delivering exceptional guest service.

"More PMS solutions these days are aimed mainly at the customer service back-end," says Luke Pfeiffer, director of PMS Product Management, Agilysys. In keeping with this trend, Agilysys rGuest Stay can recognize returning guests at a hotel. Digital information about returning guests enables front desk agents to personalise guest greetings and accommodate preferences such as room type, location, amenities and more.



Hotel PMS technology and greater integration translates into services that extend well beyond the front desk. Hotel PMS is now a critical business operations system that enables hoteliers to deliver a seamless guest experience

## CLOUD-BASED TECHNOLOGY

"We're seeing more hoteliers reducing labour costs through technology adoptions," Pfeiffer says. Modern, cloud-based hotel technology is generally more cost-effective than premise-based systems, he argues:

Cloud-based hotel software eliminates the need for significant upfront hardware costs and software licences, as well as ongoing maintenance costs related to equipment that becomes outdated or could fail. "One of the most convenient benefits of a cloud-based system is the ability to manage a

property from almost any place at any time. This allows an owner or general manager to manage rates or arrange housekeeping schedules from home and management has access to dozens of reporting features remotely."

Nor is hotel software limited any longer to optimising operations. It is being used to influence guest engagement in a big way. Another sophisticated component is rGuest Stay's compatibility with voice-based artificial intelligence systems like Amazon's Alexa. Since it's API-based, custom integrations add more value to hospitality enterprises who are looking for new, technologically-advanced PMS solutions that serve front- and back-of-the-house, as well as guests.

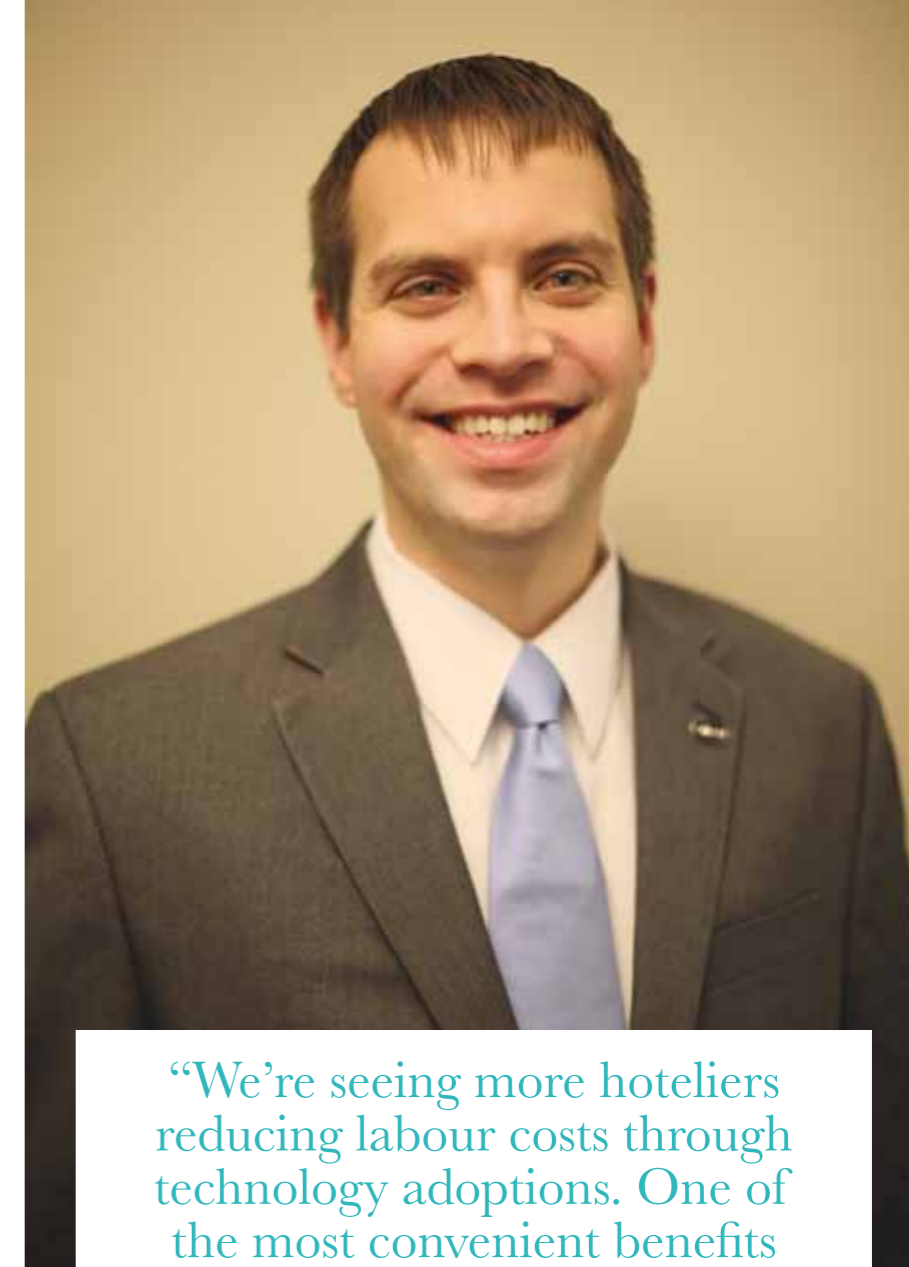
Amadeus Hospitality agrees that the number of hotels moving to cloud-based PMS systems is growing rapidly. However, explains their representative, "although there is a lot of buzz about cloud technology, open systems and the integration of big data and social media, the fact remains that data fragmentation and guest-centric views are not yet answered for."

Amadeus argues that the hospitality industry has not kept pace with other industries, primarily due to the high total cost of ownership associated with the current systems, point-to-point interfaces and siloed legacy systems built on closed architecture.

## MOVING AWAY FROM FRAGMENTATION

Amadeus is working on moving away from fragmented systems in order to reduce the complexity for hotel operations – whether that be for a brand, chain, or hotel property. Amadeus Hospitality wants to bring all of these technologies together in a modular, component-based platform so hoteliers won't need to worry about interfaces and integrations of various systems and can focus on creating an unforgettable brand and guest experience.

A good PMS automates low-end decision making to eliminate wasted time during interactions with guests. For example, it auto-assigns the room based on preferences and other factors such as who guests are travelling with. Are they part of a group? Do they have two rooms reserved since they are travelling with children and might they therefore need connecting rooms? A good PMS first and foremost is able to collect the right information and



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then secondly it uses that information to automate decisions that apply to the guest. This results in quicker, more intuitive interactions with guests and a more informed and personable service delivery.

"A good PMS system can be, for lack of a better way to describe it, invisible," adds the Amadeus representative. "When you combine workflow and decision automation with an intuitive user experience it translates into your hotel staff naturally having more time to be proactive in service delivery.

Additionally, PMS solutions can improve guest experience by absorbing intelligence from external systems and subtly delivering insights at the right time for the right guest."

Hotels need to embrace hotel PMS and other innovations to create a more individualised guest experience that not only improves satisfaction and increases loyalty to keep them coming back, but also helps their guests make lasting memories, says Oracle Hospitality. **AHCT**