

How Technology is Changing Hotel Jobs

As technology makes its way into nearly every aspect of our lives, we see it taking over the more repetitive, routine tasks that take place at a hotel, saving time for both guests and staff. So what does that mean for hospitality jobs in the future? Many innovations will help hotels compete and grow (perhaps creating even more jobs) in the market as well as meet and exceed the needs of their guests.

The hospitality industry is largely customer-driven and using technology strategically speeds operations and allows guests to “customize” their experience. It works for large chains as well as boutique hotels. Tech is more intuitive than ever and it’s constantly getting better, allowing guests to decide when they need to interact with a person and when they can simply use a device to order room service, ask for more towels or book tickets to a show.

A Multi-Skilled Workforce

Hotels are always striving for better operational efficiencies. Technology is empowering the staff to handle a wider variety of guest services and move around during peak times to stations that need the most help at different points in the day. That may mean the front desk staff is also trained to help out at the bar and servers step in to greet guests when there’s a rush of check-ins. Procedures of the past will need to change and some jobs may be replaced. However, many jobs will expand offering new responsibilities and better interpersonal as well as problem-solving skills.

A coordinated hotel platform like [ALICE](#) makes it easy to communicate between departments and meet the needs of guests quickly and effectively. Using mobile devices, a concierge professional can engage with guests from any location on the property and take care of their needs in real time; housekeeping shifts can be better informed about changes in schedules and the entire staff can act as a multi-skilled workforce, all focused on the same goal: guest service. In this way, technology elevates customer service and the hotels that manage their operations efficiently provide superior guest experiences.

Using Artificial Intelligence (AI)

Having more and better information about your guests and their preferences means you can provide even more personalized service. Tech tools that utilize new developments in AI can also save time and free staff for more complex tasks. Artificial Intelligence is already impacting the hospitality industry in a variety of ways:

- Guests are using online resources: Consumers have access to so much more information than ever before when selecting a hotel. Using smart devices, they can query very specific criteria and compare results easily. That means they have higher expectations and are pre-selecting for specific environments and services.
- Consumers are accustomed to self-service: Guests are comfortable using kiosks and apps to deliver services and will use their devices to interact with the hotel by controlling their room environment, ordering room service, etc. Staff needs to be comfortable in supporting these devices and apps.
- AI provides rich guest profiles: Hotel associates will experience a change in traditional roles and responsibilities, using these expanded tools/devices and intelligent data to enhance guest personalization. Specifically, hotel staff will be able to ensure the highest quality of service by having more relevant information available at just the right time.
- Common use of [Chatbots](#): short for *chat robot*, it’s a computer program that communicates using natural language (like “Siri” or “Cortana”) and can execute requests and interface with other apps. Chatbots are useful as a way to reduce costs and improve efficiency, by automatically coordinating with other apps to make reservations (book a table), arrange an Uber, retrieve a weather forecast, check flight schedules or order flowers.

Robots Taking over Routine Tasks

Robots are already performing routine tasks such as delivering extra towels, toothpaste or supplies to a guest's room, adding a bit of fun along with the delivery. They can also greet guests in multiple languages and can provide basic information when asked. Last year, Royal Caribbean installed cocktail-mixing [robot bartenders](#) on several of its cruise ships. While robots free up the front desk staff for more complex tasks, people are still looking for a personalized touch, especially in the high end market.

In a [recent study](#) titled "The Future of Employment," Oxford University's Carl Benedikt Frey discusses what types of jobs are most susceptible to automation... and service jobs are definitely in the mix. "A lot of jobs considered non-automatable in the past are now considered to be automatable," Frey told delegates at a recent industry trade event. How do you stop a robot from stealing your job? "Be good at social interaction, be creative, be able to interact with the world," he added.

The Big Picture

The landscape of hotel hospitality is changing and embracing new technologies to cut costs and streamline services. But that doesn't necessarily mean you'll be losing your job or being replaced by a robot anytime soon. The same social aptitude, upbeat personality and problem-solving skills that have always been valued, are still central to outstanding customer service. Being flexible and open to learning new roles will go a long way toward fitting into the multi-skilled workforce that is emerging as staffing needs flow from one area to another during peak times.

Bots are still only capable of elementary tasks and may be able to process a credit card faster than a human, but when it comes to social interactions, a warm and caring staff still makes the guest experience memorable. Automation doesn't mean substitution. While technology is changing the way we communicate, meeting and exceeding guest expectations is still the ultimate goal.