



Resilience: A Key Skill for Hospitality Operators

The Hotel Industry Is Experiencing a Major Shift

By **Reinhard Pohorec**

HNN columnist

June 13, 2023 | 8:41 AM

Over the past years, the hospitality industry has faced a challenging landscape, fraught with uncertainty and disruption.

While the world has finally unraveled from the grips of the COVID-19 pandemic, economic crises, geopolitical conflicts and advancements in technology continue to affect the way we travel, stay and dine.

Navigating the hospitality industry today is like trying to steer a ship through a stormy sea. It requires skill, agility and nerves of steel.

Despite these challenges, hotels and resorts — as well as independent spas, restaurants and bars — have shown remarkable resilience. Companies that are able to pivot their business models and adapt to changing circumstances will continue to survive and thrive in the face of adversity.

For those who weather the storm, the opportunities are more promising than ever. Not least because, particularly during times of crises, people yearn for the comfort of hospitality and a short break from everyday life.





ISHC Global Insights is a partnership of Hotel News Now and the **International Society of Hospitality Consultants** to bring in-depth analysis to the hotel industry.

As a matter of fact, hospitality remains a vital part of the global economy. According to the World Travel & Tourism Council, the travel and tourism sector contributes to about 10% of global GDP and employs 1 in 10 people worldwide.

Yet, given the complex nature of the hospitality industry, it has become crucially important for hotels and restaurants to be flexible and agile.

New Forms of Travel

Take for example how some hotels have pivoted to offer remote-work packages for guests. With the rise of remote work and digital nomads, hotels have seized the opportunity to offer unique experiences that cater to this growing market. By converting rooms into stylish workspaces, offering high-speed internet and providing access to amenities such as gyms and restaurants, leading operators have found new ways to adapt to changing customer needs.

To understand the evolution of this dynamic industry, it's essential to anticipate global megatrends and adapt to socio-cultural changes at an ever-accelerating pace. Resilience is the key to success in the current climate and the ability to shift quickly in response.

The rise of digitalization and the arrival of AI have disrupted traditional operating models, while new forms of travel — such as staycations, glamping and RV travel — have created opportunities for niche players to emerge.

Mobile apps, chatbots and AI-driven experiences are now commonplace in many luxury establishments, allowing guests to personalize experiences and access a range of services at their fingertips. Additionally, AI is being used to streamline operations and improve efficiency, from automating routine tasks to optimizing staffing levels.

These changes have forced hotels and restaurants to rethink the approach to everything from marketing and branding to operations and staffing.

Everything Is Experience

At the same time, and almost counter-reactively, there has been a notable shift towards personalization and guest-centric services. Hoteliers and restaurateurs have realized that the modern patron is looking for more than just a place to rest their head or fill their belly; they want a personalized experience that caters to their unique tastes and preferences.

Irrespective of the market segment, experience-centric concept design has been the new pinnacle across the board. Today's travelers seek uniqueness and authenticity. Hence, the focus needs to be on creating immersive experiences that allow guests to engage with local culture, history and cuisine. These trends have given rise to a new breed of hotels, restaurants and bars that prioritize the guest experience above all else, seamlessly intertwining the analog and digital world.

Furthermore, the increasing awareness of environmental sustainability and social responsibility forces hospitality operators to optimize sourcing materials and waste management, but also human resources.

By reducing the carbon footprint, minimizing waste and sourcing materials responsibly, hotels have been able to align with a growing customer demographic that values environmentally friendly destinations.

People First – Your People!

One of the biggest challenges facing the hospitality industry today is finding the right people to work in it.

Thus, creating a positive work environment that is both inclusive and diverse is a vital step toward a stronger corporate structure.

This involves creating a culture that aligns with the values and aspirations of employees and promotes a sense of purpose and belonging. Companies that have invested in employer branding have seen significant improvements in employee retention and satisfaction.

By fostering a workplace culture that is welcoming and supportive, hotels and restaurants can attract a broader range of talent and build a more engaged and motivated workforce. With high turnover rates and intense competition for top talent, operators must create a meaningful employee experience, build a strong employer brand and provide a positive work environment.

As with customer journey design, every touchpoint of the experience needs to be taken into consideration, from the very first contact all the way to providing employees with the necessary tools on duty or beyond. A clear, value-driven brand presence is just as important as ergonomic workstations, ongoing training or development programs that help staff members grow and advance in their careers.

Today more than ever, the hospitality industry is all about creating memorable moments for both guests and staff. Embracing new technologies and customer needs while maintaining a strong focus on delivering exceptional service and experiences is the key to success.

Throughout the decades, we have seen first-hand the transformative power of resilience in this dynamic, ever-evolving industry. By staying agile, adapting to changing customer behavior, and investing in employees, hotels and restaurants can thrive in even the most challenging environments, reimagining an industry that has been forever changed.

Reinhard Pohorec, is an experienced designer, international consultant and member of the International Society of Hospitality Consultants.