Crossed wires won´t solve the hotel sector's connectivity challenge

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Long before the **World Wide Web** was a twinkle in the eye of Sir Tim Berners-Lee, almost everybody accepted that 'connections make the world go round'. But the digital revolution has given a whole new significance to this saying. Nowadays if you are selling sherry, software or sunglasses, ´connectivity' is the talked-about term.

Despite being essentially a pre-internet, commodifiable thing – a hotel room remains a physical experience (or at least until Virtual Reality revolutionizes everything) – in the modern world accommodation ultimately gets converted into something digital for sales purposes. Leaving aside the remaining old-school hotels who still accept a traditional contracting of allotments and rates with the inky reservation ledger sat in the reception, the majority of the hoteliers nowadays look for electronic systems that allow them to be totally dynamic with their pricing and availability in order to maximize their results.

And this is where the world of hotels meets the world of connectivity. Like it or not, the hotel must connect dynamically with the outside world to sell the room: revenue management systems, payments, cancellation fees, amendments, loyalty schemes and more. This all requires very sophisticated processes – and far too often this is where the wires started to get crossed, both technically and commercially. In the beginning connectivities were still using physical bookings that were delivered with the help of technological partners such as channel managers. Today the connectivity is purely virtual, with bookings being a digital message between two connected systems.

In fact a successful connection today is less about the messages themselves and more about a company's ability and willingness to match business practices and philosophies. More often the specifications match but the business rules are very different. In our case, where the role we play is as a distributor, the challenge is to convince our clients to adapt its way of working, its systems, and its way of distribution into fully digital connectivity bookings.

Recently, due to my new role working in the Suppliers Connectivity Partnerships team, I was delighted to have been chosen as **Hotelbeds Group**'s representative for **HEDNA**, the **Hotel Electronic Network Association**. HEDNA is the only global forum exclusively dedicated to the advancement of hospitality distribution through strategic collaboration and knowledge sharing.

HEDNA works to optimize the use of technologies while influencing the development of current and emerging distribution channels. My goal is to make **Hotelbeds Group** a very active member of **HEDNA**, since we have a lot to say in this debate.

Among the multiple forums they organize I recently attended **HEDNA Lisbon**, where many perspectives on the state of global distribution were featured across three days of keynotes and deep-dive panel discussions.

During many conversations hoteliers shared their thoughts on how hotels and vendors can work together better to emphasize the mutual benefits of a successful relationship and how together we could improve the distribution channel.

Whilst as connectivity evolves it brings a whole new set of issues and challenges, the end-consumer

is always the primary beneficiary. We all benefit from an easy to review and wide online product offering, as well as from the cost savings and efficiencies generated through automation.

All these benefits certainly make it more worthwhile than ever before to take the trouble to connect. After all, what is the opposite of being connected? Isolation is not an answer in a world where even your fridge and lawnmower are now connected to each other.

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