The hotel industry is constantly evolving and online marketing is now a core part of hotel operations. Phocuswright data suggests that online bookings are going to overtake offline bookings in less than a decade. Hoteliers can prepare for this by embracing technology, to enable travellers to engage and book with their hotel at every stage of the online journey.

Embracing technology enables hoteliers to maintain control over their distribution mix, which reduces the risk of depending too much on third-party booking channels and sacrificing revenue through high commission costs.

But embracing technology may seem easier said than done. With a diverse range of solutions on the hotel technology market, it can be difficult to know where to start.

In this Management Guide, we will break down the customer journey into key stages and share our tips on how you can use technology to your advantage at each stage. We’ll also point out what to look for in technology solutions, to ensure they help overcome challenges, rather than create problems or extra work.
Once you have a clear overview of your target guests, you can identify which online sources they will consult to research and book accommodation. These are the sites you should engage with to promote your own hotel brand, and they may range from destination marketing websites to destination-focused blogs, social media groups, online travel agencies, booking websites and metasearch websites.

**Conquering content to improve your online performance**

Being visible online is the first step; convincing travellers to book with your hotel depends on high-quality content. Content includes written information about your hotel, your hotel images and hotel details. Your content should always present your hotel in the best light, in line with your brand and value proposition for travellers, and in a way that sets the right expectations for your guests.

Quality content can greatly impact your performance online. To use trivago data as an example:

- 79% of clicks go to profiles with engaging hotel descriptions
- Profiles with high-quality photos receive 63% more clicks than profiles with low-quality or no photos
- 70% of clicks go to profiles with accurate and complete hotel details

We could write a whole Management Guide about quality content, but here are our top tips to get you started:

**Written information:**

- Write detailed and unique descriptions of your hotel that mention your location and points of interest.
- Professionally translate written information into multiple languages.

**Images:**

- Include at least 20 images of your hotel in your online profiles.
- Use a variety of images to showcase all the features of your hotel and update them according to the season.
- Use tidy and uncluttered images with a clear focus, natural lighting and a minimum of 2000 pixels in width.
- Choose a main image that will give travellers a good first impression of your hotel.

**Hotel details:**

- Ensure consistent information on all channels about your amenities, services, address and room information.
- Check the accuracy of your hotel details to ensure your hotel appears in search results on booking sites and metasearch when filters are used.

**Be found with metasearch**

In 2015 Phocuswright\(^2\) found that one out of every two online hotel bookers was already using metasearch as the first step in finding their hotel. trivago is a leading hotel metasearch that aggregates rates for more than 1.8 million hotels in 190 countries, and is focused on empowering hoteliers to take control of their hotel profiles with trivago Hotel Manager. This easy-to-use online tool enables hoteliers to upload content and receive up to five times more clicks on their profiles. Get started at www.trivago.co.uk/hotelmanager

**Make your hotel bookable**

Once a traveller has found your hotel and you've shown them it's their ideal choice, the booking process must be seamless and stress free, otherwise that traveller might 'bounce' and book elsewhere. To prevent this, your hotel needs a user-friendly website with a fully integrated booking engine. If you're also working with OTAs and booking websites, you can use a channel manager to take the pain out of distributing your rates and availability across multiple channels.

**Our checklist to maximise direct bookings**

**Your hotel website...**

- Serves the needs of travellers: gives information and facilitates bookings
- Is accessible on all devices
- Has a simple but comprehensive menu and clear calls-to-action
- Displays your brand consistently on every page

**Your Internet booking engine (IBE)...**

- Is fully integrated with your hotel website
- Integrates smoothly with other solutions
- Facilitates real-time booking with simple steps

**Your channel manager...**

- Enables you to maintain your rates across all your booking channels
- Allows you to update rates and availability immediately

**Drive more direct bookings on trivago with Rate Connect**

If you’ve invested in the solutions to make your hotel bookable, you can also take a direct share of bookings from travellers searching on trivago, by providing a link to book on your website...

This direct link is called Rate Connect and it gives your hotel rates a unique and highlighted placement on your hotel profile, so your hotel will stand out to travellers looking to book direct. Rate Connect campaigns are operated on a cost-per-click (CPC) model, and trivago optimises the CPC for the hotel. All you have to do is set a monthly budget in trivago Hotel Manager.

**Make your hotel manageable**

When it comes to making your guests happy, being available and flexible to attend to their needs is paramount. Any management tasks that chain you to the front desk or have you holed up in the back office can hinder your ability to deliver the guest experience you aspire to.

Cloud-based property management systems are an innovative, economical, and effective solution for making hotel management easier.

More than a quarter of UK hoteliers have already taken their properties into the cloud. So what exactly is a cloud-based system and what competitive advantage does it offer?

- Utilises the Internet to store information and enhance functionality
- Low investment costs
- Simplifies and streamlines day-to-day activities

**Shift to cloud-based property management system**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Cloud PMS</th>
<th>On-premises PMS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>UK</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>85%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>US</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>80%</td>
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<td>Spain</td>
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<td>Germany</td>
<td>6%</td>
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</tbody>
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Data source: Grant Thornton3

- Expandable to include additional tools and features
- Accessible from any computer or mobile device
- Supports a seamless guest experience by integrating with your channel manager and IBE

Ultimately, a cloud-based PMS will save you time and money, and help you put your focus back on your guests. We recommend Base7booking, an all-in-one cloud-based property management system developed by hoteliers for hoteliers, and a company known for providing technology solutions tailored to the independent hotelier.

**Keep the traveller’s journey in focus**

With so many contenders for your attention in the travel technology space, it’s easy to get overwhelmed and lose perspective of what your hotel needs. Understanding your guests and their online journey to your hotel helps to keep the focus and maximise online bookings for your hotel.

Wherever your target guest is searching, be there. When they want to book your hotel, make it easy for them. And when they arrive at your hotel, give yourself the ability to be there for them and be their host — that is, after all, what hospitality is all about.

3. Grant Thornton, “Emerging clouds in hotel technology”

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**Disclaimer**

This brief is intended as a guide only. While the information it contains is believed to be correct, it is not a substitute for appropriate professional advice. The Institute of Hospitality can take no responsibility for action taken solely on the basis of this information.

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