Streamlining hospitality

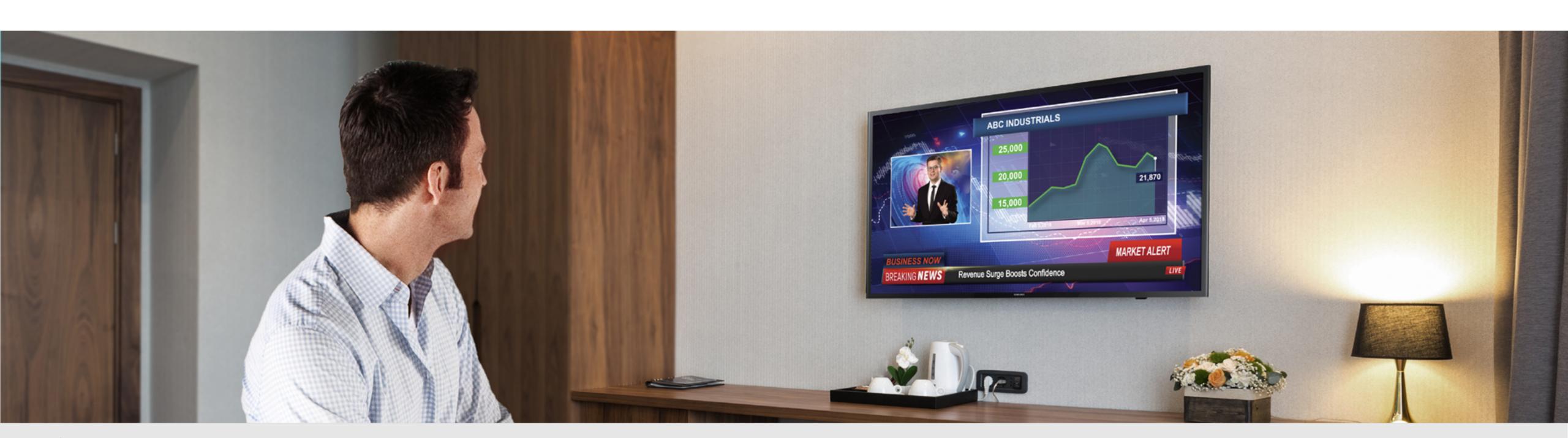Digital transformation and the guest experience

As the hospitality industry remains in flux due to the ongoing pandemic, guest expectations have changed. We now live in a world of no-contact, voice control, and responsive digital content. Guests expect convenience, wireless access, and personalization at every touchpoint. After two years of travel restrictions and working from home, millions crave an escape from the everyday. Many are returning to hotels, resorts, casinos, and cruise lines with elevated expectations. In fact, Dynata reports that over 80% of consumers[1] are more likely to choose brands that personalize their experience.

In order to see booking numbers exceed pre-pandemic levels, hotels, casinos, and cruise lines must elevate their game to meet guests' upgraded expectations of what an elevated experience should be.

Many hotels are already dealing with the aftermath of years of one-off upgrades. With aging technology systems comprising a patchwork of hardware brands and software platforms, enacting the improvements now expected by your guests is easier said than done. A property's annual budget may not provide for a major technology overhaul. In addition, property managers face a long list of maintenance issues and extra labor costs just to keep their piecemeal systems running, even without considering upgrades. Clearly, a single, unified approach to technology would be the ideal state for creating a truly seamless experience for guests and staff alike.

In this guide, we explore what it takes to create elevated experiences for guests and staff using resources and technology designed specifically for hospitality. We cover the key concerns property owners face:

- **Cost of Ownership**
- **Control Endpoints**
- **Energy Consumption**
- **The Partnership Network**

The future is now: unified guest experience technology

What makes for an elevated guest experience that modern travelers expect? Envision the guest journey. A guest makes plans at your property and before they see the front doors, your mobile app tells them where to go, when to be there, and what to expect. From the moment they arrive, beautifully branded digital signage points them in the right direction and highlights your property's most exciting features, safety messaging, and up-to-the-minute information.

Your guest has multiple options to check in depending on their preference: the mobile app, a simple self-serve kiosk, or traditional front desk service. A wave of their mobile phone triggers their room's automatic door lock, welcoming them to a luxurious private space. The smart thermostat is set to the perfect efficiently comfortable temperature for the season and time of day. The smart television displays your property's menu of digital content and orderable services. From there, the guest can easily access personalized content from their media accounts, book services, or view relevant hotel information.

At every turn, they are greeted by vibrant displays, live digital menus, self-serve booking, and branded digital content. As they pass digital displays throughout the property, they could even see personalized content based on their preferences, history, and registered travel schedule.

For business travelers, think about upgrades to meeting spaces, convention halls, and board rooms. As hybrid meetings become the norm, travelers increasingly seek ways to connect in small groups at hotels with teams across the globe. Interactive displays provide business travelers a compelling way to make those connections, giving them more tactical ways to develop strategies and sell to clients. This is especially relevant to remote-first organizations looking to set up hybrid meetings at trade shows.

All this technology exists and is available for hospitality properties to implement. The challenge is that many properties are saddled with too much legacy technology that can make implementing streamlined improvements seem extremely difficult. Luckily, with practical logistics and strategic planning, powerful technology improvements are achievable for any hotel, resort, casino, or cruise line.

The challenges of upgrading your hospitality property in a post-Covid market

Piecemeal existing technology

Properties often make updates by department (ex: kitchen, housekeeping, customer experience) rather than with a unified approach, resulting in a variety of hardware, software, and processes that do not integrate smoothly, if at all.

While unified digital content is possible with today's technology, it may be impossible between disparate POS, management, and content display systems currently in place. Likewise, maintaining and updating each individual technology requires separate partners and services that do not unify and often stack maintenance costs each year.

Lower revenue

We know properties spend very carefully, with many locations still seeing bookings and revenue below their 2019 numbers. It's important to weigh upgrades to maximize booking and revenue; however, cumbersome and outdated technology can cost more than upgrading - especially when guests are left frustrated and staff are overburdened.

Hiring and training staff to meet new expectations

Properties are struggling to hire and train staff with the massive labor shortage. Tourism Economics reports that 39% of all jobs lost in 2020[2] were in the leisure and hospitality sector, and the industry has struggled to rehire and train teams as business has begun to normalize.

At the same time, hospitality guests have increasing expectations of excellence from staff; a precision that can take months to train and years to hone. Guests rarely realize how much the skill and experience of hospitality staff plays a role in their stay.

Self-service technology offers opportunities to bridge the gap, offsetting the need for staff to provide a personalized experience many travelers increasingly prefer for tasks where speed is more important than customized service.

Building the future of hospitality technology

Every property needs a unique plan to bridge the gap between existing infrastructure and a unified digital experience. The first step to meeting the rising expectations of today's guests is to assess that starting place. What hardware, software, and systems are currently in place? Which is the highest priority to replace? What will make the strongest foundation on which to build a new unified system for the property? The answers to these questions will help frame a year-by-year plan to fully upgrade, streamline, and unify technology for the benefit of guests and staff.

This process is much easier with a partner like Samsung that can quickly help determine and prioritize requirements for a complete upgrade plan aligned to realistic budgets and timelines.
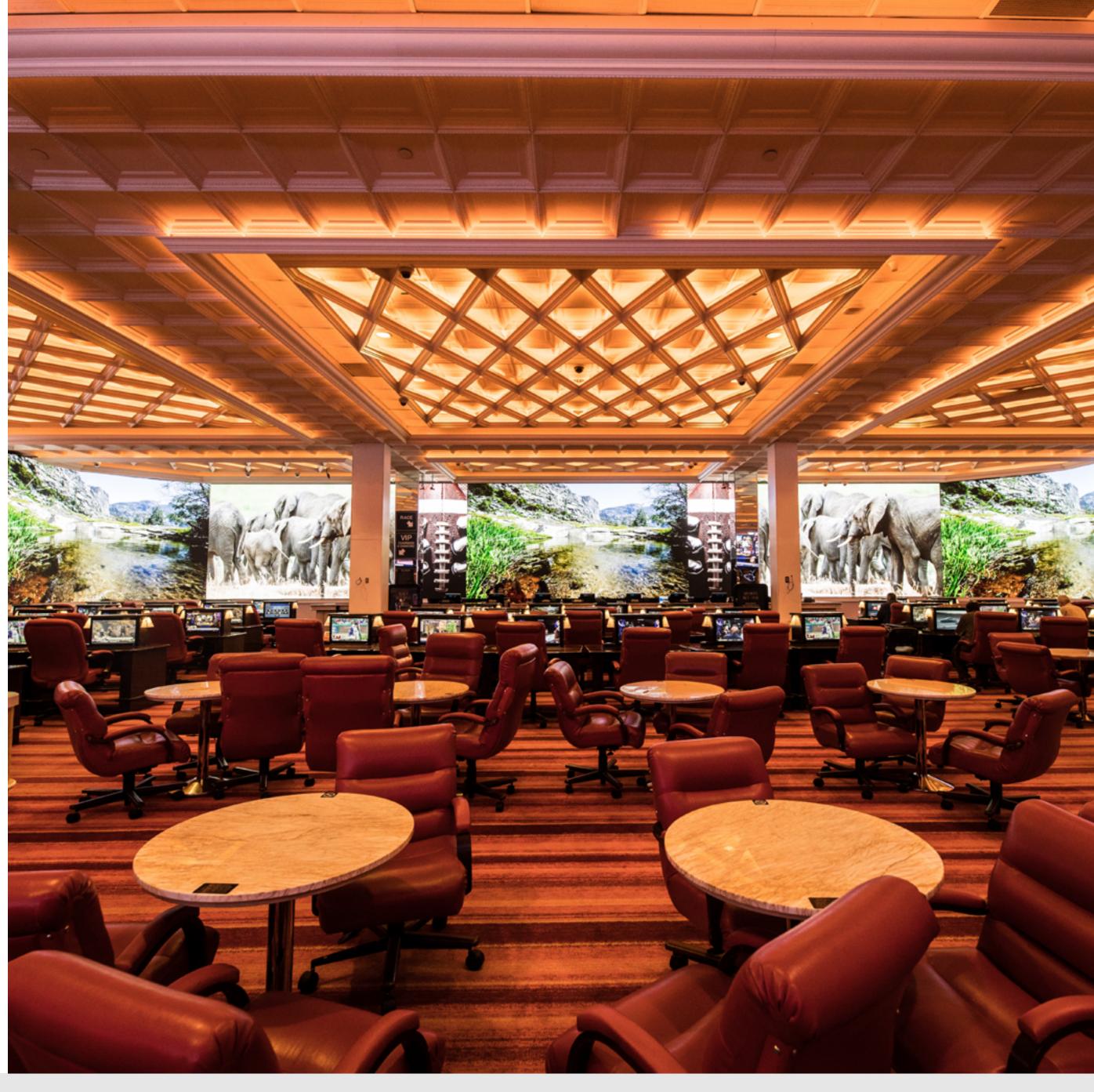
Cost of ownership in the great technology upgrade

There are two key elements to the cost of ownership in hospitality property technology. The first is maintaining the technology you already have installed, and the second is the purchase of new technology. Current cost of ownership can be calculated by adding up the costs of maintenance and repair services needed for all disparate systems. Consider your restaurant POS system, booking and concierge, housekeeping management, digital displays and menu boards, guest room televisions, and other back-of-house technologies. How many brands and services are represented, and what could the cost savings be in moving toward a unified single-brand solution?

Of course, most properties don't have enough revenue in reserve to fully replace every piece of technology on the property with a new unified system all at once. Still, the vision of a single, connected system should guide cost calculations. Indeed, it's time to start planning the cost of ownership for technology upgrades beyond one year at a time.

Look toward a 1-5 year strategy. The first year might mean making a splash with self-service kiosks, installing 4K displays in high-traffic zones, and upgrading a percentage of guest rooms with Samsung smart televisions. In the next year, the technology budget could stack on the advances of the first year with an advanced POS system, interactive screens at the pool bar, and more guest room upgrades. In three years of budget planning, most of the property could move to the new system—starting with the points where it matters most—while reducing lifetime ownership costs. Within five years, you could have a fully integrated technology stack coupled with a steady stream of inspired content and lower maintenance costs than ever. You'll be able to focus more energy on new ways to delight guests rather than reacting to constant tech issues.
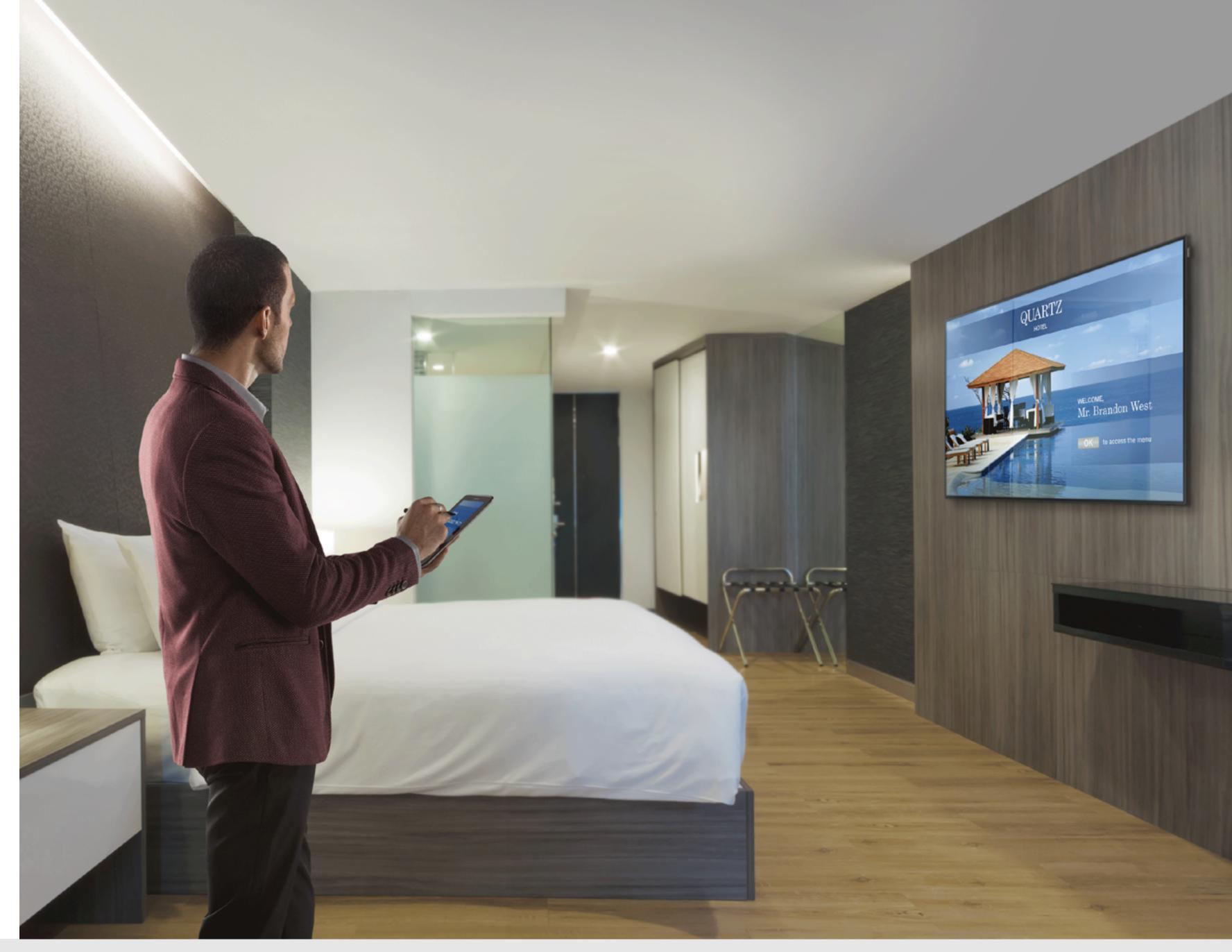
Unified endpoint control

Endpoint control is another critical consideration around tech upgrades for hospitality properties. Multiple systems require multiple controls, each with their own learning curve. A unified system means one dashboard to control every data point and content asset.

Booking and guest services can integrate with guest room televisions to provide more personalization and convenience. Guests can easily order room service and other property services from their TVs.

Unified endpoint control allows properties to take control of the technical and visual aspects of the guest experience, creating a unique ambiance while reinforcing a unified brand.

A great example is adapting digital signage based on the date and time of day. Wouldn't it be wonderful to see every display change styles as the sun sets to complement your brand's evening mood? From the lobby to restaurants to the pool and spa, changes in times of day can alter menus, color schemes, display art, and background music and continually shape guest experiences over time. As the seasons change and holidays come and go, unified endpoint control will allow for a custom look and feel throughout the year.

Controlling technology energy consumption

Energy consumption also plays an important role in rethinking a property's systems, but is often under-considered when choosing upgrades one year at a time. The latest in display, lighting, and smart-control technology often optimizes power consumption. For example, smart televisions—like Samsung's displays with system-on-a-chip technology—require less power (along with fewer cables and outlets) than a television with a cable box attached to the wall behind.

Properties featuring outdated LCD displays, some of which may run 24-hours a day, can dramatically reduce energy costs by upgrading to highly efficient LED displays. Likewise, new kiosks and dedicated POS system upgrades can also save significant energy costs.

Unifying the partnership network

Finally, there's your partnership network. When a property has one brand of televisions, another for cable boxes, another for your restaurant POS, and another for your large-format outdoor displays, that's a lot of service partners. It requires maintaining half a dozen or more service plans to cover each aspect of the property's existing technology infrastructure.

Unifying technology under a single partner allows you to save with one servicer and support plan. The fewer technology brands and service providers, the more streamlined the cost of ongoing maintenance. Each year as they adopt more technology, properties can reap additional cost savings by choosing the same provider.

Simply put, shrinking your necessary service partners can reduce your costs for annual maintenance by a significant margin.

How Samsung can help enhance the luxury experience

Post-pandemic travel favors personalized, connected technology, and a delicate balance of no-contact with the personal touch of live service.

Samsung can help create the ultimate unified hospitality experience, from beautiful digital displays in public spaces to unified content management systems to personalized guest room interactivity.

For hotels, casinos, and cruise ships, Samsung display solutions elevate the guest experience and streamline operations by transforming high-traffic spaces into visual showpieces, making guest rooms feel like home, and simplifying back-of-house communication.

Samsung's unique ecosystem combines the most vibrant displays, valuable data tools, and powerful content management to turn each stay into a seamless and more profitable guest experience. By choosing Samsung as their technology partner, hospitality leaders gain greater freedom to elevate the guest experience and simplify operations while reducing energy costs—all while enjoying the benefit of a single, unified solution for seamless front- and back-of house operations.

By starting small, it is easier to develop a year-by-year plan to upgrade an entire property to a unified Samsung-powered system with a layered implementation approach.

In time, the entire property will have a unified system of digital displays, utility controls, back-end orchestration, and enhanced guest experience in every room. By leaving behind those patchwork systems of the past, property owners can focus more on what matters: creating unforgettable guest experiences.

Footnoes:

[1] Dynata, https://www.costar.com/article/4164650/hotel-executives-weigh-obstacles-to-recovery-at-hotel-data-conference

[2] Tourism Economic, https://www.businesswire.com/news/home/20210914005231/en/80-of-Consumers-More-Likely-to-Shop-with-Brands-that-Show-they-Understand-Them

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