

# The reopening of the hospitality industry requires an enhanced customer experience

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In the aftermath of the recent Covid-19 national lockdown, the hospitality industry has been scrambling to make up for lost time and revenue. With the reopening of borders for travel and airlines operating again, people are now starting to travel for both business and leisure. Now, more than ever, it's critical for businesses that are dependent on tourism and travel to differentiate themselves based on customer experience (CX).

Here, the right technology can make all the difference.



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## A challenge like never before

The biggest challenge with the reopening of the hospitality and travel industry has been attracting clientele. Business survival in this industry depends on the ability to respond and adapt to new working conditions based on social distancing and hygiene precautions. Travel and hospitality businesses have had to rapidly transition to new ways of working, often remotely, providing an enhanced experience for both their clientele and employees.

Additionally, many employees are still working from home on the 'back end' of business systems. This is in itself challenging for organisations to provide continuous access to information without compromising security and privacy regulatory compliance. Technology providers hold the answers to these challenges experienced in the travel and hospitality industry. They can deliver the best tools and solutions enabling these companies to confidently meet the changing needs of guests.

## Room to innovate

Technology providers should work in partnership with their clients as quickly and efficiently as possible in order to create an exceptional customer service ecosystem from start to finish. The technology providers can achieve this by overhauling the entire travel and hospitality experience. While contactless payments and online bookings are nothing new to the hospitality and travel industry, there is huge potential to use technology to innovate in this space.

For example, technology solutions and hospitality arrangements can be used to invigorate the lucrative conferencing and meetings drawcard in hospitality. This could include introducing hybrid meeting options at certain hotel locations or event venues that can combine live groups engaging online with other live groups elsewhere. Meetings are still essential to conducting business, so banqueting facilities currently restricted by social distancing guidelines can be repurposed as video meeting facilities for business travellers.

Technology also has a role to play in keeping travellers, guests, and hospitality workers safe. These include cybersecurity solutions to secure business systems and data such as antivirus and malware, secure remote network connections and protect personal information. Technology can also assist from a health and safety perspective at airports, travel terminals and hotels.

Using technology such as temperature screening and monitoring systems with automated air quality monitoring, filtration, and purification systems, it's possible to create safe environments in which guests and travellers can go about their business.

## Health and safety

The right infrastructure is necessary to enable this new digital way of conducting business. Everything from connectivity to physical hardware will need to be rapidly modernised in a cost-effective manner. As travel and hospitality businesses scale up on technology that services their people and their clients, they will need to conduct an audit with the assistance of their technology partners.

It will be necessary to decommission all hardware that is no longer in use and cut back on software licenses not required. The right partner can help the business absorb much of the modernisation costs by eliminating unnecessary expenses and paying for infrastructure, hardware, and services on a consumption-basis.

As the travel and hospitality industry prepares for the holiday season which will see an increase in travellers, it's important for businesses in this sector to realise that they have a massive responsibility in helping to prevent a second wave of infections in South Africa.

This will require adherence to government regulations and general safety practices to help stop the spread of Covid-19. The right technology partner can help the business understand its risks and how best to use technology to create a safe environment for people that's built on exceptional customer service enablement.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Raeferd Liebenberg is Manager at Silvermoon, a Galix company.