

5 Quick Ways to Deliver an Elevated, Luxury Guest Experience

The hotel industry is, thankfully, recovering from the effects of the

coronavirus pandemic faster and with greater success than some economists and analysts initially forecasted, at least from a leisure travel perspective. Ironically, the threats of a persistent global pandemic, the rise of a new outbreak in monkeypox, turbulence in the global market, uncertainty in the world economy, the global impact of the Great Resignation, and a looming

global recession are seemingly only matched by the rises in investible assets, the number of the financial elite, and the resulting expectations of the luxury client. To counterbalance these threats and changes to the luxury hospitality landscape, below is a small selection of processes, initiatives, and offerings by which hotels can quickly and reasonably elevate their guest experience.



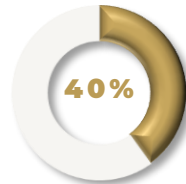
The Rise of the Luxury Guest:

“Globally, the investible assets of wealthy individuals is expected to double in almost every part of the world by 2030.”
-[Financial Times](#)

“More than five million people became millionaires across the world in 2020... the number of millionaires increased by 5.2 million to 56.1 million globally” -[BBC](#)

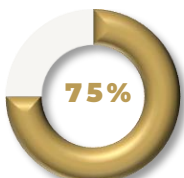
Formal Introduction to Accommodations

While the tide is shifting towards automation and the convenience of self-service (e.g., mobile check in and mobile keys), personalized service still has its advantages and attractions. Whether guests are using their mobile device, a kiosk, or traditional means to check in to a hotel, delivering guests belongings to their quarters—whether seamlessly or upon permission—always displays a level of sophistication. With 60% of guests traveling for leisure, it is safe to assume that most hotel guests wish to remove any unnecessary burdens or responsibilities during their stay. This includes both the mental stress of coordinating the logistics or the sheer physicality of transporting luggage from the vehicle to their quarters.



Business travelers make up 40% of total hotel guests
-Deloitte

Business travelers also likely wish to rid themselves of such responsibilities in favor of keeping their mind sharp and stress-free. Hotels can easily satisfy and, perhaps, exceed the expectations of guests by extending this courtesy via porter or another representative. After all, luggage carts are a marginal convenience, but a far cry from personal delivery.



"75% of consumers agreed that they are keen on buying from brands that offer personalized digital experiences."

- Yieldify

Naturally, the personal touch should not be limited to the handling of guests' luggage. Again, regardless of how they check in, guests should be offered an escort to their quarters upon arrival.

Depending on occupancy, the front desk-to-guest arrival ratio, etc., this service can be performed by either a front desk representative or a dedicated guest escort. While en route, as both a courtesy to guests and a means to tastefully increase the likelihood of sequestration and spending, be sure to call attention—and offer a detour—to popular amenities, such as restaurants, pools, spas, fitness center, etc.

While many guests still prefer personal service, there is a growing expectation for a seamless self-service. For those guests, explore integrating virtual tours and beacon technology into the mobile app and hotel itself. While these features can be costly, with habituation to social distancing, reliance on technology, and humankind's dwindling attention span, it may ultimately prove to be a wise investment. In the meantime, it is paramount to engage with guest in an elevated, personalized fashion.



"60% of U.S. consumers prefer an automated self-service... for simple customer service tasks"

-[American Express](#)

As a finishing touch to the elevated check-in experience, the representative should provide a formal presentation of the guest quarters, complete with a brief walkthrough of the space and its key features. The guest, at this point, will undoubtedly notice and likely be delighted to see that their luggage has been delivered and conveniently placed in a nonobstructive location. This is also an excellent time to share any additional pertinent information about the hotel and its amenities (e.g., hours of operation, observed dress codes, etc.), a brief overview of onsite or local activities, any best practices observed by the hotel designed to enhance the guest's stay, etc. To finalize the welcome presentation, the representative should ask if there is anything further that they or the hotel might do for the guest at this time. Doing so is a subtle nod to the hotel's commitment to personalized service, and places the guest even further at ease by knowing that their expectations for heightened service will be met, if not exceeded. Mindful of the fact that the guest might wish to either unwind, explore, etc., this stage of the formal introduction should be succinct, tastefully executed in no more than one to two minutes.

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A Personalized Welcome

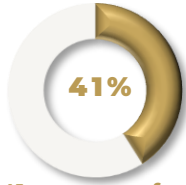
The Power of Personalization:

"66% of consumers expect brands to understand their individual needs" -

[SALESFORCE](#)

"70% of consumers say that how well a company

The key to enhancing a guest's stay almost always centers around personalization. While the formal introduction discussed above speaks to the hotel's attention to detail and commitment to personalized service, true personalization comes in the form of anticipated,



“41 percent of guests would visit a hotel more often if they were recognized by an employee without having to give their name”

-Oracle

individualized attention. A perfect example of which is a handwritten note left by the hotel on the guest's bed upon arrival. Such a simple gesture, written specifically for that guest—including their name and, if possible, mention of anyone with whom they might be traveling (e.g., children, significant other, companion, pet, etc.)—will convey the hotel's gratitude for the guest's trust in the accommodations.

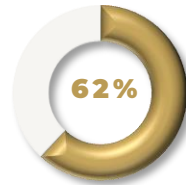
Another way to personalize the welcoming of a guest—in addition to the handwritten note—is a small token of appreciation that perfectly applies to that guest, almost as if it were hand selected exclusively for them. For instance, if the guest has a dog—either with them or at home—a gifted dog toy would leave quite the impression. Should the guest have a child(ren), a children's toy(s) or storybook(s) would have the same effect, if not greater.

Even if a guest's child(ren) or pet(s) is not traveling with them, learning about their personal life should be as simple as quick glance at their social media profile(s). If the information is made public, there should be no reservations about privacy or morality. What if the hotel were to learn through a quick social media search that the guest will be celebrating an anniversary following their stay, and gifted the guest a bottle of congratulatory champagne? What effect might that have on guest satisfaction and loyalty? Arguably, profound.

Yet another option is gifting something either exclusive to the property or region. For instance, if the hotel's spa is known for its luxurious personal care products, perhaps package a sampling of some of the more popular items as a gift. If the city or region is renowned for a particular product, such as coffee, a small bag of the most popular

blend would be considered quite the thoughtful gesture. These options might not, on their own, be as personal as the ones above; however, a simple way to personalize them is to have them accompanied by the aforementioned handwritten note.

The remarkable thing about these personalized gifts—beyond the positive effect they have on the guest experience and resulting loyalty—is the opportunities they provide. Do not pass on the chance to brand the gifts, when possible. Though, be careful to not give the misconception that the sole intent was to further promote the property. Any branding should be tasteful, just as with everything else surrounding the hotel. If executed properly, guests will not mind the subtle branding, even perhaps looking upon it fondly when they see or experience the gift again in the future. Some of the gifts, such as those that are exclusive to the hotel, might ultimately result in increased sales. Again, this should not be the sole intention, but it may be yet another favorable result. Lastly, anything learned about the guest (e.g., child(ren), anniversaries, pets, etc.)—whether it be online or in person—should be documented in their profile and called upon for future communication and/or during subsequent stays.

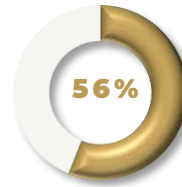


“62 percent [of hotel guests] believe having this recognition [of being addressed by name] would improve their overall experience”
-Oracle

3 An Enhanced Stay

Whether it be during the formal introduction or via a printed document, presenting a list of onsite activities and/or local attractions is a nice touch and considerate. The more this list is tailored to the guest’s interests, the greater the effect. This is a perfect example of predicting and proactively addressing guest needs. As any concierge will affirm, two of the most common guest inquiries are “where is a good place to eat?” and “what is there to do?”—or some variation thereof.

If the guests are a couple—particularly if they are celebrating an anniversary—making a reservation under their name at the (or one of the) hotel's restaurant(s) shows a great deal of consideration and forethought. Should the couple already have plans, it is a simple matter of canceling the reservation on their behalf. Should the guest be traveling alone, extending an invitation to social hour at the hotel lounge or bar, along with a cocktail compliments of the hotel, demonstrates equal thought and consideration.



“56% of people say that they partake in Happy hour in a hotel, versus 36% outside a hotel.”

-NielsenIQ

Acknowledging the growing interest in environmentalism by offering complimentary services that address these interests is both good for the planet and good for business. According to Bloomberg New Energy Finance, only 3% of vehicles worldwide are electric (EVs). By 2025, however, that number is expected to rise to 10%, to 28% in 2030, and upwards of 58% by 2040. Given that “less than 15% of U.S. drivers can afford [an electric vehicle]”, according to [Bloomberg](#), EV drivers are likely to over index amongst luxury travelers (hotel guests). By being early adapters, any hotels offering free EV charging to this growing customer base will be considered progressive, eco-friendly, eco-conscious, and welcoming to the segment. In addition to these advantages, investment at this early stage should be reasonable and allows for scaling as demand grows; versus the alternative of being required to make a significant financial outlay in the future when offering such amenities becomes unavoidable.

EV Software for Hotels:

EV charging stations are now capable of charging more than vehicles. With software providing a “connected infrastructure” capable of checking guests in to their rooms, rewarding usage with extra loyalty points, extending discounts for onsite amenities, and more—all on guests’ phones—it is also giving additional charge to the hotel industry.

4

Promotion of Health & Hygiene

Higher income individuals (e.g., luxury hotel guests) tend to place a greater emphasis on physical health and diet, according to multiple sources. The [National Library of Medicine’s National Center for Biotechnology Information](#), for example, found that “People in the highest income group tended to have a 26% higher exercise energy expenditure and a 3% higher exercise intensity than those in the lowest

income group.” Similarly, [BioMed Central Public Health](#) reported that “Lower income households purchase less healthful foods compared with higher income households.” Offering complimentary morning yoga, light fare menus—or menu items, at minimum—with calorie counts, and similar health-conscious services and products, is an excellent way to cater to this sizeable segment of affluent hotel guests, while simultaneously promoting public health.

In light of the coronavirus global pandemic and the newly emerged monkeypox outbreak, public safety and the resulting demand for sanitary conditions is seemingly at an all-time high. Unfortunately for the hotel industry, there is a litany of articles, investigative specials, reports, blogs, and other informational sources that have negatively skewed public perception as to the cleanliness of hotel rooms, or lack thereof. [Hotels & Discounts](#), for example, reported that, “A study found that 81 percent of surfaces in hotel rooms had fecal bacteria present.” It is time for hotels, particularly luxury hotels, to reclaim the narrative.

If a hotel exercises considerable effort to ensure sanitary conditions, those efforts should be promoted. For instance, should a hotel have dedicated towels for water closet basins, showers and bathtubs, and floors (a recommended best practice) and/or use only all-natural cleaning agents (another recommended best practice), that should be communicated to guests. Doing so will provide reassurance and peace of mind to guests, while simultaneously showcasing the property’s commitment to upholding the highest standards, including—and particularly—those which relate to public health.

Over the past several years, a trend has emerged where guest rooms are only changed—or even tended to—either every other day or upon request. This new practice has been packaged and marketed under environmental conservatism, making it more palatable and socially acceptable. And while there may, in fact, be environmental benefits, there are also significant financial savings.

Regardless, the fact remains that guests—even if only secretly in today’s day and age—have an expectation that their room will be tended to daily. To satisfy these expectations, hotels should reimplement the

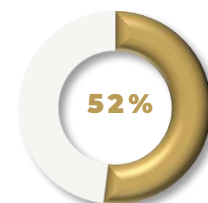
practice of daily service, even if with modification. For instance, if environmentalism is truly the hotel's aim, consider cleaning and tidying quarters daily, even if beds are made without fresh linens. Not changing linens daily will still have a considerably favorable impact on the environment. Most guests, however, at bare minimum, expect fresh towels daily, especially at upscale properties. For those guests who are more concerned with environmental protection, offer the option to, simply and conveniently, opt out of daily towel replacement. Reusing towels should be the guest's discretion.

Yet another way to keep pace with guests' rising expectations as they relate to health and hygiene is the implementation of air purification systems. It will prove to be a worthwhile investment as consumers become ever more concerned with public health, particularly indoor air quality (IAQ). Air purification systems provide transparency to and evidence—of both the effectiveness of the hotel's efforts and commitment to providing a clean, safe environment—for its guests.

5 Post-visit Engagement

Once a guest's visit comes to an end, the relationship should not follow suit. Systems should be in place to assess guest profiles routinely and automatically to formally acknowledge key events or milestones, such as birthdays, wedding anniversaries, anniversary of first or last visit, etc. Taking it a step further, if information was gathered about a guest's personal life, such as children, pets, or other key aspects, occasionally touching base and referencing those personal details is evidence of the hotel's continued interest in maintaining a personal relationship with its guests, likely leading to increased loyalty, frequency, and spend. This ongoing communication can be transmitted either via email or postal delivery, but the key is to make it as personalized as possible. This is particularly important for repeat guests.

Regularly distributed emails presenting exclusive offers or events—particularly those related to the guest's profile—will keep the hotel top of mind and increase the likelihood of repeat—and possibly more



“52% said they [consumers] would pay more to stay at a hotel with better IAQ [indoor air quality], according to the U.S.

Consumer Sentiment on Indoor Air Quality survey

-Hotel Business

frequent—visitation. These communications do not have to be as personal as the ones above but should be relevant to the guest's profile/interests and more frequent (e.g., monthly).

Conclusion: Personalization is the Common Thread

Whether a hotel chooses to employ one or all of the methods above to elevate the guest experience, or any of the countless other practices, the key is to make the effort and resulting experience as personal to the guest as possible. That personalization could be in the form of individual attention, handwritten notes, personally relevant tokens of appreciation, a showcased commitment to guests' health and wellbeing, the ability to proactively address and satisfy guest needs and wants, or any other number of efforts to make guests feel appreciated preemptively and proactively.

The ability to make guests feel valued and special is often the defining factor of the relationship. Those hotels which excel in this area often rank highest in guest satisfaction and retention/loyalty, not to mention sales growth and revenue. Fortunately, as evidenced above, there are a number of practical efforts that can be implemented relatively quickly to elevate the guest experience—and, therefore, the hotel in the eyes of its guests—thus, positively impacting favorability and sales.



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