

Hoteliers to stay in touch with guests directly

There's good news for hoteliers: after years of outsourcing digital communication to guests, getting wires crossed and mixing messages, the task of automated e-mailing and text message services can be done in-house via hotel management property systems.

Ankerdata's protel cloud-based system has developed an instant message service that allows hotel departments to stay in touch with guests directly. protel messenger 'plugs in' to the protel property management system and allows for automatic or manual e-mail or text messages to guests.



Eben Marais and Ian Lumsden of protel from Ankerdata using protel messenger system

Hotels are able to set up the system and rules specific to their needs - this is usually done pre-arrival, mid-stay and post-stay. But the system can communicate with guests at any stage, which allows for marketing managers and reservation departments to decide to whom to send what message, and when.

Using processes such as an e-mail direct to the guest when a reservation is confirmed, Ian Lumsden, Ankerdata's Sales and Marketing Director explains, "The system adds just that much more professionalism to the guest journey; for example, if you have a good reservationist, within a minute of putting the phone down when making a booking, and also if the booking is made online, the guest receives a confirmation e-mail instantly, rather than at a set time of the day or when the reservations department processes the booking." E-mails can be compiled personally and can include links to specials or particular events. The system also includes a survey option that can be triggered as soon as the guest checks out.

What's also valuable is that staff can communicate internally; for instance, if a VIP guest checks in, an automated text message or e-mail can be sent to the general manager or heads of department, notifying them that the VIP has arrived.

Natasha Bester, Marketing Director at BON Hotels, says that protel messenger adds authenticity to the guest communication experience: "Moving to protel messenger has made communication to guests a lot more personal," says Bester. "We've gone from a blanket time-controlled check in and departure message to real conversations. We can let guests know that their rooms are ready or even if a restaurant booking is confirmed or a taxi is waiting. Fantastic for personalised experiences!"

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