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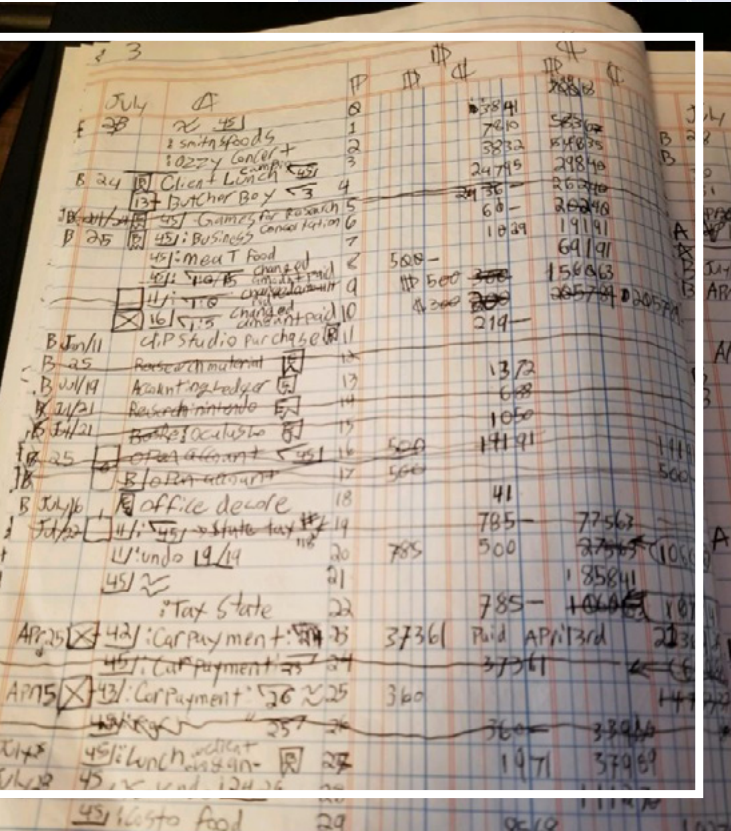
# The Future of the PMS... The Hotel Operating System...



# Look to the past to realise the future.

To look to the future we must first, briefly look to the past and fly through the evolution of the idea of the humble PMS. I like most of my peers in this part of the industry, have the experiences of the taped together, self-made, wall charts and hand-written journals, with an impressive use of psychedelic highlighters and various different coloured post-its. All this looks very important but with the one downside that editing and changing these permanent records was only possible with our good old friend correction fluid! There had to be a better way and there was...

Early versions of a PMS were little more than Excel Spreadsheets with breakable formulas and some basic rate and inventory management 'bells and whistles'. Even at this early stage I can remember sitting there in hotels listening to the frontdesk staff wanting more features, more flexibility, more automation, forgetting it was a few short years ago all the frontdesk work was done on a multitude of forms, papers, wall charts and don't forget the all-important post-its - yellow for rate change memos, pink for housekeeping, blue for room service and so on and so on.



PMS evolution has been steady through the years with only a handful of significant players owning the market and limited proprietary systems being developed as a preference to the high costs for enterprise installations. The significant change occurred with the evolution of internet and cloud hosting. This change facilitated the rise of the Cloud PMS. All of a sudden, there were a raft of open source, cloud hosted, PMS start-ups out there. These dynamic PMS' recognised that to be successful, they need to be innovative and enable their hotel customers to connect to whichever tools they choose.

For this the PMS needs to have the ability to implement partner API's or deliver their own API's for partners to connect to them. An API





(Application Programming Interface) is simply a list of instructions which provide a way for applications to seamlessly communicate with one another. The quality of the API documentation is key to partners being able to connect. The technical specification must contain at the least, a very clear explanation of what this API will support, user stories and best practice instructions, developer guide and step by step implementation instructions.

without the need to hire developers and engineers, which in turn increases potential profitability. Open API's can be completely open to anyone, which is a huge positive and a fast way to get App engagement. Being restriction free can lead to some management issues and/or misuse of the API, for example, not offering a good user experience or maintaining the look and feel the publisher expected.

Open API's or as they are sometimes referenced Public API's, are publicly available for any Developer or Solutions Engineer to access and use the data to enhance their own applications. This practise offers an opportunity to open up new connections and therefore potentially additional revenue streams

## So what does the Future hold?

Well first of all we must recognise that PMS is KING! At the top of the food chain, the PMS is a honey pot of rich data which quite literally every connectivity product in the modern distribution world needs to get access to. Now it's not all one sided, the PMS is at the mercy of its customer base who are hungry for their data to bring them better efficiencies and statistics but much more important, more revenues.

There is an ever growing number of start-ups and established tech firms staking claims of increased customer engagement, increased revenues, happier customers, more direct bookings, customer insights, customer loyalty and the list of opportunities goes on but only if they can see into their PMS. The future is connected, I don't mean channel management, that's 'old school', and most PMS' have this down. Connected is a broad term which has a variety of different meanings but we're talking about the future here, so what is the term 'connected' likely to mean?

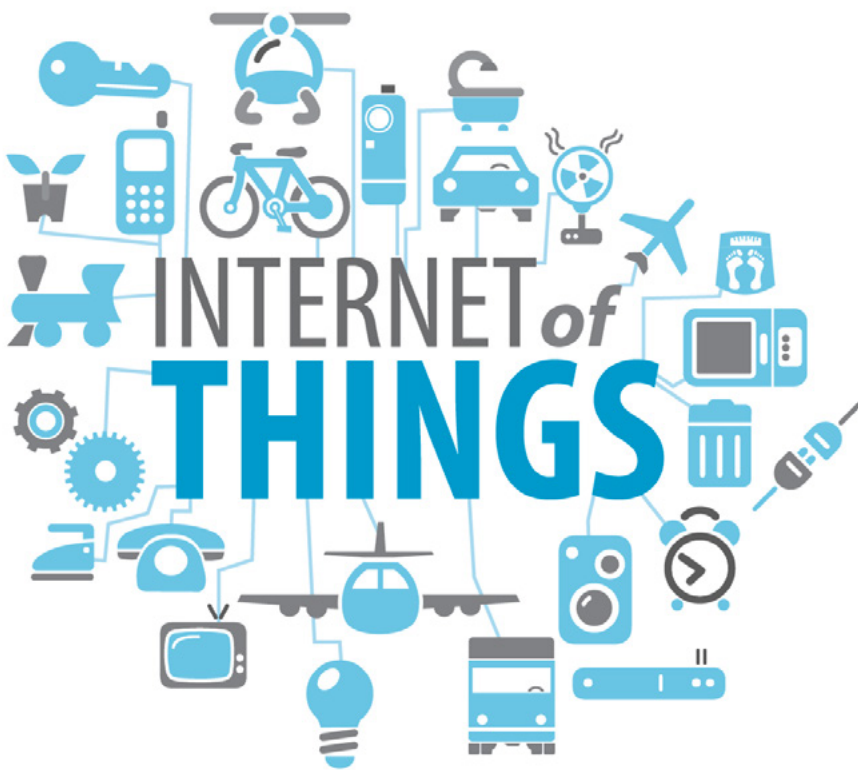
This is where the acronym PMS starts to morph more into HOS (Hotel Operating System). I predict gone will be legacy PMS systems we are used to seeing, usually operated by someone behind a desk inputting and manipulating data and we will enter what will be a platform with modular apps and optional features fully configurable to the hotel's own requirements.





requirements etc. Of course, there is a step change required here for this piece, which will mean bringing down the barriers to connectivity and allowing the multitude of partners such as service providers/apps/technology solutions to connect and retrieve the HOS data for mutual customers.

A HOS is modular in design, meaning the hotel could use all, some or none of the additional features available as the hotel grows or contracts making it possible for them to turn on/off these modules making the HOS completely adaptable and therefore attractive to the users and a greater number of lodging types. This is further enhanced by the HOS making provisions for the regional complexities such as invoicing, government reporting, fiscal



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not that I see front desks disappearing completely, just the interaction will change.

For a PMS this is the most exciting time, it's the beginning of their evolutionary revolution. For sure the possibilities are actually endless and the opportunities vast. Those not willing to embrace will no longer be able to rely on brand loyalty or relationships alone.

We already have mobile check-in and key collection without any human interaction but there is more, so much more we could do. This could be from the HOS linking systems together efficiently. Let's consider a HOS linked to a flight arrival API and Taxi App; knowing if a guest is delayed and passing this information on to the Taxi App, housekeeping and guest services for example, which allows the customer to know on arrival that everything is organised by a simple SMS.

Let's take it a step further and add in voice activated in room services utilising Amazon's Echo or Google Assistant technologies integrated into the PMS - "Alexa - more towels please", "Alexa - club sandwich and a Diet Coke please", "Alexa - what time do I need to check out", the request and responses are only limited to the HOS ability to share data within the platform to the integrated services that includes translation, so never again will a small hotel in South of England need to worry about how to reply to "Alexa - チェックアウトは何時ですか?".

All of this information is in the HOS and will enhance and modernise the way guests interact with the hotel. The driving force should be the hotels strategy on guest engagement not the limitations of their PMS. The traditional frontdesk is already being removed from hotel lobbies with the introduction of automation and mobile and self check-in. This not only increases the availability of community space but frees staff from the confines of a desk and back office, enhancing guest experience through greater interaction and relying on the automated systems to collect and profile the guest data. It's

Lodging Partners of all types know they can capitalise on true automation and better interpretation and use of their data to positively improve guest experience, in turn guest satisfaction which affects guest loyalty and ultimately commercial value.

It's not about PMS any more, it's all about connectivity and operating systems. This is the rise of the Hotel Operating System, where will it go? No one can tell you that but what I can say is if you are not already on this 'Bandwagon' then it's probably too late...



**Martin Harlow, Director Supplier Solutions at Redeam, is a recognized 20-year leader in travel technology and supply chain connectivity. An early innovator in hotel channel management, Martin is now taking his expertise in digital transformation to the Tours and Attractions space. Redeam is an agnostic platform delivering digital connectivity solutions for the tours and attractions industry.**