

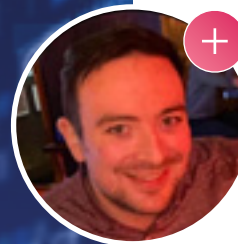


# The Single Guest Profile and the importance of data to drive personalised guest experiences

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*The hotel industry has always been a guest first industry; however, technology and often, hotel processes haven't evolved the same way. As guests expect faster and more personalised service at every step of their travel and stay, it is more important than ever to consider the guest as the centre of the hotel technology stack and hotel processes.*

*Hotels need to focus on consumers themselves, not just servicing them when asked but pre-empting their requests. The key to improving hotel operations technology is improving the guest profile by creating a Single Guest Profile accessible across all systems where applicable.*

*To understand the purpose and capitalise on the benefits, how does a hotel or a group of hotels best do this? What are some of the key considerations, and what should hotels look for in technology to achieve.*

*Here is a video of an online session with key industry players discussing this topic, for information purposes only.*

## HOTELS ARE ACCUMULATING VAST AMOUNTS OF DATA.

It was not very long ago that the only data points collected by hotels were email addresses and guest names. Fast forward to today, and the hospitality industry is collecting unstructured data in vast quantities, both electronically and offline.

However, many hotels are not using that data in a meaningful way, despite having more data about their guests than ever before.

With data being gathered at various touchpoints across the guest journey, information collected can include booking tendencies, travel type, entertainment preferences, purchase behaviour, social media, and more. However, with many different systems within the hotel technology infrastructure, there are likely to be differing profiles for the same guests displaying only part of the whole picture.

The volume of data, data silos, and disparate systems with multiple guest profiles within hotels point to the real challenge, turning that data into a meaningful, clean, and structured business asset to help drive insights and take actions based on hard data.

## EXPECTATIONS ARE CHANGING

As demographics change, consumers want to engage with brands, with an increased demand for personalisation.

**Baby Boomers (1946-1964)** prefer the telephone and are risk-averse to technology.

**Gen X (1965-1980)** are lovers of email and the telephone but have adapted and become accustomed to self-service and automated types of communication.

**Millennials (1981-1996)** the first digital natives. With phone phobia a real thing for many millennials, they're the ones who will go straight to the self-service checkout rather than the one with a human serving.





**Gen Z (1997- ?)** the born-digital generation! Even more dependent on their devices than millennials, they, as a polar opposite to their millennial counterparts, like face-to-face communication. However, they also demand a high level of personalisation from both their face-to-face and digital engagement.

44% of Gen Z will provide more personal data to ensure a personalised experience. Additionally, 44% say they would stop using a website that did not anticipate their needs, wants, or likes. This shows a demand for a tailored, personalised experience based on the data they have shared. (WPENGINE research).

According to work carried by SalesForce, 62% overall would provide more information if it provided them with a more personalised experience and offers in return.

The increasing level of personalisation and individually tailored service demanded, which hotels need to drive at scale, can only really be achieved by taking action based on data, through connected technology and, usually, with an element of automation.

A key point to note is the expectation of personalisation – addressing the guests needs before they need to ask.

The information to do this exists within the hotel technology stack. Still, to take action, hotels need to work to bring this data together into a Single Guest Profile and ensure they have the technology and operational processes in place to deliver on it.

## THE SINGLE GUEST PROFILE

The data held on an individual guest, across various systems, can include;

- Contact details
- Demographic information
- Interests
- Purchase history
- Preferences (both for their stay, such as room type preference, as well as preferences on *how* they want to be communicated with)
- Experiential and Feedback

Each of the points above is somewhat useful on their own; however, bringing all of that information together allows for actions to be taken across the hotel to deliver on-demand for personalisation.

When disparate data is brought together into a Single Guest Profile, you can build rich pictures of your guests, which will only become more detailed, the more data is added.

For example, a look at your PMS data may provide you with a starting point for building a high-level guest profile such as:

- the business traveller
- the family
- the couple





Imagine the level of personalisation, insight and pre-emptive action that can be achieved when these profiles can be further characterised with other criteria using data from other systems such as POS, Spa/Leisure Management; or the level of customer loyalty or satisfaction:

- the business traveller who comes every year to a trade fair
- the parents who stay at your property every three months to see their child at university
- the guest who left a very positive review the last time he stayed in one of your establishments
- the guest who has been to your restaurant or spa several times
- the couple who have already stayed at your establishment for a weekend and are now renewing their wedding vows

With the (at the time of writing) impending arrival of iOS15 and its much talked about privacy features relating to email, the death of the third-party cookie in 2022 as Google shifts its privacy policies, as well as the many other recently implemented privacy protection features. The value of the first-party data that hotels hold in their systems cannot be understated.

Being able to take action and deliver a personalised experience based on consolidated first-party data will help mitigate any disruption where third party data has been relied on previously. Not only that but being able to use rich first-party data sets via a Single Guest Profile has delivered better results for our clients.

### THE RIGHT TECHNOLOGY

This is all well and good in theory; however, to deliver on the potential of the Single Guest Profile, it's essential to look at the technology you have in place. With many systems in play and sometimes multiple systems processing guest data before a reservation is even confirmed, it is no surprise there is an industry-wide problem with uniformity and consistency of guest profile data.

Deduplication, matching and unique identification of guest data require an open flow of data between systems, with a central aggregation point. This issue has given rise to CRM and Customer Data Platform (CDP) solutions within the hospitality industry.

For hotels to make the best use of CRM or CDP platforms, hotels should look at their whole technology stack and investigate providers that have adopted an open system approach or are willing to integrate with other providers.

Cloud-based technology can provide for the deployment of an open and interconnected technology stack, opening up the possibility for CRM or CDP platforms to provide the Single Guest View across the entirety of a hotel operation.

It is important to note that when you are looking at a possible CRM, CDP platform, or any system that will form part of your connected ecosystem, privacy concerns must be taken into account and local and





international standards that need to be considered.

These technologies already exist. If you take action based on the insights provided, they can, and will, transform each guest's experience with your hotel and also how your hotel understands and engages with its guests.

## EMBEDDING THE IMPORTANCE OF DATA AS A BUSINESS ASSET

Bringing together disparate data sets to create a Single Guest Profile requires a mindset shift from both hotels in what technology they deploy and from technology vendors in how easily the data and guest profiles held within their systems are open and able to interconnect. Thankfully, however, vendors are recognising the benefits of facilitating the flow of data between systems. However, there are operational aspects to ensuring that you get the most out of your data and your Single Guest Profile is as useful as possible.

It starts with making sure all your teams across the hotels are bought into the importance of data in your guest relationships. Everyone in all departments has roles to play in ensuring that the data collected is as accurate and useful as possible, and it's critically important that everyone knows this.

Anecdotally, we have heard of some hotels that incentivise the gathering of clean, accurate data and those that include messaging around its importance and best-practice in gathering data as part of a new staff members onboarding.

Some hotels have a cheat sheet of do's and don'ts – the essential element is that everyone buys into it.

A great example is making sure you convert those OTA email addresses (booking.com etc.) into 'real' email addresses on check-in. When you adapt your technology stack to deliver a Single Guest Profile, you can

more easily provide operators with a quick and easy view of incomplete or data that needs updating. Managing this quality of data is something we frequently hear from our hotel partners, with methods of identifying these gaps something our team has worked extensively to address.

While technology can do a lot of the heavy lifting regarding deduplication, matching and unique identification of guest data, the adage of 'garbage in, garbage out' still holds true in many cases.

Instilling the concept of data as a business-critical asset across the hotel and making sure you have the operational processes and technology in place to identify and address gaps in data collection will all help to ensure you have the best possible understanding of your guests.

## TAKEAWAYS

- As demographics and expectations shift toward a higher demand for personalisation, building a Single Guest Profile based on the data held across the hotel will be key
- Single Guest Profiles and first-party data will play an increasingly important part in delivering personalised guest experiences and hotel operations





- Hotels looking to create a Single Guest Profile should investigate implementing a CRM or CDP platform to deduplicate, match and uniquely identify guest data, making it accessible across the hotel operation
- Embedding the importance of data in the culture of the hotel operation is just as essential as having the right technology in place – clean, accurate data powers the Single Guest Profile



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*Having started his career in the hospitality sector, including corporate meetings and events, Jamie is passionate about building brands and improving guests' experiences. Before joining For-Sight in October 2018, Jamie led national and global B2B marketing teams from Fortune 500 software developers to Professional Legal Services firms.*

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