

EXECUTIVE INSIGHT:

Taking Brand Engagement to the Next Level with an Advanced Network



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Internet of Things (IoT) is a top strategy to improve customer experience for both restaurant (60%) and hotels (78%) in 2020. What network considerations and steps should be taken to accommodate an infrastructure that needs to support connected guest and employee

systems and devices?

DONNA M. COBB: IoT covers a broad range of solutions that help connect your business, your customers, your suppliers and your infrastructure. IoT solutions collect data, which is then analyzed and helps create hyper-personalized experiences for your customer across your restaurant or your hotel. Even at the most basic level, IoT can help reduce energy costs by managing lighting and environmental assets. Consider the amount of time and resources wasted if an employee needs to leave the floor on a routine basis to check temperatures in cooler cases versus having a device to manage and monitor automatically.

How can a well-structured and powered network bolster customer loyalty?

COBB: In the hospitality industry, finding new ways to win the loyalty battle – capturing new customers and retaining them – is critical. Having the right network in place can help power those initiatives. By building a foundation of performance, flexibility and affordability, hospitality providers can be confident that the technologies they choose will provide a platform built for today and at the same time be ready for the next technology advancement. Customers demand seamless experiences, as an example, the ability to order and pay with their mobile device, demands a network that can adapt without causing slow-downs or bottlenecks in the process. An advanced network supports the

devices and entry points that can help track customer preferences, provide personalized experiences, and even drive upsell opportunities.

Consistently, the majority of guests (84%) and diners (56%) say that access to free WiFi will drive booking and dining decisions. How has this demand changed how restaurants and hotels need to build out networks? What steps are often overlooked?

COBB: Access to fast, reliable, free WiFi is table stakes, not just for guests but for back-office applications as well. WiFi needs to handle all guests and all of their devices without impacting back-office connectivity that powers the business. It also needs to prevent the guest network from accessing unauthorized, sensitive data. Often hospitality businesses overlook the number of devices that are accessing the WiFi, and the impact on responsiveness. Most guests are carrying three connected devices, so it is essential to provide adequate bandwidth for a great experience. In hotels, as an example, a guest's stay is not confined to the hotel room. There needs to be seamless access in all public areas as well.

What do you think will have the biggest impact on hotel and restaurant networks in the next few years? How can brands prepare?

COBB: I believe the next big impact for hotels and restaurants will be the ability to take brands to the next level. Beyond customer satisfaction and loyalty, building trust and having a brand a customer can stand behind will become more important. In restaurants, it is not just about how you recycle, but are you migrating to more sustainable packaging and how are you handling food waste? Technology advances will enable ways to address these new challenges, and you need to be confident that your network is agile and powerful enough to keep pace with the ever-changing landscape of the industry.