

THE BEST PRODUCTIVITY IDEAS FOR HOTELS

**A COLLECTION OF
HOSPITALITY
CASE STUDIES
IN SINGAPORE**

COMPILED BY:



TRAINING STRATEGIES

TRAINING & CONSULTANCY FOR SERVICE INDUSTRIES

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH:



Better Jobs For Life
Employment and Employability Institute



FOREWORD

“Looking prim and sleek in well-pressed uniforms, hoteliers attend to every need of their guests, all without breaking a sweat.



Away from the public eye, much manpower is deployed and elaborate coordination goes on behind the scenes to ensure that hotel operations run smoothly for the best guest experiences. As Singapore progresses, so does innovative technology aimed at enhancing our quality of life. Contrary to popular belief, technology does not necessarily replace workers. Instead, technology can be harnessed to enhance guests' satisfaction and free up workers from tedious, manual tasks to focus on delivering intimate customised service to their guests.

To better help our hotel workers in Singapore, e2i has partnered Training Strategies Pte. Ltd. to launch this booklet containing selected case studies of our partners who have incorporated technologies in their operations. With the new equipment, our hotel partners were able to re-design some of their processes, thus making the job easier and more efficient for our workers.

We hope that the guide will provide inspiration and information to readers on how technology can help our hotel industry deliver even better services to their guests. If you are keen on transforming your workplace and your workforce, e2i is here to embark on this transformation journey together with you to achieve a shared vision on digitalising the hotel industry in Singapore.

We would like to thank Training Strategies Pte. Ltd. for the collaboration in helping to uncover these innovative leaders in the hotel industry and we send our appreciation to our hotel partners who have made this publication possible.

Gilbert Tan
Chief Executive Officer
e2i

INTRODUCTION

“A leader is one who knows the way, goes the way, and shows the way.”

John C. Maxwell

“In an industry that is traditionally dependent on human-to-human interactions, the delicate balance in enhancing productivity with technology while retaining that X factor in the hospitality business is a challenge for hotel owners and managers. Yet with Singapore hotels facing a tight labour market and rising manpower costs, the quest to do things better with new technology must go on for businesses to thrive amidst the competition.



Rather than doing their own things and keeping to themselves, some hotels have stepped forward to share their experiences in their productivity journey so that we can learn from one another and accelerate growth in the hotel industry. It is with this intent that the idea of producing this booklet was conceived.

One thing we have learned through our interviews with the hotels featured here and our observations of them is that when proper implementation, communication and change management are in place, the team members will welcome and embrace the productivity idea better because they understand the purpose of the whole initiative.

It has been an honour taking on this exciting project. We are privileged to have met and worked with such enthusiastic and inspiring process owners as well as team members from human resource, marketing communications and operations at the various hotels.

We would like to thank e2i for its support and the following six hotel partners for their precious time and effort in making this publication possible:

- Copthorne King's Hotel
- Crowne Plaza Changi Airport
- M Hotel Singapore
- Sheraton Towers Singapore
- Singapore Marriott Tang Plaza Hotel
- Swissôtel The Stamford

We hope this sharing of experiences will benefit many and inspire more hotels to step forward to share about their productivity journey.

Lam Lye Chan

Founder & Senior Performance Consultant
Training Strategies Pte. Ltd.

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Copthorne King's Hotel

1 Because Breakfast Matters

Crowne Plaza Changi Airport

Located with seamless connectivity to Singapore Changi Airport is Crowne Plaza Changi Airport, an urban resort with 563 guest rooms. Its strategic location caters to transiting passengers while its proximity to nearby business parks makes it ideal for business travellers.

The situation

Buffet breakfast is served daily at Azur, the hotel's award-winning restaurant. On weekdays, the restaurant is kept busy serving around 300 to 350 covers while the weekends bring in a slightly larger group of 400 to 450 covers.

With a lean service team of 8 to 11 staff, Azur sought to embark on a productivity project to review its breakfast processes so that the staff would have more time to focus on service delivery.

Engaging the help of consultants via the Inclusive Growth Programme Grant and Job Redesign Grant government initiatives, extensive time motion, movement and workflow studies were carried out.

The findings underscored the importance of ensuring the accurate entry of guests' information and entitlements into the system by the Front Office staff.

It was also necessary for the hotel to upgrade its keycard system to one

that could capture guests' information adequately.

Actions

Azur acquired the Shiji Smart Breakfast Control system, which would give its staff electronic access to the data of hotel guests at the tap of a keycard. Steps were taken to interface the restaurant's Shiji system with the hotel's Opera system so that information could be transmitted.

Less time spent on paperwork

Previously, the Azur staff had to start printing the hotel's occupancy report at 5.30am in preparation for breakfast service, which would start at 6.00am. With both information systems at the Front Office





and Azur now interfaced, report printing is no longer necessary. This reduction in daily paperwork allows the staff more time to engage and assist guests with attentive service.

Previously, the staff had to tally up the number of guests who came for breakfast at the end of the shift. Now, these figures are automatically recorded and analysed in the Shiji system.

Less waiting time

Previously, guests arriving for breakfast had to state their names and room numbers in order for the staff to verify their meal entitlements. Now, with a tap of the keycard on the Shiji device, the staff are able to verify this information swiftly and prepare the bill, if necessary.



Should the keycard not work, the system also allows the staff to retrieve the information by keying in

the room number. Guests spend less time waiting in line and may be seated for breakfast sooner.

Results

The revamped breakfast system has helped the hotel to address the challenge of upholding service standards while coping with a lean team. Besides saving 30 minutes daily in pre-opening preparation and eliminating waste, it has also helped to reduce language barrier between guests and staff as information is obtained at the tap of a keycard.

2 Chillin' n Cookin' with livecookintable®

Sheraton Towers Singapore

Food and beverage operations are a core function at Sheraton Towers Singapore. The luxury hotel runs three dining establishments and a high volume of banqueting events, including outdoor ones, at 16 versatile venues with a total event space of over 13,400 square feet.

The situation

Whenever an event at Sheraton Towers Singapore calls for food and beverage to be set up outdoors, the culinary team would first cook the dishes ahead indoors and then do the setup outdoors. Warmers are used to help keep the food hot though quality is still somewhat affected as the service staff need time to plate and serve the dishes to the guests.

The staff are also required to monitor and change the traditional Chafo units and burners every two to

three hours. They face the risk of injury over open fire when using cooking equipment.

Having a limited number of cooking stations available during peak event periods means the staff are unable to speed up the food production process to ensure a positive guest experience.

With a sizeable number of staff comprising older workers who have been on its team for decades, the hotel is constantly exploring ways to use technology to make the work safe and less tedious.



Actions

By embarking on the Inclusive Growth Programme with e2i, Sheraton Towers Singapore was able to purchase the livecookintable® — a versatile portable culinary and service station, which can be set up and packed easily. Offering various modular options, this modern equipment comprises various panels that may function as a cooler, a warmer or a cooking device. It can also be converted





into a table, depending on the needs. Each setup is determined by the Executive Chef based on the menu.

The mobility of this system helps to reduce the manpower required to watch over food quality as the desired temperatures for warming the various dishes are determined and set ahead. The system also supports in-house operations with additional food stations, which may be easily converted into cooking and chilling stations, thus maintaining the pace of operations and reducing the likelihood of injury as fire is not used.

That faulty panels of this German-made system may be replaced individually anytime without affecting the entire system makes it a cost-effective proposition despite its substantial price

tag. Staff training is provided to ensure the system is handled appropriately and

weekly deep cleaning is carried out by the chefs.

Results

With livecookintable®, the staff no longer need to manoeuvre trolley loads of prepared meals or carry/pour hot water into chafing dishes, which may be physically demanding for older workers. The risk of work injuries is thus minimised. Setup time is reduced as tablecloths/skirtings are not required and there is no need to monitor the chafing dishes or replace the fuel. The livecookintable® system is also easy to clean with a scratch-free cloth and gentle detergent.

With opportunities for the staff to be multi-skilled and deployed where needed to operate the culinary stations, the hotel's reliance on casual F&B labour is reduced. At the hotel's *The Dining Room* restaurant, where buffet meals are served daily, the turnaround time between breakfast and lunch has been shortened by 75%. That means the staff have more time to focus on higher value duties and other essential aspects of the setup.

3 Inspiring New Ways

Swissôtel The Stamford

A prominent feature of the Singapore skyline, Swissôtel The Stamford is one of Southeast Asia's tallest hotels. Boasting a luxurious range of 1,252 guestrooms with panoramic views all around, the hotel embraces innovation and strives to meet the evolving needs of the next generation. It is the first hotel in Singapore to implement smart technology by automating its check-in and check-out counters, enhanced with an industry-first biometric facial recognition technology.

The situation

The lobby at Swissôtel The Stamford is often bustling with guest arrivals and departures. Handling around 600 to 900 check-in and check-out tasks daily, the Front Office colleagues usually spend a significant amount of time completing administrative paperwork, resulting in longer waiting times for guests. To cope with the paperwork, the

colleagues stay back after their shifts to clear the backlog. During high occupancy periods, the queues for check-in and check-out would be even longer, resulting in guests waiting for up to an hour for their turn at times.

Actions

The hotel decided to implement the use of self check-in/check-out counters. Using biometric facial



Guest experience is the core of our strategy – the technology we use must be user-friendly for all and sustainable

*Ms. Nurul Syuhaidah
Front Office - Asst. Manager*

recognition technology, the smart system allows guests to scan their faces to authenticate their passports.

Approaching the proposed transformation with guest experience in mind, the Front Office and Info Systems teams carried out process mapping and workflow tests. Each counter is designed as a standalone system; if one malfunctions, the rest would not be affected.

First, the hotel had to integrate the Opera property management system with those for scanning passports,



luggage tags, credit cards, and the secure lock system. Next, the team had to understand and align the facial recognition process to meet government requirements. There also had to be a mindset change amongst the colleagues to do things better and differently.

A step-by-step guide and video clips to demonstrate the correct placement of the passport for scanning, cutting the key, inserting the credit card and so on

have been included to help guests along. Feedback is constantly reviewed to improve user experience — the number of screens has been reduced from the original 10 to 9. The Front Office and Concierge teams are trained to assist guests in using the system.

Simplifying the processes with smart technology has reduced administrative tasks. Bills are sent via email. With recording and closing now handled automatically, the

colleagues can conclude their shifts promptly. And with little need for registration cards, receipts and envelopes, the hotel is also able to be more sustainable and help do its part for the environment.

“With less paperwork, our Front Office team can focus on interacting with the guests to better engage with them

*Ms. Lau Yu Joy
Project & Innovation Executive*

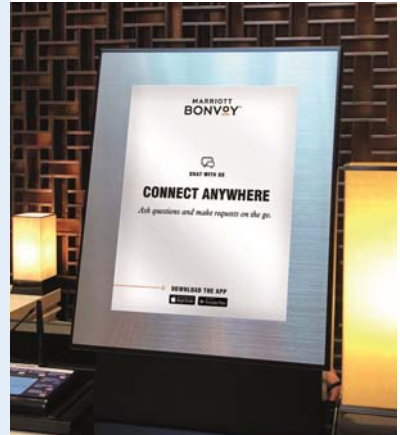
Results

Since automating the procedures, the hotel has noticed improvements in productivity, guest satisfaction and colleague satisfaction. Instead of requiring 6 to 8 Front Office team members per daytime shift, only 4 to 5 are now required each time. The previous workload and paper usage associated with each colleague processing 30 to 50 registrations per shift has been significantly reduced with automation. Guests are pleased as less time is spent waiting in line. The colleagues are able to focus on building guest relationships through meaningful interactions — adding that personal touch of walking guests to the elevator and being true lobby hosts.

4 Smart Check-In, Unlock My Door

Singapore Marriott Tang Plaza Hotel

The iconic Singapore Marriott Tang Plaza Hotel, with its strategic location here “at the crossroads of Asia,” has always been regarded by its global headquarters as the flagship hotel in Asia Pacific for new projects. It was selected to offer the smart check-in/check-out and mobile key features on the Marriott mobile app.



The situation

The directive from its global headquarters to implement these smart functions via the app was an opportunity for the Singapore Marriott Tang Plaza Hotel to take guest satisfaction to a new level.

With the Marriott mobile app, check-in/check-out is more efficient. Marriott Bonvoy members will receive a push notification on their mobile devices 48

hours before their arrival, alerting them that they may request to check-in. And when their room is ready, they will receive an automatic notification and may use their mobile key to access the lift and unlock their room door. These user-friendly app offerings seek to appeal especially to the tech-savvy Millennials and business/corporate guests.

Initially, guests at the hotel were curious and had

mixed reactions when they were introduced to the app and its mobile check-in feature.

Behind the scenes, the staff faced teething system glitches with the digital key function such as pre-check-in notifications and delayed access.

Actions

Good technical support was provided to the Singapore team.



The hotel's frontline staff put their skills to use, attending to the needs of guests while explaining the use of the app. New tests have since ensured the system runs smoothly and the staff remain ready to tackle any unforeseen glitches that may occur.

With the app, the Front Desk staff simply need to verify guests' identity/passport details and the registered credit card, and

obtain their signature. This simplified process saves time while ensuring security is maintained.

With an improvement in productivity, the staff are also able to spend more

time engaging the guests.

Check-out is also hassle-free as the digital key expires automatically; the bill is charged to the credit card and the statement is sent via email to the guest.



Results

The staff have been able to engage guests and anticipate needs by referring to their history details shown on the app. Guests enjoy the convenience of being notified via the app when their room is ready and are able to manage their reservation and rewards better.

The app's "chatbot" function and "apply corporate code" reservation feature have noticeably reduced the frequency of corporate inquiry phone calls. The check-in process time has been reduced by approximately 3 minutes.

5 Applied Intelligence in Action

M Hotel Singapore

Imagine having your room amenities delivered to you by a friendly robot. This is not a science fiction. It is a reality at M Hotel Singapore, where exciting technological advancements in the form of autonomous front-of-house helpers are a common sight. Centrally located in the business district, the hotel is amongst several Millennium hotels in Singapore to enhance guest experiences through technology.

The situation

The Housekeeping and Front Office staff at M Hotel Singapore have often been kept busy delivering additional amenities such as bottled water, slippers, towels, toothbrushes and other items on-demand to its 415 guestrooms. Coupled with the challenge of manpower shortage in the hospitality industry, the hotel realised the urgent necessity of transforming

its processes through innovation and technology to sustain this labour-intensive function. The manpower hours saved could be channeled to other value-added work.

Actions

AURA, the room service robot, which was first introduced at its affiliated M Social Hotel, was procured to bring convenience and delight to guests, and to

help staff focus on improving guest experiences. Other Singapore hotels of Millennium Hotels and Resorts, such as Grand Copthorne Waterfront, Orchard Hotel Singapore and Studio M, followed suit.

With this new delivery system, guests' requests are first received by the call centre and then conveyed to the Front Office Concierge staff so that AURA may be dispatched to deliver the items.

Compact, stylish and skilled, AURA has become a talking point in social media posts by hotel guests. It is able to operate guest lifts, navigate its way to the guestrooms and let guests know when it has arrived outside. It does not





compete with others to enter the lift and its sensors allow it to detect objects/people along the way to avoid collisions.

When guests have removed the items, AURA enquires about their stay with a rating system of one to five stars on its screen. Unsuccessful delivery attempts

are recorded for follow-up by the staff accordingly.

Apart from the initiation cost, the hotel pays the vendor a monthly maintenance fee. The Concierge staff are tasked with cleaning AURA daily to ensure that it is in tip-top condition. Its battery

takes an hour to be charged.

AURA's role has since been expanded to include the Scout Facility feature. Operating as "Security on patrol," it supports the security team by taking photos and videos of situations on guest floors.



Results

On average, AURA spends 6,750 minutes per month delivering items to the guestrooms. In terms of human staff hours, this represents time savings of 16 work days per month, which can be spent on delighting guests instead to give them a memorable stay experience.

By taking over some of the security patrolling duties — especially during midnight shifts where manpower is limited — AURA relieves the hotel of its manpower crunch so that staff can be assigned to perform other tasks.

6 Fabulous Eggs, Security Redesigned

Copthorne King's Hotel

Situated just minutes from Chinatown and the Orchard Road shopping belt, Copthorne King's Hotel is a stone's throw from old and new experiences. Enhancing productivity via the Hotel Industry Transformation Map, the hotel successfully implemented three projects involving the use of new technology and revamped workflows at its restaurant, *Princess Terrace Café*, and the Security department.

FOOD & BEVERAGE

The situation

Breakfast at the *Princess Terrace Café* is always a busy time, especially at its popular egg station, where egg dishes are freshly prepared on request. Endure long hours of standing while cooking simple egg dishes repeatedly to meet the high volume of orders from over 300 breakfast guests — this

was the challenge any two chefs assigned to the egg station had to face each day.

Action

The hotel procured a Singapore-made autonomous service chef robot named AUSCA (Automated Service Chef Associate) to handle the egg orders instead. It is capable of preparing eggs in two ways: sunny-side up and omelette.



To begin, guests place an empty plate on AUSCA and select the desired egg dish. AUSCA then gets busy. From pouring the oil and cracking the eggs to tossing them and serving the dish on the plate, the robotic arm completes each order systematically. In fact, AUSCA can serve up a sunny-side up in 1 minute 15 seconds and an omelette in 1 minute 40 seconds.

Initially, AUSCA's performance had to be closely monitored by the staff to ensure teething issues were addressed. The team learned that the size of each egg mattered — if the egg were



SECURITY

The situation

Security is a serious matter at Copthorne King's Hotel. However, many of its processes demand time-consuming administrative work to be carried out and this hampers the response agility of the security team.

The workflows for these two areas were thus reviewed for improvement:

- Issuing keys such as master keys, outlet keys, safebox keys, etc.
- Recording the particulars of visitors and issuing passes

too small, AUSCA might not get a firm grip and would end up dropping it or getting egg shells in the dish. In addition, the pointed part of the egg had to face downwards in order to be in the right position for AUSCA to pick it up.

After two months of fine-tuning the setup, the staff now only need to refill the omelette ingredients, ensure there are sufficient eggs in place, and do some general cleaning and maintenance.

Now, handling up to 300 egg orders at breakfast time daily is no problem for AUSCA and it does so

without complaining or feeling tired.

Results (Food & Beverage)

Tourists and families with young children are often amused and delighted to have AUSCA cook the eggs for them. Now, only one chef is required to manage the egg station. Guests who are in a hurry may request the chef to prepare their egg orders instead.

Relieved from the physical strain of repetitive cooking and hours of standing, the staff can focus on ensuring food and service quality. The innovative use of AUSCA has been a talking point on social media; this has enhanced the hotel's brand exposure. AUSCA has the potential to be used in serving other popular dishes as well, perhaps Laksa.

Actions

New technology systems have been introduced to reduce paperwork and improve workflow efficiency:

Key Management System

Accessing the required keys is fuss-free as the staff simply needs to scan his/her thumbprint for verification. The system will only release the respective keys to those who are authorised to have them, thus the staff will need to retrieve the key in person.

If the key is not returned by the end of the day, the system will trigger a notification, which will be sent to the staff's superior.



Having a back-up system in place in the event of power failure is critical.

Visitor Management System

The personal particulars of visitors such as contractors and part-time staff are now obtained via a self-registration kiosk in a simple four-step process:

1. Scan identification card
2. Key in name
3. Key in mobile number
4. Take a photo for face recognition



When these steps have been completed, the machine will print a self-adhesive identification label for the registered visitor to display prominently for recognition while moving around the hotel's premises.

The ability to reduce the risk of human error while reducing cost and manpower reliance is a big advantage to the Security team

Mr. Tamalason Chelleganu, Acting Security Manager

Results (Security)

Innovative productivity solutions have enabled Copthorne King's Hotel to reduce manual work for its Security team. With the new systems in place, the staff are no longer desk-bound to register visitors, issue keys and monitor their return; instead, they can be assigned to handle other essential tasks.



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