

6 Ways The Hospitality Industry Is Giving Airbnb A Run For Its Money

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The way people travel is changing.

Technology is not only shaping the way in which people share their experiences, it is also shaping where and how they do it. **Home-sharing** tech companies such as **Airbnb** have existed for less than a decade, but have managed to cause significant disruption in the **hospitality industry**. This disruption is forcing **hotel** companies to revamp the traditional model of doing business and to reinvent themselves to compete.



"One of the things that people are trending away from is the idea of people spending time in their rooms. [Before] it was about larger rooms and larger suites and people maximizing the ability to do things in their room, [but] younger guests are more interested in spending time in common spaces," **Colliers International** Valuation Services

Director Ryan Sikorski said.

Here are six ways hotel brands are reinventing themselves to stay relevant during a time of tech dominance and intense competition.

1. Co-Working



The concept of **co-working** has **risen in popularity** over the past few years. While spaces have traditionally been located primarily in office buildings, that is changing as hoteliers appeal to **business travelers** by including **co-working options in their facilities**.

These corporate amenities are particularly essential as Airbnb begins to target the business traveler demographic.

"Airbnb's next stated objective is to eliminate some of the stigma that goes with the business traveler staying in an Airbnb. They are making efforts to increase the comfort level that a business traveler would have going that route," Sikorski

said.

Serendipity Labs, a company that **delivers co-working as an upscale hospitality brand**, saw an opportunity to merge the two industries and recently 3H Group Hotels, SSM Hospitality and Hunter Hotel Advisors joined the concept as franchisees.

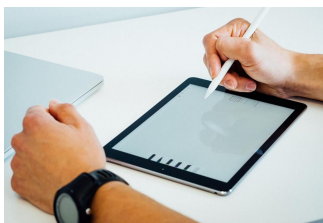
They are not the only ones jumping on this trend. Serendipity has more than 100 properties under development.

“There’s this huge market where people want to work and the way people work is changing. We think we’re way out in front [of the hospitality industry]. This is the early days of this category and we’re setting standards,” Serendipity Labs CEO **John Arenas** said.

LiquidSpace, an online marketplace for flex space based out of Palo Alto, California, has also ventured into the hospitality industry. More than 30 major hotel chains, including **Hilton**, DoubleTree, **Embassy Suites** and Hampton have signed on to offer office and meeting space for users of the app.

While **Marriott International** launched its own workplace rental concept, called Workplace On Demand, it is also working with LiquidSpace to market its services on the app. Spaces are for both hotel guests and business professionals who need to quickly drop in and work.

2. Top-Notch Technology



One major investment hotels are making to remain competitive is in their tech offerings. Hoteliers are giving their properties tech facelifts in an effort to stay up-to-date with their brands' current standards, and it is not a cheap task.

Hoteliers are making investments to combat cybersecurity, investing in more reliable WiFi and pouring money into functional and appealing mobile apps. They are also allocating funds for more up-to-date in-room technology, such as smart TVs that provide streaming options like Netflix and Hulu in addition to an array of movie offerings and cable TV.

A new tech-powered hospitality concept in New York is using technology to help improve efficiency and keep its room costs low. The hotel, called **Public Hotel**, **has stripped away unnecessary costs** and amenities such as bellhops and reservation desk agents, which no longer resonate with the traveling public.

Instead, the brand uses self-service tablets, allowing guests to check themselves in and print room keys without the help of an actual person. By cutting out the cost of salaried employees, the hotel is able to offer prices to visitors that are comparable to many Airbnb lodges.

Prices start at \$150 for a basic room and move up in price depending on the time of year and the suite requested.

Four Seasons Hotels is also getting into the tech game and recently launched a **mobile app** that includes a chat function aimed to enhance customer service and is working on implementing a guest recognition program to encourage customer loyalty.

3. Fitness Accommodations



Americans are becoming more fitness focused, and the hospitality industry has taken note.

That is why **Hyatt Hotels** recently acquired fitness and spa brands Exhale Spa and Miraval Spa, and Hilton hotels launched the “Five Feet to Fitness” program in May, **Forbes reports**.

The concept combines a traditional hotel room with a fitness center so guests can easily and privately work out when they travel. In addition to equipment that includes everything from yoga mats to free weights, the rooms also come equipped with a touch-screen display that plays workout tutorials.

Westin Hotels & Resorts is also **keeping fitness convenient for guests**, but in a slightly different way than Hilton. Westin teamed up with New Balance to roll out Westin Gear Lending in April. For only five dollars, the hotel will provide guests with fresh workout clothes and running shoes. If those same people are joggers, the hospitality brand’s Run Westin program will provide them with dedicated running routes around the hotel.

4. Experiential Hospitality



Other hotels are more focused on interacting with guests and getting them involved in activities offered within and around the hotel.

According to JLL, the Zero George hotel in Charleston, South Carolina, caters to the foodie demographic by offering cooking classes with local chefs, who teach guests different recipes, techniques and styles.

But that is not all. A slew of packages are available to order through the hotel, including a romance package for couples, a pamper package for traveling best friends, a photography package, which takes guests on a customized three- to five-hour guided tour of the city, and a beach package that even goes so far as to include a beach tote, hats and sunscreen compliments of Zero George.

In British Columbia, Canada, the Sonora Resort offers guests high-end experiences both in and outside of the resort. In addition to providing options such as a spa day on a private island, the lodge also has a list of excursions that include salmon fishing trips, a helicopter glacier tour that includes a gourmet picnic and even a grizzly bear tour, just to name a few.

5. Amenity-Rich Offerings



Similar to bellhops and reservation attendants, a number of amenities are becoming obsolete in the hospitality industry, while others are growing increasingly desirable.

This is one of the reasons Public Hotel in Manhattan has put a significant focus on its food and beverage offerings. The hotel has five restaurants and bars, plus a coffee shop and market. Between 35% and 45% of its revenue is accumulated from these areas. But the reason this concept works so well is not only because of an increased interest in food. It has to do with the fact that many people, **millennials in particular**, want a social experience in addition to having a place to sit and eat.

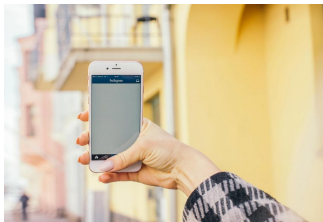
“Hotels still have the advantage of the common spaces, the younger guests can’t

get what they get at an Airbnb that they can get at a hotel. If the trends are going toward common spaces and communal amenities that is specifically one thing an Airbnb can't provide," Sikorski said.

In addition to offering guests customized fitness and wellness packages, the Four Seasons [Hotel Westlake Village in the San Fernando Valley](#) near LA includes gardens and an art gallery on its property so guests have the option of being solitary or more social when they please.

"[Younger guests] would rather have a fun café or wine bar where they can get things done. If you think about it from a cost basis it's overall less expensive to provide those amenities on a common basis rather than an as room basis, so maximizing common space is also in the interest of the hotel," Sikorski said.

6. Social Media Interactions



As [social media permeates nearly every industry](#), hospitality in particular is starting to step up.

[Recognizing the need to stand out against the crowd](#), many hotels have begun to showcase and celebrate the qualities of the hotel and surrounding area in a way that is [sure to get attention both on and offline](#).

One example of this is [the Liberty Hotel in Boston](#). Between the late 1880s and 1990s, this hotel was the Charles Street Jail. In fact, it is the famous penitentiary that once confined Malcolm X.

[Owners of the now luxury lodge](#) decided to use its past to generate some buzz. Liberty Hotel, which is commonly used as a wedding venue, uses Instagram to show off the venue and promote events with pictures of its restaurant, which pays homage to its former use as a jail cell with the name Clink, along with another cocktail bar, which was previously a drunk tank and is now named Alibi.

The account even encourages guests to tag their pictures using the hashtag [#libertyhotel](#) to allow them to share the experience with their network of friends and family.

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