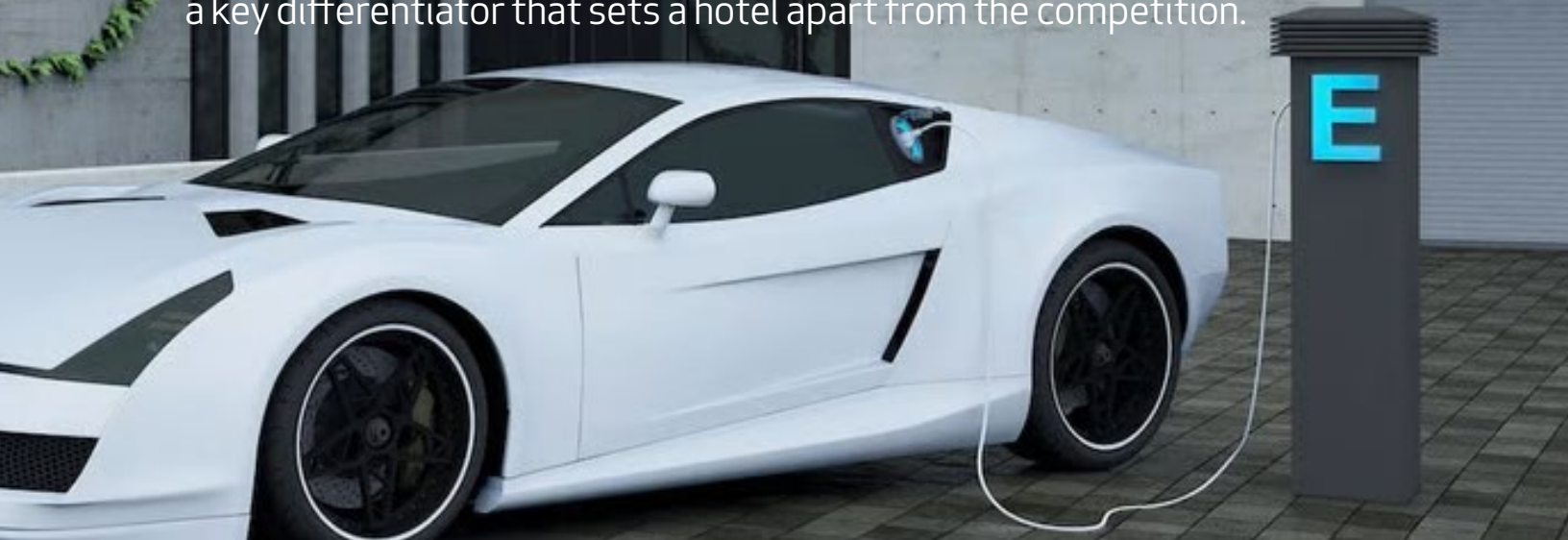# Why technology is key to delivering a great parking experience

As electric vehicles grow in popularity, EV charging stations can be a key differentiator that sets a hotel apart from the competition.

June 2022 - By Sean Milstead

When guests book a stay at a hotel, they know what to expect from the front desk. Checking in and getting room keys is typically a pretty straightforward experience, but that's not where the experience begins. For guests that drive their own vehicles, the experience begins when they arrive at the valet stand or garage. Every hotel is different—pricing, availability of self-parking, options for in/out privileges, and access to amenities like electric vehicle charging vary widely. And even though a hotel's website may list pricing and amenities, the short, bulleted list usually doesn't tell a guest what to expect when they arrive.

That's why it's important to make the process as frictionless as possible. Ideally, the parking process should be so convenient that it flows seamlessly with your hotel's other amenities. If a guest has to wait in long lines to retrieve their car, or if they're surprised by the parking fees at the end of their stay, it can easily overshadow the entire experience.

Here are some ways to use technology to enhance your hotel's parking operations and give guests the convenience they value.

Make the Right Technology Upgrades

Guest expectations have changed dramatically in the last two years. Contactless payments and app-enabled wayfinding were once seen as nice-to-have features. Now, many of your guests expect them. For example, when you attend a concert or cultural event, it's not uncommon to pay for your parking at the same time that you pay for your tickets. Both your parking pass and entry tickets are easily accessible via QR codes that you can locate in an email or app. There's no reason that hotels can't offer a similar experience.

It's possible to integrate parking apps with your hotel app so that guests can access all of their amenities in one place:

• Garage access can be integrated into the app, enabling you to automate in/out privileges and add parking fees to the room folio.

• Guests can keep track of all of the fees they accrue in the app so there are no surprises at the end of their stay.

• Loyalty programs can be integrated into the app, allowing guests to accumulate points and redeem rewards with ease.

• Guests can request valet services before they leave their room, which reduces the amount of time they spend waiting for their car and shortens the line of guests at the valet stand.

Looking beyond apps, there are several other technologies that can enhance the guest experience. Guidance technology makes it easier to find available spaces. The most advanced systems use apps to guide guests directly to available spaces. There are also more affordable systems that rely on cameras and LED signage to direct guests to floors with available spaces.

An added benefit of guidance technology is that it makes the garage safer because drivers spend less time looking for a space. As electric vehicles grow in popularity, EV charging stations can be a key differentiator that sets your hotel apart from the competition or nearby lots with lower fees. Cashless payment systems allow guests to pay from their phones while also lowering your equipment costs.

Do More with Less Staff

Whether a guest self-parks and pays at a kiosk or hands their keys to a valet, the staff supporting your parking facility are an essential component of your program. Guests may even interact with parking personnel more than they do with the staff at the front desk, but ongoing labor challenges can hinder your ability to offer the level of service your guests expect. Technology can alleviate that burden and support better self-service. For instance, automated gate technology and license plate recognition can support self-service, eliminating the need for staff at gate kiosks.

App-enabled valet services allow you to better track and monitor valet utilization and provide the appropriate levels of staff. Smarter valet labor utilization enables you to offer more than just parking and retrieval. For example, you can

also make EV charging a part of your valet services. When a car is fully charged, the valet can move the vehicle and put another one in its place, which allows you to maximize the capabilities of each station.

Reap the Back-Office Benefits

While technology makes the parking experience better for your guests, it also offers you a wealth of information that you can use to improve operations. Guidance technology can provide you with information on which areas are most popular. This data can be useful for when you want to implement amenities like EV charging stations and scooter rentals.

Parking app data can show you which times of day and days of the week are busiest and how often guests use in/out privileges. You can then use that data to set the optimal rate structure and even make adjustments based on demand or seasonality.

Enhance Every Interaction

When guests drive their own (or rented) vehicle to your hotel, it gives them the convenience of going where they want, when they want. If it's difficult to retrieve and return their car, that can undermine the convenience that they value. Every touchpoint counts, and technology enables you to enhance every interaction. Of course, technology alone isn't enough.

It's important to think of how each new tool will fit into your overall operations and how to maximize the benefits they offer. That's how you'll develop the parking experience that exceeds guests' expectations and improves your backend operations.

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