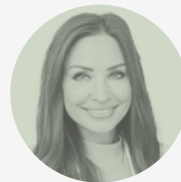
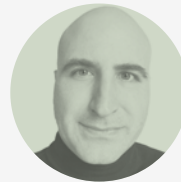


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Sustainability Tech Edition

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A Vision for Hospitality Business Schools: Bridging Technology and Tradition

Tech in Hospitality

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Hospitality Business Schools' long tradition in operational excellence and service quality is no longer sufficient to navigate the future of technology-enabled hospitality. While Hospitality Schools successfully trained generations of professionals in living the human-centric nature of hospitality, the industry faces a rapid digital transformation. This transformation creates a unique opportunity for Hospitality Schools to serve as a bridge between the innovative potential of emerging technologies and the deeply rooted social fabric and human touch of personalized hospitality. With a vision to become innovation hubs, Hospitality Business Schools can become crucial players in maneuvering the hospitality sector in a tech-enabled, human-centric era.

THE EVOLVING ROLE OF HOSPITALITY BUSINESS SCHOOLS

Traditionally, Hospitality Schools focused on mastering service excellence, ensuring that future professionals understood every facet of hospitality operations and guest interaction. Over the years, curricula expanded to include business management, financial expertise, and leadership skills. However, digital transformation is not merely an operational upgrade—technology is reshaping the very nature of service, requiring a fundamental shift in how future hospitality professionals are educated.

Consequently, Hospitality Schools must evolve into institutions that facilitate technological adoption without compromising the social essence of hospitality. This requires acting as the linking pin between technology and human-centered service design, ensuring that future professionals can seamlessly integrate digital opportunities while maintaining the essence of hospitality: caring for the guest while creating a warm and welcoming atmosphere.

THE CHANGE GAP: TECHNOLOGICAL VS. SOCIAL CHANGE

Technological change is accelerating at an incredible pace. The recent revolutions in AI—from generative AI to agentic AI—automation technologies, and data management shape technological opportunities that were unimaginable a few years ago. In fact, AI-driven personalization, automated service robots, smart check-in solutions, and data analytics for revenue management are becoming the norm. However, unlike the rapid progression of technology, social change within hospitality takes much longer. Cultural shifts, guest expectations, and workforce adaptation evolve much more slowly than, for instance, developments in AI or robotic deployments. This gap presents both a challenge and an opportunity for Hospitality Schools.

Hospitality Schools hold a unique position in bridging this gap between technological progression and social change. Unlike many industries, the hospitality sector has sector-specific academic institutions that train its workforce. This well-established legitimacy enables Hospitality Schools to act as trusted hubs where technological innovation meets human hospitality operations.

To drive meaningful digital transformation, Hospitality Schools must build on this credibility, ensuring that technological opportunities are sustainably materialized by hospitality businesses. Training programs must embed digital literacy, AI integration, automation strategies, and data-driven decision-making, all while reinforcing the social intelligence essential for hospitality professionals.

HOSPITALITY BUSINESS SCHOOLS AS AN INNOVATION HUB

To truly drive digital transformation, Hospitality Business Schools must move beyond being knowledge transmitters and position themselves as innovation hubs. A shift that is clearly explicated by recent policy visions for the hospitality sector.

Hotelschool The Hague is taking a leading position in spearheading this transformative process. Hotelschool The Hague collaborates closely with technology providers and hospitality businesses to prototype emerging technological solutions and test their impact in real-world projects. Therefore, the school leverages its own hospitality concepts (hotels, restaurants, bars, cafes) as testing grounds for prototyping and testing. Through these simulation labs, future professionals co-create new realities of tech-driven hospitality together with industry partners to assess the real-world impact of emerging tech trends.

CASE STUDY: ROBOTICS FOR HOSPITALITY

A strategic partnership between Hotelschool The Hague and Technical University Delft combines robotics expertise with hospitality insights to develop innovative applications for a tech-driven, human-centered future of hospitality. By leveraging its strong sectoral credibility, the Hospitality Business School facilitates co-creation between engineering specialists, hospitality professionals, and students, ensuring that emerging robotic technologies align with industry needs while maintaining the human-centric service ethos.

Many promising robotic solutions exist or are under development, from automated concierge services to housekeeping assistance, yet their adoption remains slow due to operational challenges and resistance from hospitality professionals. A key concern is that robots may undermine the human essence of hospitality, shifting the focus away from personal guest interactions.

Hotelschool The Hague is addressing this challenge by providing a real-world prototyping and testing environment where innovative robotic solutions can be evaluated for their practical benefits and guest acceptance. The school's ongoing research on transforming hotel housekeeping highlights how robotics and automation can enhance employee well-being rather than replace human workers. By leveraging its academic credibility and sector-specific expertise, the school plays an important role in demonstrating how robotic technology can enhance service quality while preserving the industry's fundamental human touch.

CASE STUDY: VR TRAINING FOR HOSPITALITY

Hotelschool The Hague is partnering with technology providers in the field of Virtual Reality (VR) training and future-oriented hospitality businesses to revolutionize hospitality training and education. The partners prototype and test VR training for, e.g., housekeeping, guest relations, and F&B operations. This new form of training enhances experiential learning, allowing students to refine decision-making skills in realistic, controlled environments. By utilizing VR training, hospitality professionals can practice handling real-world service scenarios without the constraints of a physical setting, leading to improved confidence and competence.

Despite VR's potential, there remains a significant gap between its technological capabilities and widespread application in hospitality businesses. Resistance often stems from concerns about its practicality, cost, and integration into existing training structures. The partnership between technology providers, hospitality business schools, and hospitality businesses addresses this challenge by providing a real-world prototyping and testing environment where innovative VR training solutions can be evaluated for their impact on learning outcomes and industry adoption.

VISIONING: REDEFINING HOSPITALITY BUSINESS SCHOOLS AS PIONEERS OF SERVICE INNOVATION

Hospitality Business Schools will be the driving force behind technological hospitality innovation. Positioned at the crossroads of industry and academia, hospitality schools will serve as hubs where emerging technologies meet human expertise, ensuring that digital transformation enhances—not erodes—the essence of hospitality.

Hospitality Business Schools can leverage their legitimacy in the sector to accelerate meaningful change. As trusted institutions, they can unite IT pioneers, hospitality leaders, and policymakers to co-create the future of tech-enabled, human-centric service. Through strategic partnerships, research-driven experimentation, and cutting-edge curricula, Hospitality Business Schools can shape a workforce that is both digitally fluent and deeply rooted in hospitality traditions.

Thereby, the role of Hospitality Business Schools in digital transformation is not just about teaching technology. The identity of Hospitality Business Schools must become one of co-creating a tech-driven future of hospitality in a way that preserves its fundamental human ethos.

The hospitality industry's future lies in mastering the balance where technology enhances hospitality, enabling professionals to deliver exceptional, efficient, and deeply personal guest experiences. Hospitality Business Schools must take the lead in this transformation, ensuring that the next generation of hospitality professionals is both tech-savvy and human-centric.

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