

The benefits of new pod-style reception desks in modern hotels

Olena Pavliuchenko, Iryna Simenok, Maksym Isakov

National University of Food Technologies

Introduction. Many hotels nowadays are saying goodbye to traditional, formal reception desks to make room for individual, pod-style desks that hotel executives said offer an easier and smoother guest experience. Each of these pods is staffed with hotel attendants to offer personalized assistance. They also enable guests to more privately complete functions such as paying bills and filing complaints.

Resources and methods. The benefits of new pod-style reception desks for modern hotels are viewed.

Results. The first ever pod-style front desk debuted in April 2011 at Hilton McLean Tyson's Corner near Washington. Hyatt is also quickly embracing this trend. Michael Miller, vice president of architecture and design of Hyatt, told the panel audience that the company had moved to pods during the redesign of the Hyatt Regency New Orleans. When Miller led the redesign of the hotel, which was completed in late 2011, he said, he included the pods to create an interactive and modern guest experience. It facilitates ease in staff walking from behind the desk and personally greeting guests. The trend parallels the growing popularity of select-service hotels with selfcheck-in kiosks, where technology advancements are enabling hoteliers to maintain service standards while cutting labor costs by giving guests the ability to perform functions that previously required hotel staff. Also, hotels can design more open desks because cash transactions are becoming rarer, and security is no longer the concern it once was. Smaller computer monitors and printers also make it easier to cut down on the desk size. It is important to understand why they are becoming more popular: 1. Attract younger customers. The industry is seeing more Gen-X and Gen-Y customers — travelers in their 20s or 30s — who are accustomed to more informal interactions in commercial activities. "The (old) check-in counters were often elevated. We're trying to remove that 'You're-in-court-and-there's-the-judge' type of feel," Alan Benjamin, President of Benjamin West says. 2. Increase employee productivity. With employees no longer stationed at one part of the lobby, they can multitask, conducting other jobs as they arise. At Hyatt, for example, employees are increasingly providing more concierge services, such as providing directions and restaurant recommendations. Employees can step out and help customers who may not be familiar with automated check-in kiosks. 3. Bring more revenue. Hotel chains have been aggressively transforming lobbies into more communal spaces, where guests will linger and spend more time and money on food and beverages. By reducing the amount of space taken up by the check-in area, hotels can enlarge other revenue-producing areas. The check-in areas of Embassy Suites with the new pods are about 40% smaller than in the hotels without them.

Conclusions. So, as we can see, the pod-style front desks allow team members and guests to interact more directly with personalized service, increase employees productivity, attract younger customers and increase hotel's revenue.

Literature. 1. Barnes, Alyssandra. A warm reception for new-style front desks / Alyssandra Barnes // *Travel Weekly*. – June 21, 2013.

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