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AI Adoption Is Accelerating. Here's How Hotels Are Keeping Pace

Mid-Stay

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Catherine Donaldson takes a decidedly practical approach, moving past the philosophical debates about AI in hospitality to focus on where it is already delivering measurable results today. From AI voice agents answering calls around the clock to agentic workflows that coordinate operations without manual handoffs, she maps five proven use cases and makes the case that the performance gap between adopters and laggards is already widening.

The verdict is in: AI is creating major gains in hospitality. Seventy-one percent of hoteliers say AI is already having a major impact on their operations, up 10 percentage points from the year prior. Over 80% of hoteliers plan to increase adoption across their operations, with only 1% anticipating pulling back (Canary Technologies, 2026).

For hotels still on the sidelines, the performance gap is only widening. Here's where AI is already working in hospitality: the proven use cases, the measurable results, and how agentic automation is helping real hoteliers right now.

HOSPITALITY AI: FROM EMERGING TECH TO MAINSTREAM USE

Any time new technology emerges, there's a predictable adoption curve: A handful of early movers try it, confidence builds, and eventually, it becomes the new baseline. Hospitality has seen this many times: think electronic locks replacing physical ones or digital credit card authorizations replacing faxes.

Agentic AI is following a familiar pattern, but this time, the pace is accelerated. The breadth of use cases, the speed of improvement, and the depth of integration across the tech stack mean hotels aren't choosing between early adoption and caution. They're choosing between the gains of keeping pace and the losses of falling behind.

Hoteliers are reporting that this is already happening: 85% expect to allocate at least 5% of their IT budget to AI this year. And for those who have already invested, the results are compelling. Over 60% of hoteliers using AI report meaningful staff time savings and improved guest satisfaction (Canary Technologies, 2026). When AI absorbs the high-volume, repetitive admin work, staff are freed to focus on what matters most: high-value, in-person hospitality.

Front desk teams that used to spend their shifts fielding the same questions over and over again now have bandwidth for in-person interactions and complex issue resolution. Properties are automatically generating bookings and ancillary revenue with AI that answers calls, texts, and web chats from interested travelers and current guests alike. Guests are getting personalized recommendations and instant responses to service requests at any time of the day. And in the background, AI is agentially completing full workflows to facilitate this at scale.

What these anecdotes don't capture is the compounding effect. Hotels that started AI implementation early on have moved past the experimentation phase. They're now refining their strategy, homing in on real results and reaping the benefits of automation.

5 AI USE CASES FOR GUEST AND STAFF ENGAGEMENT

How is AI influencing the stay? How are guests and staff feeling the effects of AI? Where are there service gains from agentic workflows? Here are five areas where AI is already delivering results.

1. EXTEND IN-STAY SERVICE TO BOOKING

The guest relationship starts before arrival, and often before the booking itself. Every day, travelers research properties and land on questions that aren't immediately answered on the website: pet policies, availability of adjoining rooms, shuttle schedules, and group rates.

AI-powered webchat and voice agents engage prospective guests in real time, answering property-specific questions and assisting travelers with booking reservations. Hotels effectively extend the service expected by guests to travelers by incorporating personalization, instant responses, and request fulfillment from the start.

In one example from a major hotel brand's earnings call, deploying agentic AI agents drove hundreds of basis points of additional direct bookings across their portfolio (Wyndham Hotels & Resorts, 2026). For hotels that prioritize guest service at the point of booking as a strategic goal, pre-stay AI engagement both drives revenue and sets the tone for service expectations before the stay.

2. ANSWER EVERY CALL

Once a guest is on property, the questions keep coming: Pool hours, breakfast times, late checkout requests, local restaurant recommendations, extra towels. These are low-complexity requests, but they arrive in high volume, landing on front desk teams who are already juggling check-ins, phone calls, and walk-up interactions.

AI voice agents handle the routine load automatically. They answer every call, at any hour, with responses that reflect the property's actual policies and amenities. Complex matters get routed to the front desk, but only when a human is actually needed. The result is a front desk team that spends less time on the phone and more time with the guest standing in front of them.

3. BE A CONCIERGE FOR EVERY GUEST, AT EVERY HOUR

Guests have questions throughout their stay, and expectations that go beyond a quick answer. Where should we eat tonight? Is there a good hiking trail nearby? Can we get extra pillows? AI guest communication handles it all across every channel guests already use, drawing on a hotel-specific knowledge base to respond instantly with answers that reflect the property's actual policies, amenities, and local context.

The concierge dimension is what separates agentic AI responses from basic automation. A guest asking about gluten-free dinner options gets a recommendation suited to the occasion. A family traveling with children gets different suggestions than a solo business traveler. When something requires genuine human judgment, staff step in. But for the high volume of interactions that simply need a knowledgeable, responsive answer, AI handles them consistently well.

Ninety-two percent of hoteliers say they have adopted or plan to adopt AI guest messaging, making it one of the most widely embraced applications in the industry (Canary Technologies, 2026a).

4. COORDINATE OPERATIONS WITHOUT THE MANUAL HANDOFFS

Behind every smooth guest experience is a chain of operational handoffs: a request logged, a ticket created, a team notified, a follow-up confirmed. In most hotels, a significant portion of that coordination still runs through staff, who act as relays between systems and departments. It works, but it creates friction, and when friction compounds, service suffers.

Agentic AI functions as a command center for back-of-house coordination. When a guest opts for reduced room cleanings, AI optimizes the housekeeping schedule accordingly. When a maintenance issue surfaces through guest messaging, it becomes a tracked work order without a staff member manually entering in the details. When a guest requests late checkout, the system checks availability against the property management system and responds with what's available: a confirmation for loyalty guests, an add-on offer for others.

Of course, this provides fast service, but it also guarantees consistency. Requests that previously depended on the right person seeing the right message at the right time now move through a defined workflow, regardless of how busy the hotel is. For operations teams managing high volumes across a property, that reliability is the difference between a service standard and a service aspiration.

5. CAPTURE MORE REVENUE AT EVERY STAGE OF THE STAY

Hotels have traditionally had narrow windows to generate revenue beyond the room rate: the booking process and the occasional front desk agent upsell pitch. Miss those moments and the opportunity is gone.

AI expands that window considerably. On the guest side, AI-powered upselling surfaces relevant offers automatically throughout the stay: an early check-in offer the night before arrival, a dining package when a guest asks about the restaurant, and a late checkout the morning after a wedding reception. These offers go out without a staff member initiating them, timed to the moment a guest is most likely to say yes. Properties that use AI upselling consistently report thousands of dollars a month in ancillary revenue and significantly higher conversion rates than with manual outreach.

On the group and events side, the revenue opportunity is larger, but the friction has historically been greater. A sales manager juggling multiple RFPs simultaneously has real limits on response time, and slow follow-up loses business to properties that reply first. AI sales agents handle the full inquiry-to-contract workflow: instant first response across every channel, automated lead qualification, tailored proposal generation, digital contract signature and deposit collection. The sales team inherits ready-to-act opportunities rather than a backlog of cold leads.

Together, these two capabilities turn revenue generation from a staffing-dependent function into a consistent operational one.

3 EASY WAYS TO WIN WITH AI

Considering scaling AI? The most effective AI adoption strategies start with high-impact use cases, demonstrate results quickly, and expand rapidly. Here's how to get started:

- **Start with a use case that shows quick ROI.** Build momentum early by picking a high-impact, low-complexity problem first (something like guest messaging, event sales or upsells) where results are visible immediately. Early wins create internal buy-in and quickly make the case for expansion.
- **Go industry-specific, not generic.** General AI tools aren't built for the specific needs of the hospitality industry. A platform that's purpose-built for hotels will outperform a generic solution adapted to fit, with all the hotel-specific tech integrations built right in.
- **Prioritize agentic solutions.** Responding to a guest message is useful. Automatically routing a maintenance request, following up, and closing the loop without staff involvement is transformative. Look for AI that completes workflows, not just one that answers questions.

The hotels that will see results the quickest are those that pick a starting point, move fast, and iterate as they go. With the right platform and the right use cases, the path from first implementation to measurable ROI is shorter than most expect.

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