

### Survey Results

Professional Level, Titles, Years in Industry, Job Locales

Tech Trend Predictions What's In, What's Out

Interview with Sherry Marek 2023 Hall of Fame Inductee

### Perspectives

Quotes on best advice, leadership and start in hospitality technology

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# AHFTP PRESENTS









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HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY TECHNOLOGY EXPOSITION AND CONFERENCE www.hitec.org





# Celebrating the Women Leading and Influencing the Hospitality Technology Space

hen we examine our own career journey, we can see it is shaped by all manner of life events (whether intentional or even sometimes accidental) to get us where we are today: when we work our first summer job on a golf course or set out to earn our hospitality degree, when we find ourselves taken under the wing of an accomplished mentor or offer to take on that first big technology project (even when we aren't technically in the IT department). And our experiences are also greatly influenced by the individual characteristics and attributes that make us who we are.

Having chronicled the career trajectory of many HFTP members and stakeholders for 24 years, I have come to understand that the true value of an international association like HFTP lies in the sharing of these individual experiences — as well as the knowledge and expertise gained along the way — for the betterment of a global, interconnected hospitality industry. With this in mind, our association has continuously sought ways to amplify the voices, share and celebrate the distinctive experiences of individual hospitality professionals, especially women: through editorials, leadership opportunities and valuable relationship- and knowledge-building events.

As the leading hospitality technology conference and exhibition in the world, HITEC offers the perfect venue for celebrating the women who are leading and influencing the hospitality technology space right now. In anticipation of HITEC Toronto 2023 (and the special Women in Hospitality

Technology reception that will be hosted there), we have constructed this comprehensive, data-driven profile of today's women in hospitality technology. The goal of this profile is to help women at all stages of their career in hospitality technology gain valuable insights and boost their own career trajectory by learning from the industry's top female executives. Where



should they start? What positions can they aspire to? Which companies have demonstrated employment of women in high-level, decision-making positions? What life lessons can they glean from the women who have already seen it all?

It is a powerful asset to learn from those who come before us. We hope you find yourself empowered by the information, advice and guidance provided by the women who participated in this profile. And we look forward to seeing you at the Women in Hospitality Technology reception at HITEC Toronto this year.

Eliza Selig is the staff vice president of marketing and communications for HFTP.

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# OMEN INHOSPITALITY TECHNOLOGY

This Spring, HFTP distributed a survey to women working in the hospitality industry who manage or use technology as part of their roles. The premise was to build a comprehensive, data-driven profile of the women leading hospitality technology in 2023. Respondents include IT managers and practitioners, leaders of hospitality technology companies, and users of technology across all departments and levels of business. The survey received 105 responses, from professionals representing a range of career levels and segments.

Briefly, a majority of the respondents were high-level professionals (79 percent), who have been in the industry for at least 16 years (61 percent). In fact the largest segment stated they have only worked within hospitality (20 percent), while the remaining respondents indicated working in at least one other industry during their career. Almost half are working for a solution provider (46 percent), followed by a hotel/hotel management company (30 percent). What follows is an illustration of the responses, providing a snapshot to illustrate the careers of women leading, influencing and employing hospitality technology today.

rofessional Level

Responses were sorted by title to identify levels.



**C-Level: 54%** 

**Sales — 16%** 

Technology — 13% Marketing — 8%

Other — 17%

Top-Level: 25%

**General** — **21**%

Technology — 2%

Finance – 2%

Manager: 21%

Technology — 9%

Marketing – 5%

Finance – 3%

Other - 4%

Company **Founders** 

#### **Level Definitions**

Top Level — Highest position in company (CEO/CFO/Pres.)

C-Level — Executive position (Director/Vice President)

Manager — Mid-range position



Job Titles Sample of respondents' titles.

CEO

Director, Sales

**President** 

Sr. Director, IT

**CFO** 

**IT Manager** 

**Marketing Manager** 

**Enterprise Director, Sales** 

VP, Marketing Head of Customer Success

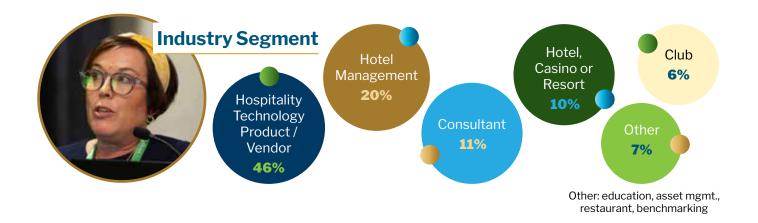
**Project Manager Global CIO** 

**Application Manager** 

**VP**, Revenue Management

**Chief Product Officer** 







### **Years in Industry**

11-15 years	13%
16-20 years	<b>15</b> %
10-20 years	
21–25 years	18%
-	

### **Certifications/Masters**

Certification/Masters\*: 32%

#### MBA/Masters — 20%

**CRME** – 4%

Certified Revenue Management Executive

PMP - 4%

Project Management Professional

Other — 20%

CHTP, CHAE, CPA, CMP, CCHBA, CGMA, CMP, CHDM, CHSP, CPE, AMP

### First Hospitality Roles Sample of responses.



Sales Manager Systems Manager

### **Other Industries**

Respondents name where they have worked outside of hospitality.



Others Named
Banking
Construction
Defense
Insurance
Manufacturing
Media
Real Estate
Retail
Telecommunications

<sup>\*</sup>Some individual respondents indicated more than one certification/masters degree, affecting the overall percentage.

## **Where We Work**



**Companies** 

Organizations represented by respondents, categorized by segment.\*

### Club

Legends Golf and Country Club River Bend Golf and Country Club Royal Palm Yacht and Country Club The Country Club of Virginia

### **Hotel/Hotel Management**

**Bentley Legacy** 

Canouan Estate Resort & Villas

**Crystal Mountain** 

Fontainebleau Las Vegas

Four Seasons Resorts Lana'i

Gloria Management

Hilton

Janko Hospitality

Kalahari Resorts & Conventions

Khalidia Palace Hotel

Mandarin Oriental Hotel Group

MGM Resorts Intl Corporate IT

Mohonk Mountain House

Resorts World Las Vegas

Reunion Resort

**Enchantment Resort** 

Sequel Hotels and Resorts

TFE Hotels

Accor

### \*This list does not represent all respondents, naming only responses given.

### Consultants / Analytics / Plus

A23 Advisors

Aiken Street

Hospitality 2.0

**HOSPA** 

**HotStats** 

Kalibri Labs

**KLW Consulting** 

Knock Out, Gain Advisors and

RationalAl

**PROVision Partners** 

Success Through Trust Inc.

Vacayou Wellness Travel

### **Technology Vendor**

Agilysys

Air2Data

**Alliants** 

**AMADEUS** 

Away Together

Cloudbeds Technology

Cogwheel Marketing

dailypoint - Software made by Toedt, Dr.

Selk & Coll. GmbH

**DANNI Enterprises** 

Datavision - MDO

Delaplex Software

Demand Calendar AB

**Dragonfly Strategists** 

Duetto

Eleven Software

**HPE Aruba** 

HRS Hospitality and Retail Systems

**IDS Next** 

Impulsify

InTouch Data

Inn-Flow Hotel Software

Innspire

**Integrated Communications** 

Intouch

**IRIS** 

Journera

Machine Q, a Comcast Company

Maestro PMS

MDO

Mongoose

Mount

**Onyx CenterSource** 

Oracle

Plusgrade

Salto Systems

Samsotech

Single Digits

Stayntouch

SuitePad

**TELUS Business** 

Thynk.Cloud

Tripleplay by Uniguest

Tyme Global UrVenue

# ECH TRENDS

Respondents name which technologies will have a major impact on the hospitality industry. And then those that are on their way out.

'Technological advancement can significantly affect a business's development, processes and tools. New trends, like the accessibility of data, AI, e-commerce and increasingly powerful computer hardware can help improve a business's efficiency and help it reach more customers."

**Amal Falouh** • Talent Acquisition/Learning & Development Manager • Khalidia Palace Hotel





**65%** 

Named AI as

a top trend.

These technology categories were the top mentioned.

### **Artificial Intelligence**

"I think that all processes will become more automated and need less human interaction and this will deeply change hospitality."

### **Mobile Tech**

Includes use of personal mobile devices for check-in/out, room entry/locks, screen-cast to guest room TV, messaging and more.



### **Data Analytics**

Responses centered on a more efficient capture and use of data, and monetizing the information.

11% 0||0| |00|| |0|0|

### **Sustainability**

Includes use of greener building materials and energy systems, as well as leveraging tech to support sustainability movement.

### **Alternate Payments**

Mentions noted mobile/digital payments, cryptocurrency, and cashless tipping



### **Virtual Reality**

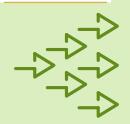
"To truly experience hospitality is to be present in person." 10%



### **Robotics**

Respondents primarily 9% pointed to the use of robotics in place of staffing tasks as a diminishing trend.

### Metaverse





9%

# A World of Interests

Outside of their professions, respondents told us about their hobbies and how they spend their time.

### **Sports**

Kayaking, Canoeing,
Horse Riding, Running,
Skiing, Surfing, Hiking,
Scuba Diving, Swimming,
Soccer, Golfing,
Speed Skating

### **Music & Arts**

Singer, Drummer, Poet, Keyboard, Saxophone, Dance, Ballet, Cooking, Floral Arrangements, Painter, Writer

### **Interests**

Camping, Chess, Nature,
Home Repair, Birding, Pilot,
Gardening, Legos, Juggling,
Photography, Reading,
Travel, Volunteering,
Farming

### A Little About Me...

- "I'm a certified open water scuba diver, I am an avid boater who is working on her charter captain license and I'm adopted!"
- "I enjoy spending time outdoors hiking and exploring nature. It is great to travel to new destinations, learn about history and explore what nature has to offer."
- "I am great with home improvement projects and all my friends' go-to if anything needs fixing."
- "I have had a Top Secret SSBI Clearance while serving six years in the USN."
- "I have a 40x90 ft Covid garden I started three years ago with my son that has won regional awards."

- "My first hospitality jobs were helping to run my parents' business that was a children's summer camp."
- "I make chain mail armor, clothing and fashion accessories; my prized accomplishment was an aluminum trench coat made for a 6'4" man. It weighed close to 30 pounds."
- "I am a musician (keyboard and vocals, along with writing music) and love music more than almost anything in the world."
- "Have completed a charity 60 km walk in one day twice."
- "I love exploring old ruins and castles and writing stories about the people who lived there."

### **LEADERSHIP INTERVIEW**



Identifying a need for better business intelligence specific to hospitality,
Sherry Marek co-founded Datavision.
In addition to building a successful company, Sherry is a respected personality within the profession, continually sharing her expertise as as a mentor and educator.

herry Marek started her career in the mid-'80s at Hilton International and InterContinental Hotels, focusing primarily on front of house systems where she worked extensively with system users and vendors at properties across the globe. The experience brought her to recognize a struggle with reporting — whether it was tapping into the data inside a single system or consolidating data across systems.

This insight led her to co-found Datavision Technologies and create the first true business intelligence system for hospitality. In 25 years, Datavision grew from two people to 50-plus employees with installations in 35 countries across six continents. In 2022, the company was successfully acquired and Sherry has transitioned her focus to promoting women in STEM fields, as well as within the hospitality industry.

In this interview, Sherry covers her professional journey and insights she's learned along the way.

### When did you first know you wanted to be in the hospitality industry?

I started working different jobs at a Hilton property in Washington, D.C. — front desk, banquet, bartending and, eventually, IT. When Hilton International offered me the chance to be part of the team that installed their customized version of HIS at properties around the world, I jumped at the chance. Although my first exotic destination was Newark, N.J., I spent the next few months in locations like Budapest, Paris, Dubai



Just as I had several female mentors in my career who helped me grow professionally, I now mentor younger women to reach their full potential. I believe in the power of networking and sharing connections. In addition to the typical mentor model, it is reciprocal; a 60-year-old person can also learn from a 25-year-old. I look forward to helping others climb the career ladder or supporting them as they pause in their journey."

Sherry Marek presenting at HITEC Amsterdam in 2018.

and Singapore. I met so many amazing people at corporate and the various hotel properties. That's when I really fell in love with the idea of staying in hospitality forever.

#### What do you love most about working in hospitality?

My favorite parts of the industry are the people and friend-ships. I am still friends with so many people from around the world, it's incredible. I have met great people from the vendor side, consultants and several customers who are now personal friends. In fact, we have a Hilton International IT reunion later this summer in Europe. These are people that I used to work with 30 years ago — yet, every time we meet in person, we pick right up where we left off the last time.

# As someone who supports the entire hospitality industry through technology, what insights have you gained from being in this adjacent role?

As vendors who provide software to hotels, it is our responsibility to keep the industry moving forward by constantly innovating new technologies. When we started Datavision, for example, data was not at the forefront of hoteliers' minds. We worked hard to change this perception and demonstrate that the power of information is as important to a profitable hotel as guest service.

Of course, excellent software must be paired with excellent customer service — especially in our industry. When we go to a hotel, we expect great service and as a vendor, we should provide that same level of service to our customers, who happen to be hotels. This is why at Datavision, we always fostered a culture of providing "white-glove service" to our customers. We introduced a common management philosophy and followed it. Rule #1: the customer is always right. Rule #2: If the customer is ever wrong, see Rule #1.

### Describe an experience you will always remember.

My general manager at my first job in Washington was a New Zealander named Rex Rice. Rex liked to take a *walkabout* in the afternoons. On different days you would see him talking to the waiters in the restaurant, the doormen, the stewards in the kitchen, or the front desk team asking about customers, questions about their day and other subjects. He would then

bring back his observations to the department head meeting and share some of these ad hoc discussions.

I loved his concept of hearing from the people who dealt directly with the customer, as opposed to sitting in the executive office and having information delivered up the management chain. I tried to implement this model as Datavision grew. I would talk directly to our colleagues in different departments to get an unfiltered idea of what was happening from their point of view. We also had everyone in the company (developers, engineers, etc.) go through customer service training, since everyone should learn to serve their customers, whether internal or external.

### What have been some of your biggest career goals?

When we started Datavision, I had a few goals. First, create a product that really helps the industry move forward technologically. Second, build a company with integrity based on strong, honest relationships with our customers. Third, ensure that the office environment was one where employees enjoyed working — an environment with no office politics and open communication. Looking back, I feel we achieved all three goals.

### What has been your greatest accomplishment?

Probably the fact I was able to start a company with my husband, build it into a successful business over 25 years, raise three kids and assorted dogs, exit the company after acquisition and stay happily married throughout! Running a company is stressful at the best of times. I have no idea how we balanced everything out.

# You are recognized for developing a system to alleviate a specific pain point in hospitality operations. What led you to recognize it and in response, develop the solution?

When I was working for InterContinental Hotels in the late '90s, we asked our PMS vendors to create an integrated reporting solution and they were unable to do so. At that time, I was dating my co-worker Sudharshan Chary, who was a software engineer at InterContinental. Over several lunches, I explained the challenge to Sudharshan. We decided to try and solve the problem ourselves — and started Datavision. I

did market research, talking to my CIO contacts and created a framework for how the system would work. Sudharshan researched the technologies to support the platform, wrote interfaces to some key systems and created a UI from scratch.

We piloted the system at several friendly hotel sites who gave us feedback, allowing us to quickly grow the system beyond its initial design. From then, it was a "snowball" effect: we kept installing the system and continuously improved it.

### What are your future plans as you enter the next phase of your career?

Over the past 10 years, I have been heavily involved in promoting women in hospitality and STEM. Moving forward, my goal is to make this my main focus and continue to help women connect with each other to make our industry a better place and ensure they have options to stay or move on, pause or change direction.

I would like to also continue encouraging young women to enter the technology field. A simple example is when my youngest son was in high school on the robotics team; I talked to various girls on the value of robotics team and how the different roles on the team translate into future jobs (programmer, project manager, product manager, operations, etc). I am opening the door to virtual coffee breaks with other women business owners for consultations. It is fascinating to hear simple but important questions. For example, one woman selling clothes for the first time at a trade show had people buying clothes at her physical booth, but had no way to get them on her mailing list. Of course, it is great to sell a product and earn cash, but she also realized the value of cultivating repeat customers. We discussed how she could begin collecting customer information in-person at her next event, and send updates on new merchandise. I look forward to sharing thoughts and helping others collect better data. To quote the Farmers Insurance ad: "We know a thing or two because we've seen a thing or two."

# What does your induction to the HFTP Technology Hall of Fame mean for you in particular as a woman who has worked tirelessly to build a successful career?

Just as I had several female mentors in my career who helped me grow professionally, I now mentor younger women to reach their full potential. I believe in the power of networking and sharing connections. In addition to the typical mentor model, it is reciprocal; a 60-year-old person can also learn from a 25-year-old. I am deeply honored when younger women ask me, "How can I get more involved in the industry?" I look forward to helping others climb the career ladder or supporting them as they pause in their journey. As Ayn Rand said: "The ladder of success is best climbed by stepping on the rungs of opportunity." Success cannot be achieved in one step. It happens over time.

### What other important events or experiences have contributed to your professional success?

When I worked for Intercontinental Hotels, I was on the User Advisory Board for both Fidelio and HIS. That is a great way to work with other people at other companies and partner with the vendor for the good of the industry. After starting Datavision, I became involved in the local HFTP South Florida Chapter. About 15 years ago, I started attending the HFTP Annual Convention. It is quite different from HITEC and small enough to meet and talk with a lot of different people and have great conversations. When it comes to the HFTP Annual Convention, it is sort of like the bar in Cheers: everyone knows your name. During Annual Convention as a vendor, I have been able to participate in various educational opportunities by speaking at sessions and writing articles for industry publications. It is personally rewarding. Ten years ago, I was elected to the HFTP Global Board of Directors. This role allowed me to meet and talk with even more HFTP members. All these steps along the way have allowed me to meet and work with different members of the industry.

#### Do you have interests outside of your profession?

Reading, adventure travel and music. I am part of a few online book clubs and look forward to more free time in retirement to learn how to create podcasts. I almost went into music education in college for saxophone but could not see myself practicing for hours per day. So now I am looking to learn another instrument like drums or piano. My husband is a trekker and a mountain climber, having climbed several big mountains around the world. He and I have plans for several treks together including the Haute Route in Switzerland, the Milford Track in New Zealand, and the Laugavegur in Iceland.





Sherry Marek posing with the Datavision team (left) and with her family (right).



# Technological Advances in Payments in the Hospitality Industry By Juliann Pless

uring the 10 years I've worked in hospitality technology, I've seen a steady increase in women in leadership roles in the industry. My first leadership role at Corporate Spending Innovations (CSI) was as the director of Hospitality Services. Later, I was promoted to vice president of Travel and Mobile Solutions and am currently the senior vice president of Travel Payment Solutions.

I was introduced to hospitality technology when CSI needed someone to manage a new product focused on hotels, travel and payment. Although it was entirely out of my comfort zone then, I saw the potential for innovation in developing new product technology, and CSI saw my potential as a leader.

Since then, technological advances have evolved so much that they are happening all around us every day. We are even seeing more use cases where technology is replacing human interaction. However, customer service is the key to success in the hospitality industry. It is so important to remember that the customer comes first when considering and implementing new technologies into the customer experience.

Virtual and contactless payments are the latest emergingtechnologies that will become the standard, particularly in hospitality. Following the pandemic, payment technologies evolved from checking in at the front desk with a physical card to using secure contactless payment methods, like virtual cards. And touchless functions were incorporated into everything from motion sensor faucets to hotel room doors and also payments. Guests now tap their cards to a payment terminal while checking in or paying for a meal.

"Though virtual and contactless payment methods are not new, they are now presenting themselves as mutually beneficial to hoteliers, corporate customers and guests. Virtual payments are more secure for the corporate traveler or guest and the hotel where they are used."

Hospitality technologies will continue to evolve in line with consumer expectations and the conveniences they experience when they are not traveling. Contactless payments are just one example. Sustainability has become second nature to many people at home. Soon, they will expect, and maybe demand, a certain level of hospitality sustainability when they travel.



Though virtual and contactless payment methods are not new, they are now presenting themselves as mutually beneficial to hoteliers, corporate customers and guests. Virtual payments are more secure for the corporate traveler or guest and the hotel where they are used. And automated processes and less paperwork at the front desk increase sustainability initiatives for hotels and guests.

It's exciting to be a part of the evolution of payment technology in a leadership role at CSI. Not only do I see how payments have advanced, but I also contribute to those advances. Every year, HITEC allows like-minded individuals to gather, learn, share knowledge and network. This type of engagement encourages growth in the hospitality industry and also opens the doors for innovation and product improvements surrounding technology.

I'm very appreciative that HITEC is highlighting Women in Hospitality Technology at this year's conference in Toronto, as it shows the importance of women in leadership roles in the industry. And I'm incredibly proud that CSI is one of the sponsors of this program. Educational sessions delivered by industry experts and an exhibit hall that allows interaction with solution providers at HITEC guarantee you will leave the event with actionable takeaways.

Juliann Pless is the senior vice president of Travel Payment Solutions for Corporate Spending Innovations.

Thank you Corporate Spending Innovations for sponsoring the HFTP Women in Hospitality Technology Reception. To learn more about their services visit HITEC Booth #526.

# **Navigating a Professional Path**

Respondents' best professional advice and how they got to where they are today,

## **Getting Ahead**

"Don't be afraid to ask for what you want — even if it's not going to happen right away. If you don't ask, you don't get it. Period."



Irene Chow · Sales Manager
Tripleplay by Uniguest

"Neither failure or success are permanent. Never take failure personally and never grow complacent in your success. The only constant in business and life is CHANGE!"



**Andrea Mane · SVP**, Strategic Marketing PROVision Partners

"Continue to grow and learn. Never be afraid to be uncomfortable as this is when you are learning."



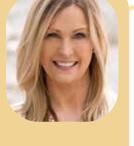
**Shannon McCallum ·** VP, Hotel Operations Resorts World Las Vegas

"Fail fast and fail forward.
Failure shouldn't be scary,
but welcomed as a sign of
pushing boundaries and
moving your company
forward."



Madison Rifkin · CEO Mount

"The only voice that matters is the one in your head. Meaning tune out the noise, the naysayers, the negative and focus on your goal, focus on the vision. At the end of the day, the only person who de



day, the only person who determines if you are capable of doing hard things is you."

Janine Williams • Founder/CEO Impulsify

"Know your toolbox, and not just the technology or processes; but who your go-to people are. Build your internal and external networks."



**Elizabeth Benson ·** Director of Revenue Management Mohonk Mountain House

# Leadership

"Put your team first — be the leader behind the pack, not at the front."



Nicki Dehler · VP, Product · StayNTouch

"Lead with authenticity.
Stay true to who you are
and why you do
what you do."



**Jessica Hayes** • Business Development Executive Plusgrade

"One successful tech product can scale to make thousands of businesses more efficient, more profitable and millions of guests happier."



**Ira Vouk ·** Consultant/Founder Hospitality 2.0

"Being an entrepreneur is like eating a cheeseburger — beautifully messy."



Melanie Brewer · CEO · Away Together

"It's okay. No one will die because the Wi-Fi or Opera is down."



**Celeste Hilliard** • Senior Director, IT Four Seasons Resorts Lana'i

"Feedback is meant to be fuel, not cruel... learn when it is cruel and call it out."



**Alice Spies ·** Head of Customer Success InTouch Data

"The higher you go in an organization know the less feedback you get is a good thing."



**Tracee Nalewak-Giraldo** • Chief Growth Officer UrVenue

"I don't think I decided to work in technology, but it developed from my use of technology and finding better ways to do things using technology."



**Stephanie Anderson**, **CPA**, **CHAE** · CFO Riverbend Golf and Country Club

"I aspire to stay innovative and always learning. Technology is severely underutilized in the hospitality industry, particularly back of house. I want to help change that."



**Kathryn Bryant, PMP**Executive Dir., Travel and Hospitality Strategy • Oracle

"Because I love helping people and I'm good at translating tech talk to normal-people speech. Win, win!"



Joy Senn · Lead IT Specialist Kalahari Resorts & Conventions

# **Technology Entry**

"Thought I was taking a job in market research and then learned I was expected to build technology systems to provide data analytics to Hilton International's hotels."



Cindy Estis Green · CEO Kalibri Labs

"Grew into IT from the operations side — I wanted to make a change in the IT team and bring their focus in line with the values of the business.



Hospitality and customer service skill sets when delivering technology solutions."

Sarah Anderson · Director, IT Reunion Resort

"Hospitality technology is an evolution of our lives. In personal and professional. Hospitality is in my DNA. Bring them both together. Hospitality technology feels like home."



**Natallie Cobden ·** Dir. Global Strategic Partnerships & Marketing • Innspire





# Setting the standard for integrated Hospitality payments.

Experience a secure integrated platform that digitizes invoice approvals and payments and optimizes B2B payables end-to-end.



# Respond to today's demands in the hospitality industry with an integrated AP automation platform.



Remote capabilities with 24/7 real-time visibility



Eliminate manual data entry and reduce errors



Gain additional revenue with rebates on qualifying payments



Secure digital payments that are PCI-DSS, SOC 2, and HIPAA compliant

We help you automate multi-property general ledger coding and payables across hotel operations.

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