Hotels open a new revenue stream with remote workers
Pivot, pivot, pivot. This has been the mantra of businesses as they strive to generate revenue while coping with the repercussions of COVID-19.

One area that’s experienced dramatic disruption due to the virus, is the workplace. Tens of millions of American workers have been thrust into chaotic work-from-home environments that often involved juggling homeschooling and family demands as well as jobs.

Creative hoteliers responded to this by catering to customers seeking a quiet place to work. Hoteliers transformed empty guest rooms into safe, clean and peaceful work environments. And they adapted revenue models to charge by the hour, day, week and month.

Even after public health restrictions are lifted, it looks like remote work is here to stay. Research from Gartner confirms that 82 percent of business leaders plan to let employees continue working remotely at least some of the time, and 47 percent plan to make the change permanent.¹

Many companies recognize the benefits of a remote workforce and flexible work culture. Smaller on-site staff means smaller CapEx budgets. Flexible workspace policies help businesses attract and retain employees and no longer limits search for top talent due to geographical barriers.² Plus, younger workers (Millennials and Gen Z) strongly support remote teams as the new norm.³ However, the current state of remote work presents challenges for workers and an opportunity for hoteliers.

A new revenue stream for hoteliers
Many people now working from home are frustrated by their inability to maintain a healthy work/life balance. And they struggle to maintain focus amid attention-seeking family members and household demands. According to a Microsoft survey, 54 percent of parents say it’s difficult to balance household demands while working from home.⁴

In addition, many remote workers have been homebound for a while now, and they’re finding it monotonous. The knowledge that they can now work from anywhere has led to an increase in longer-term “bleisure” and “workation” hotel stays. People are beginning to crave new scenery and experiences, and they’re enjoying the freedom of blending work with relaxation. In July, CNN reported that hotels were seeing a new trend in month-long stays — and longer — in the wake of COVID-19.⁵

Hotels catering to this market are creating extended stay packages that include plenty of activities for kids as well as all the connectivity requirements workers and their families need. Hotels must provide reliable connectivity during the day for work and school, and during the evening for family entertainment.

Another challenge for remote workers relates to internet speed and availability. Remote workers in certain areas of the country often struggle with slow or non-existent home internet service.⁶ These workers are forced to rely on their cellular service for internet connection to work. Even in suburbs and cities where internet connections aren’t normally an issue, peak periods of usage...
clog up home networks, driven by more people in a household working and learning online at the same time.

A further issue is that traditional co-working spaces don’t work for many because open floor plans and shared bathrooms make it difficult to maintain appropriate social distancing. Plus, people have concerns over building ventilation and a lack of formal cleanliness procedures.

Repurposing hotel guest rooms and suites as private offices serve remote workers and open up new revenue streams. Hotels help people maintain a healthy work/life balance by offering a separate, distraction-free environment for getting work done, with 63 percent of workers appreciating that hotels offer the privacy to work in peace. Furthermore, guests enjoy the benefits of a private bathroom, and get comfort in knowing hotel cleanliness standards ensure spaces are always pandemic-level clean.

Targeting day-use, bleisure and workation customers help boost revenues during weekdays which are typically slower for business. And you can gain even more share of wallet by offering enticing amenities, such as in-room dining, an after-work massage or workout with a personal trainer on lunch breaks, and a schedule of family-oriented activities. Hoteliers can even create remote worker packages that include amenities such as fast WiFi, free printing, unlimited coffee and a catered lunch.

Considering that one in four remote workers believes there aren’t enough hotels offering co-working spaces, targeting this segment provides a ripe opportunity for hotels to stand out and rise above their competition.

Make sure your IT infrastructure is ready
When asked if they’d like to continue working remotely, 72 percent of respondents to a PwC survey said they’d like to work outside of the office at least two days a week, and another third prefer never to go to the office again. It’s clear that remote work is not a temporary business trend, but a permanent change. And smart hoteliers are pivoting their businesses to serve this growing market.

To serve it well, you must implement an IT infrastructure that can support this new revenue generating opportunity. Remote workers demand reliable internet connectivity just like they’d have when working in an office. Your network needs to be able to handle multiple people on multiple devices doing multiple online activities throughout the day. Over 60 percent of digital nomads expect a free, fast WiFi connection speeds for co-working. They want to be able to quickly send and receive emails, upload and download files, videoconference and browse the internet without a hitch throughout their workday.

However, most hotels don’t normally have multiple guests staying in their rooms for eight hours a day using these high-bandwidth online activities. Hotel operators must ensure that they can meet guest bandwidth expectations, or risk losing out on this lucrative business opportunity.

In addition to bandwidth needs, data security is a concern. Increased use by remote workers means a potential increase in the number of vulnerable devices accessing your network. This means more ways for cybercriminals to get into
your system and cause mischief. In fact, more than one third of organizations have experienced a security incident as a result of a remote worker.14

Remote worker guests need to know that your network is secure enough for them to work confidently with sensitive business data while on your property. And you need to know that your hotel’s private data isn’t going to be compromised by anything your remote-working guests do.

Create an exceptional experience for remote workers
There’s no denying that the hospitality industry took one of the hardest hits from the pandemic. And the uncertainty wrought by COVID-19 has challenged us all in different ways. Hotels looking to thrive must reinvent themselves to handle the dip in business and leisure travel. By providing a great co-working experience, you not only create a new revenue stream for today, but one that will likely continue to be viable for the new tomorrow to come. In addition, targeting remote workers will help you build customer loyalty as well. Exposing guests to your hotel amenities while they’re on property may encourage them to turn to you for future leisure business when travel picks up again.

Creating the best experience for remote workers hinges on having the right IT infrastructure and security solutions to support their unique needs. Learn how the hospitality IT specialist at Spectrum Enterprise can help.

13. Ibid.

About Spectrum Enterprise
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