

Property management system customised for backpacker accommodation

"There's a new kid on the accommodation block and hoteliers and hospitality industry suppliers should start taking notice," said Ian Lumsden, GM of Ankerdata's hotel division and the South African agent of property management system, protel. Thanks to their client never@home, prote have pooled their development resources into customising a property management system to s the backpacker accommodation supplier, a market that is poised for exponential growth, said Lumsden.



A worldwide trend resulting from the travel demands and expectations of "Generation Y" or Millennials, as they are also labelled, has emerged. The traditional backpacker as we know it has transformed over the years from an overcrowded, bug-infested youth travel (and party) experience to a trendy, design-focussed affordable accommodation option. Call them what you like, hostels, flashpackers, poshpackers, this new breed of accommodation is hitting the mark and taking its fair share of bums in bed. Generator, St Christopher's and Meininger from Europe have set the international benchmark in these 'designer and upmarket budget hotels', creating an experience for their clients that includes events, live music, travel and food experiences.

Gareth Davey, MD of never@home, said that it has been surprising that hospitality service providers have been slow on the uptake in servicing the backpacker market. Davey has 17 years' experience in the hospitality industry, including working in international hotels, hostels and, more recently, Base Hostels which owns 28 hostels in New Zealand and Australia. Davey believes that the needs of backpackers are significantly different from the traditional hotel. A tour of the transformed The Graeme Hotel in Cape Town will prove his point that operations are very different from those of a hotel. Housekeeping must consider traffic through the communal areas, rooms and bathrooms. Food and beverage is a completely different offering, and never@home provides fridge space and a kitchen for as many as 230 travellers.

Per-bed reservations

protel has developed a solution on the booking engine that allows per-bed reservations. Although the host has 48 rooms, it has 230 beds to sell and the challenge it experienced was that it was unable to split up the rooms into individual rates per bed. "protel has come to the rescue and implemented a booking system where guests can book online and select from various options, including private rooms to an eight-bed share. It has been a life-saver," said Davey, who added that no other management system was able to support their needs.

Meeting the call of revenue managers too, Eben Marais, operations manager of protel, demonstrates that the system also calculates the best available rate (BAR) and posts that via their live web-based booking engine.

never@home has plans to expand through the typical backpacker guest journey and is investigating options in Joburg, which services the Kruger National Park, a backpacker favourite, as well as the Garden Route, which is on every international visitor's must-see list.

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