



Tomorrow's strategy?

It begins with *****

*[Insert name here], VP of Operations at \$\$\$ Hotels, a J.D. Power's award winner, shares how \$\$\$ shapes future strategy based on *****.*

It's hard to move the guest satisfaction needle when you're already renowned for great guest service. But ***** is helping us do it. Thanks in large part to ***** , we continue to see increasing customer satisfaction year over year as we grow. Case in point: since 2001, J.D. Power & Associates has rated \$\$\$ Hotels in the top three for the "Highest in Guest Satisfaction among Upscale Hotel Chains" category—twice we pulled in first with the highest ranking.

Such high satisfaction is partly due to our unique customer experience program. The program empowers each \$\$\$ associate to do their personal best to make guests feel comfortable and appreciated. It's amazing the difference one interaction, one thoughtful act, one memorable event can mean to a guest's satisfaction.

But our high satisfaction is also due in large part to ***** . Meeting the demands of affluent travelers means delivering consistently superior customer service, so we're always looking for new ways to get feedback from customers and address what they want. Before we went with ***** , we'd have to wait for a month-end report with its collection of thousands of surveys. What's the reality that you're going to read through all those surveys? And when you did take time to review them, you'd necessarily see a comment like, "I left my belt in the room." But by then it's weeks later and nearly impossible to track it down.

Today, we get instantaneous guest feedback. Just as soon as the guest gives it, it's there. So even if you only review feedback daily, it's easy enough to read through and act on 30, 40 or 50 surveys a day versus thousands at the end of the month. So if a guest says, "I left my belt in the room," we can immediately go to the room to check. ***** lets us act much more quickly.

We first looked at ***** and others in the feedback space several years back when our customer-feedback vendor contract was coming up for renewal. Our goal in putting it out to bid was to find *the* best-in-class customer feedback solution that leveraged online technology at a competitive cost.

***** met those requirements—and more. First, their solution provided real-time customer feedback, something we really liked. Second, it provided deep analytical tools that we knew would help us further our mission to provide best-in-class customer service. I wasn't there for the implementation, but I know it was problem-free. I also know that the people who made the decision found ***** to be very responsive—and they still are today, as if they really want to work with us.

In fact, ***** has proven to be a very good partner. They recognize the importance of getting back to us when we call with issues or if we want to do something on the fly or maybe get additional reporting or sweeten something. For instance, I had once asked if it was possible to do a customer question that might change quarterly as we rolled out and vetted different initiatives. We wanted to track it over three, six, nine months to see whether a specific initiative would give us improved scores or improved customer satisfaction. Immediately they said, “Sure, we can do that, just tell us the question,” and they were able to do it.

The system has become such a mainstay for us that, at every single one of our hotels every single day, we read every single survey from the day before, looking for opportunities to improve, identifying trends and putting notes on our guest reservations so, should they return—and we hope they will—we’ll know whether their experience was good or bad and how. If the bed size was wrong or the room type was wrong—whatever it is, we’ll acknowledge it with personal follow-up and note it in our records so it doesn’t happen again. Each hotel does this as a team, so all associates are aware of every guest response and we can begin to identify trends by floor or by room type. Many of our managers access ***** from home before work in the morning—that tells you something!

We also use ***** to drill down into incidents in every category, which lets us act in ways that will reduce the percentage of guests with issues, whether with parking-valet billing or room cleanliness, or just about any other facet imaginable. We use the monthly reporting, quarterly reporting and year-end reporting to evaluate and identify trends by hotel type, guest type, what types of problems are occurring within a market segment, and then to work on strategies that will swing the trend in a positive direction. For instance, we learned that business travelers are very pleased with our check-in, but our leisure travelers weren’t. So we increased staff on the weekend to combat that. And because ***** really lets us get down to the small details, we also use it to help us roll out new amenities, down to the lines and products within them. For instance, based on what we’ve learned from ***** , we’ve changed our breakfast—a major change—and also our linen provider, our sheets, even our floss.

***** is the tool \$\$\$ uses to determine what we’re going to do next week, next month, next quarter, next year. We’re setting next year’s strategy now, and it’s based on *****.