Canadian
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Lodging Outlook

HVS

SMITH TRAVEL RESEARCH

The Virtual Meeting Ground

Why telepresence is a nascent revenue opportunity for upscale and luxury hotels

By Catalin Cighi, October 2007 - HVS Boston

Meeting space is a key feature of most upscale and luxury hotels, and as interest in remote-conferencing piques among business travelers, a space's technology can be as crucial as its square footage. Upscale and luxury hotels now have the opportunity to capitalize on "telepresence," a technology expected to enjoy a global market of $1.24 billion by 2013.[1] More than an improved version of teleconferencing, telepresence allegedly creates the illusion that people located in cities, nations, or even continents apart sit at different ends of the same table. This remarkable technology makes the virtual more tangible by means of life-sized images that are able to engage in eye-contact. Furthermore, telepresence practically eliminates any perceivable delays in the transmittal of video and audio, creating a meeting environment unmitigated by the stutters and freezes of traditional teleconferencing equipment.

During the past 18 months, technology firms such as Hewlett-Packard, Cisco, and a host of smaller competitors have focused on developing and marketing telepresence worldwide. Benefits quoted by the promoters include significant savings of time and travel costs. According to The Economist, Cisco achieved a 20% reduction in total travel costs and reduced takeover negotiation times from months to days by implementing telepresence into its internal operations. Reduced air travel translates into less carbon emissions, thus qualifying telepresence as environmentally friendly. The product is primarily targeted to international corporations and government agencies, but it addresses the needs of any organization that relies on significant global coordination of its operations.

The main challenges to adopting this technology are the high upfront investment and a wary consumer base. In the United States, a single telepresence hub costs up to $350,000 to implement and approximately $18,000 per month to maintain. To achieve significant efficiency, a global organization would need to set up at least five telepresence hubs in strategic international locations. Potential clients question the wisdom of the substantial investment in a technology that may not deliver on its promises. Herein lies the opportunity for an international hotel chain. An international hotel chain is strategically positioned to profit from adopting telepresence because it already enjoys:

1. Being at the right place: Many international, high-end properties are strategically located in financial and political centers, and within steps of the global corporations and government organizations that constitute the target audience of telepresence.
2. Being at the right time: Telepresence has yet to prove its value and gain momentum in the corporate arena; hence, hotels can offer a low-cost opportunity for potential clients to experience the benefits of the product without the perceived peril of a significant financial commitment.
3. Having the right resources: High-end properties already have in place the full-time customer service and technical support needed to offer continual access to clientele; thus, communication across distant time zones is not an issue.

The benefits of adopting telepresence include:

1. Prestige and character afforded to a hotel's brand image: To strengthen the illusion of presence, furniture and décor must be identical in coordinating telepresence hubs, thus creating the opportunity for hotels to promote their image through singular design elements to a select, captive audience.
2. Induced demand: While this technology is offered as an alternative to long-distance travel, we expect regional travel for telepresence meetings to result in room-nights and ancillary demand for the hosting property.

[1] *Economist article, print edition August 23rd 2007 "Behold, telepresence: Far away yet strangely personal."*

HVS - CANADIAN LODGING OUTLOOK

October 2007	Number of Rooms	Occupancy Rate (%) 2007	Occupancy Rate (%) 2006	Average Room Rates (in $CAD) 2007	Average Room Rates (in $CAD) 2006	RevPAR (in $CAD) 2007	RevPAR (in $CAD) 2006	Room Supply % chg	Room Demand % chg
Nova Scotia Area	1,204	61.7%	60.9%	$102.09	$95.62	$62.99	$58.23	-2.0%	-0.7%
Halifax, NS	3,488	77.9%	74.0%	$133.58	$131.19	$104.06	$97.08	5.7%	11.2%
Montreal Downtown	9,989	75.5%	74.5%	$152.49	$150.64	$115.13	$112.23	2.3%	3.7%
Montreal Area	5,506	67.7%	68.6%	$104.32	$104.80	$70.62	$71.89	3.5%	2.2%
Quebec City, QC	3,912	70.7%	71.0%	$150.77	$147.02	$106.59	$104.38	0.8%	0.3%
Quebec Area	5,789	59.4%	58.4%	$117.41	$114.35	$69.74	$66.78	0.0%	1.8%
Toronto Downtown	13,530	79.2%	76.3%	$173.92	$175.89	$137.74	$134.20	2.5%	6.4%
Toronto North/East	6,504	70.2%	67.8%	$115.94	$117.14	$81.39	$79.42	-0.7%	2.8%
Toronto Airport/West	8,121	71.1%	68.8%	$117.80	$115.23	$83.76	$79.28	-0.8%	2.6%
Ottawa, ON	6,562	80.7%	77.5%	$141.54	$134.96	$114.22	$104.59	-0.3%	3.9%
Ontario East	4,220	60.2%	59.3%	$103.13	$99.64	$62.08	$59.09	1.2%	2.7%
Windsor/ Ontario SW	3,084	53.0%	53.8%	$97.15	$95.90	$51.49	$51.59	0.0%	-1.6%
London/ Kitchener	6,668	62.6%	65.2%	$102.88	$101.74	$64.40	$66.33	5.4%	1.2%
Ontario North/ Thunder Bay	2,073	69.6%	68.3%	$86.25	$87.80	$60.03	$59.97	0.5%	2.6%
Ontario NC/ Sudbury	4,471	64.1%	65.6%	$104.58	$102.07	$67.04	$66.96	2.5%	0.1%
Niagara Falls, ON	9,051	60.0%	65.2%	$124.42	$128.60	$74.65	$83.85	0.9%	-7.3%
Ontario Central	3,492	60.0%	58.5%	$103.07	$104.59	$61.84	$61.19	3.3%	6.1%
Mississauga, ON	5,683	69.7%	61.0%	$110.77	$108.73	$77.21	$66.33	0.3%	14.5%
Winnipeg, MB	3,641	73.5%	72.8%	$102.94	$96.39	$75.66	$70.17	3.0%	3.9%
Regina/Saskatoon, SK	4,265	75.2%	72.2%	$107.95	$101.81	$81.18	$73.51	0.0%	4.3%
Calgary, AB	8,246	80.5%	75.7%	$144.50	$128.97	$116.32	$97.63	0.4%	6.7%
Edmonton, AB	7,099	79.4%	75.5%	$119.28	$110.61	$94.71	$83.51	0.7%	5.9%
Alberta North Area	3,172	65.7%	73.5%	$144.58	$128.22	$94.99	$94.24	3.0%	-8.0%
Alberta South Area	9,012	63.0%	60.1%	$120.95	$113.91	$76.20	$68.46	1.7%	6.5%
Vancouver Downtown	7,753	77.1%	75.9%	$165.93	$149.46	$127.93	$113.44	-2.7%	-1.2%
Vancouver/ Burnaby Area	2,082	68.4%	67.7%	$112.76	$100.13	$77.13	$67.79	0.0%	1.0%
Richmond-Surrey/ East Area	5,945	72.4%	69.2%	$105.85	$100.23	$76.64	$69.36	0.7%	5.5%
British Columbia Area	5,186	47.4%	45.5%	$107.14	$110.47	$50.78	$50.26	0.9%	5.2%
Kamloops/ Kelowna Area	4,518	53.8%	55.5%	$99.64	$91.17	$53.61	$50.60	1.0%	-2.1%
Vancouver Island	4,111	67.5%	65.5%	$110.23	$109.61	$74.41	$71.79	0.4%	3.6%
Provinces									
Alberta	27,529	71.4%	69.7%	$120.07	$110.73	$85.73	$77.18	1.5%	3.9%
British Columbia	29,237	60.6%	59.9%	$109.63	$103.09	$66.44	$61.75	0.3%	1.4%
Manitoba	4,415	71.4%	68.8%	$80.76	$80.43	$57.66	$55.34	1.6%	5.5%
New Brunswick	3,600	49.4%	54.4%	$93.93	$80.87	$46.40	$43.99	0.6%	-8.6%
Newfoundland	1,839	78.1%	68.9%	$108.54	$105.50	$84.77	$72.69	0.0%	13.3%
Nova Scotia	4,692	58.6%	58.7%	$112.29	$108.97	$65.80	$63.97	1.0%	0.7%
Northwest Territories	124	INS	INS	INS	INS	INS	INS	INS	INS
Ontario	73,459	66.6%	64.6%	$115.62	$114.41	$77.00	$73.91	1.5%	4.7%
Prince Edward Island	951	46.5%	53.4%	$89.41	$84.86	$41.58	$45.32	0.0%	-12.9%
Quebec	25,196	61.2%	61.8%	$113.36	$111.58	$69.38	$68.96	1.1%	0.1%
Saskatchewan	5,668	70.3%	65.2%	$90.72	$87.78	$63.78	$57.23	0.0%	7.8%
Yukon Territory	234	INS	INS	INS	INS	INS	INS	INS	INS
Canada	176,944	63.3%	62.1%	$110.24	$106.83	$69.78	$66.34	1.0%	3.0%

*INS - Insufficient Data

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Halifax, NS	3,488	72.3%	70.6%	$129.51	$124.81	$93.64	$88.12	-0.6%	1.8%
Montreal Downtown	9,989	69.2%	69.6%	$151.49	$155.29	$104.83	$108.08	2.6%	1.9%
Montreal Area	5,506	65.4%	66.8%	$107.05	$105.92	$70.01	$70.75	1.6%	-0.5%
Quebec City, QC	3,912	65.5%	67.6%	$139.78	$138.33	$91.56	$93.51	0.8%	-2.3%
Quebec Area	5,789	58.8%	58.2%	$124.86	$121.42	$73.42	$70.67	0.3%	1.3%
Toronto Downtown	13,530	72.3%	71.0%	$171.22	$172.15	$123.79	$122.23	1.5%	3.3%
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*INS - Insufficient Data

The Virtual Meeting Ground (Continued from front page)

3. Potential tax benefits for adopting an environmentally friendly technology (as well as an enhanced public image for operating "green").

4. Increased revenues: Revenues from renting out the facility can be significant. Given the global audience, the potential utilization of a single hub is 24 hours per day.Given the scale of the hotels located in financial or governmental districts, as well as the high-end target market, the rate potential is quite promising.

We have merely touched on the concept of telepresence as a revenue source for high-scale hotels, and a greater goal of this article is to introduce, by means of this example, an imminent paradigm shift in the lodging industry. The evolution of technology will help hotels to actualize neglected potential and become meeting ground for new products and potential consumers. Future articles will further explore this horizon and offer other potential applications for consideration. ▲

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For further reading on telepresence:
http://www.telepresenceworld.com/
http://www.cisco.com/en/US/products/ps7060/index.html
http://www.hp.com/halo/
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Telepresence

DEFINITIONS

Occupancy:	Rooms sold divided by rooms available.
Room Revenue:	Total room revenue generated from the sale or rental of rooms.
Average Daily Rate (ADR):	Room revenue divided by rooms sold.
Room Revenue Per Available Room (RevPAR):	Room revenue divided by rooms available (occupancy times average room rate will closely approximate RevPAR).

If you have any questions regarding this publication please send a message to bmacdonald@hvs.com
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