**Introduction**

Manual management and organizational methods such as the traditional pen and paper approach are still utilized in a large number of hospitality settings around the world. The reason is quite simple actually – they require little investment. So little in fact, that the costly trade-offs that accompany such methods appear insignificant in the short run. But humans make mistakes, and there’s no way to get around that, unless of course we minimize said human involvement wherever we can.

Let’s look at some departments that are key to a hotel’s success, and how using manual methods may be hindering a property from unlocking its full potential:

**Front Desk –**While it may be the first point of physical interaction between a hotel and guest, the front desk is a lot more than just the face of the brand. Reservations, cancellations, special requests, and sometimes even concierge services are handled here – for smaller hotels this list of responsibilities is even longer. Coupled with the fact that the front desk is usually managed by one to three personnel for tens to hundreds of guests, this department is naturally prone to making mistakes. Manually noting down reservations and assigning rooms is a disaster waiting to happen – it’s not a question of if an error will occur, but rather when. Double bookings, forgotten reservations, and other such scenarios don’t just ruin the guest’s experience; they can also be extremely detrimental to the hotel’s brand image in the long run. One of the biggest challenges faced by the front desk is updating room inventory on time. It can get very difficult to [update availability across all OTAs](http://www.hotelogix.com/hotelogix-channel-manager-details.php) every time a booking is made, and this can quickly spell disaster since all it takes is a few seconds for a guest to book a reserved room. If the front desk is badly managed, guests may form the impression that the entire hotel is badly managed – which usually isn’t far from the truth.

**Housekeeping –**Housekeeping is probably one of the trickiest departments for hoteliers to deal with, considering the high turnover rates and lack of genuine interest among candidates. New employees coming in may not be familiar with the hotel’s practices regarding cleanliness and hygiene and may not even be aware of standard procedures. Trying to manually assign work in a standardized manner can be extremely challenging for both the hotel as well as the staff to execute. Moreover, guests may opt for various amenities and add-ons – such as an extra bed – which can become difficult to categorize and relay to the housekeeping team. Even if that’s done without incident, the likelihood of an error popping up has already increased and will continue to increase with every channel the message needs to pass through. Communication between the front desk and assigned housekeepers can also be problematic, especially when it comes to confirming the status of a room when a guest checks-in.

**Food & Beverages –**Depending on the size of the hotel, this department may include even the kitchen, catering, and restaurant (if it’s part of the hotel’s brand). As the second biggest revenue earner for hotels after the rooms themselves, a lot can go wrong when management of this department is left to manual methods – and human error isn’t the worst of it. Food fraud is difficult to catch and manual entry systems leave all sorts of doors open for dishonest employees. Even when analysing reports, the fraud may slip by unnoticed as employees can easily scratch out inconsistencies while compiling data. Also, errors like forgetting to charge the guest or charging them incorrectly can lead to loss of revenue and in some cases; earn the business a bad name.

**Marketing & Distribution –**It’s easy to forget that hotels are also enterprises that need marketing. This is something that simply cannot be done manually, at least not to the incredible extent that the Internet has made possible. While hotels can certainly set up and manage social media pages and blogs, manually listing and removing the property on different sites can turn into a nightmare – especially considering the sheer volume of Online Travel Agents (OTAs) that we have today. Emailing potential customers becomes time-consuming and in such a competitive industry, guests and travel agents will not take the time to look up a hotel when there are dozens of others lining up with special offers and promotions.

**Accounting & Management –**Managing accounts and keeping tabs on everything from inventory to staff can be exhausting when done manually, not to mention the fact that an error here can directly impact the establishment’s bottom-line. Accounting mistakes can also severely impact the professional quality of the hotel’s brand, especially if a guest is involved – resolving these mistakes often confuses everyone including the staff, allowing the discrepancy to remain hidden. Without computer generated reports, it can take a long time to analyse the hotel’s most profitable departments and pick out the ones costing the most money. Manually generated reports have a number of limitations – they may be biased based on personal opinion, may not factor in all the necessary variables, and of course there’s that element of human error. As any educated hotelier is well aware of, the smallest of accounting discrepancies can rapidly snowball into a potentially crippling issue if ignored.

It is impossible to fully eliminate human error regardless of the setting, so creating a completely error-free system does not lie within the realms of what the hospitality industry can hope to expect from tomorrow’s technology. But this doesn’t depend entirely on each individual employee; even the most experienced personnel can be prone to making mistakes. The good news is that promoting standardized systems and processes in place of traditional practices – in this case, manual methods, can significantly reduce the potential for human error. Humans are not very apt at handling segregated, structured tasks; and are especially vulnerable when it comes to non-routine conditions. This gives rise to stress, the final ingredient in the perfect recipe for disaster.

By introducing an environment where the level of quality assurance is much higher, employees naturally find it easier to handle tasks effectively and even when mistakes are made, it becomes much easier to identify and rectify them. By introducing the staff to an intuitive, automated environment in which all processes are standardized and turned into a routine, it is indeed possible to limit the effect of human error.