7 factors

to consider when selecting reservation software for your hotels and resorts

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A powerful reservation system is necessary for the success of your business, no matter if you run a boutique hotel, a large ski resort, a national chain of motels, a theme park, or full-service cruise ships.

Yet, too many hospitality businesses still use separate, standalone solutions for their different functions. When room bookings are managed in one system, restaurants reservations are logged in another software, and spa bookings are written down on post-its, it can be difficult to maintain a clear view of guests and services – let alone offer guests a personalized, bespoke experience.

Many businesses are now looking to replace their old systems with software that connects all parts of their business and supports their growth. When selecting a reservation software, look for these seven important functionalities to make sure you pick a solution that will effectively support your hospitality business.

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1. **Centralized view**

2. **Visibility for employees on all devices**

3. **Packages and bundles**

4. **Personalized offers**

5. **Streamlined management of staff and resources**

6. **Robust reporting and insights**

7. **Room to grow**

1 Centralized view

The ideal hotel experience seamlessly blends together all the elements the property has to offer. If you offer services like kayak rentals, horse-riding tours, spa treatments, bars, cafés and restaurants, guests expect to be able to book any of these services online or at the property, and pay for them as and when they prefer.

However, most hotels can't offer this kind of unified experience. If they use separate solutions for each part of the business they often can't see across the different systems, and can't track what services a guest has booked, or what spots are still available and when. Using several separate systems can even lead to more serious issues such as double bookings, missing reservations, and inability to understand customer habits and preferences.

The only way to ensure a consistent, unified experience to both guests and employees is to use the same, **end-to-end platform** to manage all your pieces.
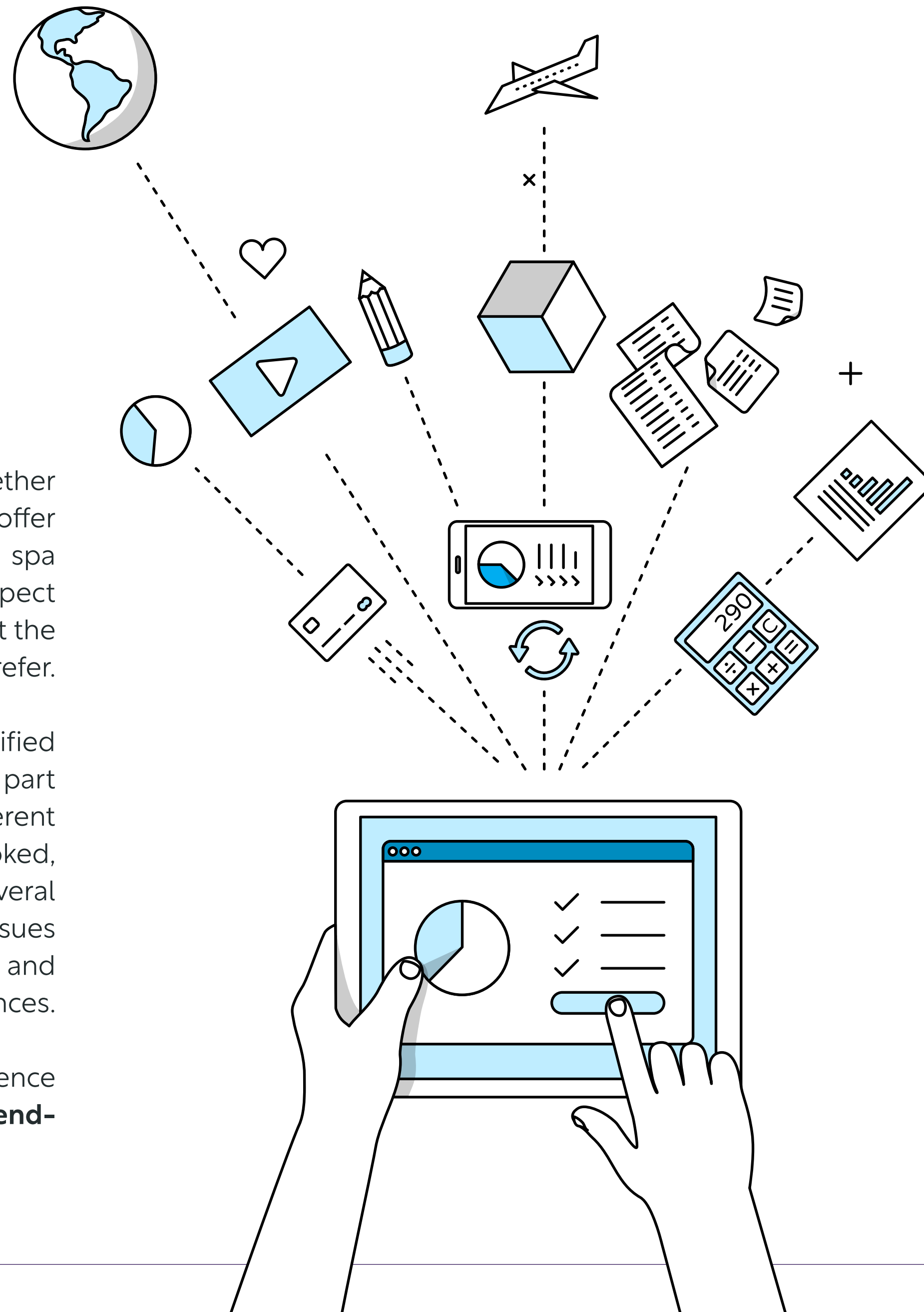
When looking for a new reservation system, make sure that it supports:

Reservations for all your facilities in one platform. That includes hotel rooms, conference rooms, restaurant and dining services, the services offered in your fitness center, spa, or other facilities, and all your other amenities.

Online and in-person bookings for both rooms and amenities. The system should enable online sales both on your website and through your various distribution channels, including OTAs.

Group bookings. The guest list should be connected to the various activities each group has booked alongside the rooms, giving you a clear overview of what services are reserved to each room and each guest.

Corporate bookings for business travelers, with special rates and dedicated services.

2 Visibility for employees on all devices

"Dinner for four at 7:30? Let me call the restaurant and check if we have a table available. [...] Sorry, they are not picking up the phone. I'll write down 7:30, I'll call you later to let you know."

This kind of interaction is no one's idea of luxury service. Yet, too many hotels still use ineffective systems to manage and communicate bookings, and the employee at the reception often has no visibility over the availabilities in the restaurant, health club, or in other parts of the hotel.

The ideal reservation software gives you **a single, centralized source of information about availabilities, prices and offers of rooms and services** across your entire enterprise. It should empower your employees to **handle any request through any point of sale (POS), mobile device, or back office computer** in the organization, no matter whether a guest is adding a meal to the room,

buying a ticket for an event, or making complex requests like a two-hour boat rental with a scuba diving instructor and drinks in the bar afterwards.

By giving your staff visibility over what tables are still available at the restaurant, and letting them book empty slots at the spa from any computer, tablet, or mobile, you'll make their job that much easier – while providing your guests with smoother, more satisfactory service.
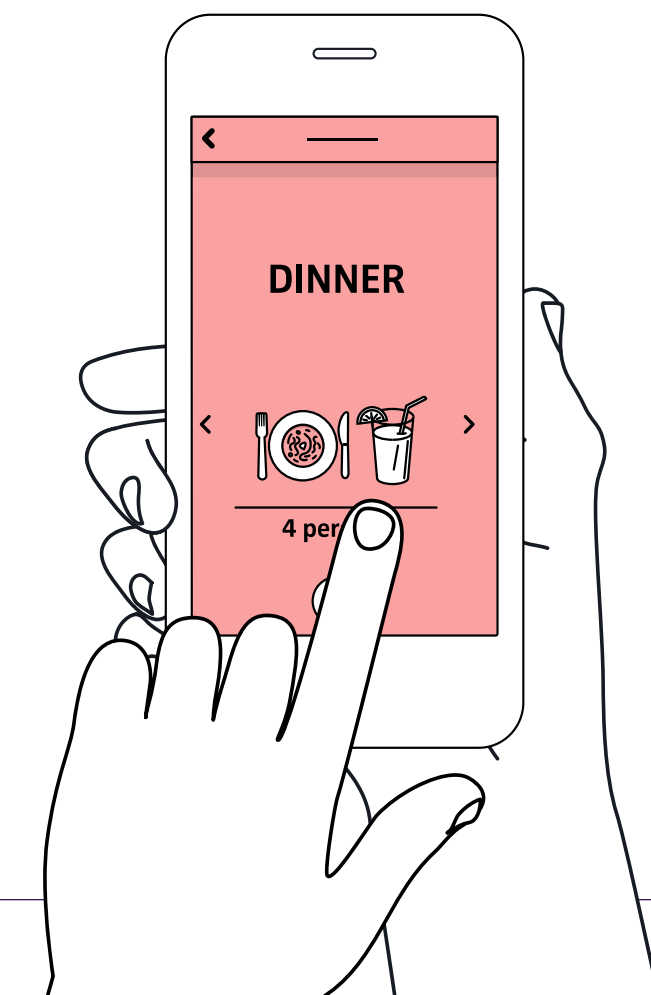
3 Packages and bundles

Research from Expedia Group shows that guests who book travel packages tend to bring higher value to hotels: they **book earlier, stay longer, and generally spend more** than travelers who only book rooms.

The ideal booking software will enable you to offer different types of packages, depending on your goals and your customers' preferences.

Look for a system that enables you to:

Mix and match components as you prefer

You should be able to bundle several items (for ex. room with breakfast and shuttle transfer), mix internal and external amenities (for ex. creating a "ski & dine package" inclusive of dinner at the hotel, ski equipment rental, and a ski lift pass), and make the packages as extensive as you please (for ex. offering all-inclusive family packages with meals, nanny service, and theme park tickets).

Set flexible pricing

The system should let you set different prices for the same package, for example making it more expensive during weekends, or discounting it before lunch.

Keep track of what you are selling

The right solution will enable you to set up items so that each item in the package is automatically posted to the correct revenue stream. This will simplify your accounting and give you a better overview over what's being sold, and what is redeemed most often.

Keep all parts of the business in sync

When a guest arrives at the hotel, the reservation should automatically update. Similarly, if a customer is a "no show", the system should automatically mark the same way all activities linked to their reservation. This will save you time and reduce the risk of errors, while also giving you more opportunities to fill the vacancies and minimize your losses.

4 Personalized offers

Personalized experiences are the most desirable luxury offering a travel destination can offer, according to the latest Global Travel Trends Report from American Express. For businesses, personalization can bring rapid return on investment: research by The Relevancy Group and Liveclicker shows that **companies using advanced personalization tactics see up to a $20 return on every $1 invested.** On top of that, effective personalization can lead to increased guest loyalty, research firm McKinsey underlines.

To offer personalized offers and packages, you need to be able to follow the guest journey, and know what your customers like, how often they visit you, and what they order and re-order. To get this visibility, you need a unified booking solution that covers different parts of your business in the same platform. By consolidating your data from separate interactions and hotel revenue centers (including bookings, rooms, all amenities and activities) within one database, this kind of platform gives you the information you need to:

Recognize guests when they return, and make them feel welcome. Personal touches, such as a "welcome back" note left in the room alongside the guest's preferred newspaper, can help build loyalty and create more meaningful connections.

Personalize communications and offers based on previous interactions and preferences. For example, you can inform a keen golfer of your remodeled golf course, or send dog owners who've visited you before a special promotion for your pet services.

Identify general trends across guest segments, and use this insight to design offers and packages that drive higher revenue among different groups and across all areas of the hotel.
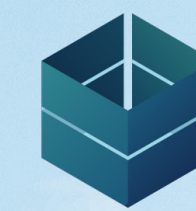
"The hotel industry needs a system that can manage rooms and services and has a single inventory, an out-of-the-box universal booking engine, payments and BI as part of the package, and which can address multiple channels, following customers in their journey."

Nick Price, CEO NetSys Technology

That system finally exists!

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The hotel and property management software that puts your guests at the center.

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5 Streamlined management of staff and resources

Booking appointments or selling tickets might seem easy – but if your offering is complex, you'll need powerful tools, or you risk missing out on opportunities. A spa therapist might also be available as a personal trainer; a restaurant lounge might be reserved for private events at specific times. If you don't have a clear, real-time oversight of your resources, you might under- or double-book them.

The ideal reservation system will enable you to manage a complex mix of resources across different areas of the business. Look for a software solution that allows you to:

See up-to-the minute information on which staff members, rooms, and amenities are available and which ones are booked, so you can make effective use of your resources limiting empty slots while avoiding double-bookings.

Reassign appointments quickly if you need to. If an instructor is ill, or if bad weather causes cancellation of outdoor activities, managers should have the flexibility to move the resources elsewhere, share them across areas, or quickly launch tailored offers to minimize losses.

Clearly **share and communicate schedules** with freelancers and other external professionals, from the tennis instructors to the catering service to the entertainers, and limit time wasted.

Easily **track appointments and hours worked** by your staff members who work on commission. This will also simplify your accounting at the end of the month, and enable you to compensate them correctly and on time.
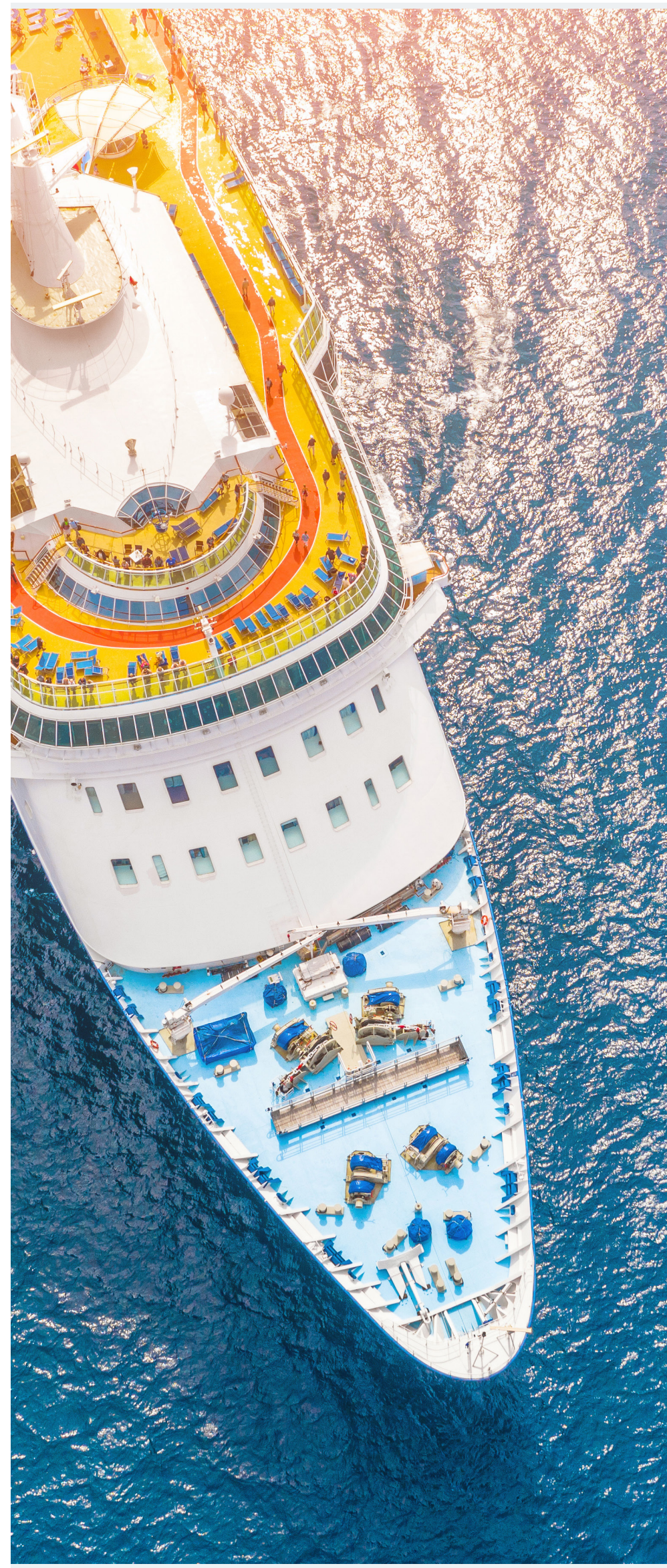
6 Robust reporting and insights

What packages are most popular among families with children? Should you rather offer dinner-and-sail or midnight cruises? What amenities do business travelers reorder most often?

Data plays a key role in keeping your business profitable, helping you maximize revenue and ensuring your offering is aligned with your customers' demands and expectations.

By collecting all your business and customer data in a consistent form in one centralized place, unified systems are key to getting the business insights you need. A unified solution will save you time and money, as you won't need to waste time bringing together data from different sources, and you won't need to hire a data scientist to try and make sense of a bunch of disconnected pieces of information. Instead, you'll get data that's consistently organized, and which you can run through analytics software solutions to get the insights and reporting you need, whenever you need it.

The ideal booking system will also come with a **ready integration to an analytics and reporting software.**

7 Room to grow

Growth is an important part of any business. If your reservation software only allows you to make bookings at one of your properties, or supports limited types of amenities, once your company expands you may have to either change the system, or buy and integrate further separate solutions.

To support your growth, look for a reservation system that can grow and transform with you. The ideal software:

Enables you to **add different activities easily.** You should be able to modify your offering fast on all your touchpoints if, for example, you build a new tennis court, or decide to change your swimming pool into a ticketed-entry waterpark with fitness classes.

Gives you the flexibility to **modify setups as needed.** You should be able to reserve the same room for conferences, concerts, or wedding parties, or to book the same therapist for massages and beauty treatments, without the risk of confusion and double bookings.

Is modular, and supports your needs whether you run a one-location resort, a theme park with rides, or a chain of hotels. This way, if and when you decide to expand, you can rely on your current system, and know that information, prices, resources, offers, and customer data will flow seamlessly across all your properties.

Building value with the right software solution

In a competitive industry like hospitality, to stand above the competition and gain a place in your guests' memory, you need to deliver fantastic, personalized customer experiences, all the time. For that, you need technology that supports you, helping you know your customers and remember their preferences. A powerful reservation system can be an invaluable tool in delivering great experiences, transforming your hospitality business into a destination rather than a place providing rooms to sleep in.

As you select your new reservation system, look for one that gives you centralized information, strong reporting functionality, and the flexibility to create always new offers and packages, so you can keep delivering value to both your business and your guests.

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The wrong software can kill your business.

Missing reservations. Double bookings. Wrong prices. Spots left empty.

A lot can go wrong if you select an inadequate reservation system. You know how this tale ends: disappointed customers, and money lost today as well as tomorrow, when your guests will decide to stay somewhere else.

We can help you make your business into a bucket-list destination for guests.

Contact us

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LS Retail is a world-leading provider of business management software solutions for retail, hospitality and forecourt businesses of all sizes.

Our all-in-one management systems power tens of thousands of stores, hotels and restaurants worldwide, within industries as diverse as fashion, electronics, furniture, hospitality, duty free, F&B, forecourt, and more.

The LS Retail products and solutions are sold through a global network of partners.

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ArcherPoint is a Certified Microsoft Dynamics Solutions Partner and LS Retail Diamond Partner since 2002. Contact us today to learn more.

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