10 questions to consider when implementing technological transformation

1. What problem does it help solve? Will it help save time or add more work?

When choosing a new tool it is important to be clear on what problem it's going to solve and how it's going to bring positive change. Reflect on whether it is fit for the needs and peculiarities of your hospitality business. Critically evaluate the tool in the context of your needs. It's best to avoid gimmicky solutions and not innovate for the sake of innovating. Technological solutions are expensive and you don't want to be stuck with something that is too complex for workers to use.

2. What are the alternatives to bringing in more tech?

Try not to get into the techno-solutionism trap. Be critical and reflexive when making decisions. Is there another way? New solutions bring new problems and can have longer-term consequences. So choose wisely and in consultation. Don't automatically assume more tech is better.

3. How does it integrate with your current systems?

When choosing a solution, consider whether and how it integrates within your existing suite of programmes/tools. If it doesn't, will it cause new issues and require more staff time to do manual tasks of copying information over?

4. How is this tool going to meaningfully support my team?

Choose tools that will support your staff and not replace them or remove tasks they enjoy. You do not want to leave staff with the most mundane, repetitive tasks or solving issues caused by technological limitations. Adopt a worker-centred approach when choosing new tech. It will help you in the future and the workers will be appreciative and more committed.

5. Is it worker-friendly and not only customer or-manager-friendly?

Evaluate new technology in light of its user-friendliness, not only from the customer perspective, but most importantly from the worker perspective. Your workers will be the ones who will be using it and impacted by it on a daily basis. This will help you get workers on board, save time and frustration.

6. Have you asked your workers for feedback? Has your team had a chance to test it?

It's crucial to involve staff in giving honest (anonymous if possible) feedback on the usability and usefulness of new tools, and how these will affect their work and customer experience. Consult your workers and they will appreciate having a voice in decision-making. Make sure your workers feel valued. Early participation and inclusion are key.

7. Have you spoken to other hospitality workplaces?

Approach other hospitality employers about their experiences of bringing in new tools. Exchange knowledge and share experiences with others. Foster a culture of critical evaluation of new technologies beyond discussions of efficiency and productivity.

8. What is the opportunity cost?

Anticipate challenges. Consider what the opportunity cost of automating and bringing in more technologies is (e.g. less interaction, less customer loyalty, lower satisfaction, higher staff turnover, loss of skills).

9. Could the new technology have an adverse and unintended negative impact on your workers and their wellbeing? Could it be deployed in an unintended way against the workers?

This is a very important and underappreciated aspect. Reflecting on how a technological solution will affect workers and their roles, and what the often unintended consequences could be (e.g. too much monitoring, losing autonomy, depersonalisation, losing opportunity to interact with co-workers and customers) is key. Being mindful of these can reduce staff turnover, and improve worker well-being and satisfaction.

10. What if it doesn't work out? Is there a way out?

Ensure, if possible, that you have options to exit agreements if the tech is too inaccessible and counterproductive for the team and creates inefficiencies. Exiting needs to be both practically possible and not just contractually possible.

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