



Bringing Hospitality Workers' *Voices to Life*

This interactive e-book brings together eight short audio-narratives created through a research project on technological change in hospitality workplaces. The recordings are accompanied by eight illustrations inspired by the audio-stories.

Each audio-narrative tells a story of how technology is impacting everyday working realities, interactions, and shaping the future of hospitality work. These stories are an amalgamation of hospitality workers' experiences collected through 65 interviews.

The audio-narratives picture the realities experienced by many people working in increasingly digitalised and automated bars, cafes, restaurants, pubs, fast food outlets and hotels.



[Click to play introduction](#)



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Click on each tile to listen to the voices of hospitality workers.



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View this project online: https://hospitalityfutures.co.uk/workers_voices

Bartender



Click to play narrative

Listen to how bartenders experience intensification of work due to new technologies.



-- SCRIPT --

[**Fade in. Sounds of glasses clinking, drinks being poured and mixed. Intense chatter and music with a heavy beat.**]

One two three four.
One two three four.
One two three four – pour!

One pint of lager,
two small glasses of white wine,
one single rum and Coke.
Two Sex on the Beach,
four gin and tonics,
one vodka lime.

One two three four – pour!
One two three four – out!

[**Sound of printing. Tickets appear.**]

Read the order.
Grab the glasses.
Fill the glasses.
On the tray.
Off they go.
Job done.

Read the order.
Grab the glasses.
Fill the glasses.
On the tray.
Out.
Job done.

Order. Glasses. Fill. Tray. Go. Done.
Read. Grab. Pour. Go. Done.

One. Two. Three. Four.
Over and out.
Over again.
Over and over and over again.

[**PAUSE.**]

QR code.
Download the app.
Card details, please.
Order processed.
Abracadabra – your drink appears!

The printer overflows.
A thousand drinks are ordered all in one go.
Dirty glasses filling up the bar.
Hands snatching the trays and running the drinks to your table.
Dropping them off.
Running back again.

No chats.
No banter.
No faces.

Just me.
Your invisible magician.

One. Two. Three. Four.

I have no idea who you are.

From the menu on your phone
straight to my printer.

Cut out the middle man.
Cut out the bill.
Cut out the smile and the please and thank you.
Cut out the few breaths between orders.

Here's your drink.
Made behind the bar.
Or Made in Taiwan.

Over and over again.
Make it quickly.
Now make it again.

No time or need for me to be your therapist.
Or your friend.

One. Two. Three. Four.

[**Fade in. Sounds of glasses clinking, drinks being poured and mixed. Intense chatter and music with a heavy beat. Fade out.**]

[**END**]

Chef



Click to play narrative

Listen to how chefs experience technological change and its impact on the passion chefs have for their jobs.



-- SCRIPT --

[SOUND: Distant sounds of food being prepared in a restaurant kitchen.]

It didn't use to be like this.

This quiet.

Almost silent.

Just the equipment making noise.

The knives hitting the chopping board.

The pots and pans.

The bubbling and hissing...

[BEAT]

But otherwise – silent.

It wasn't like this before.

In the history of food preparation, this is a millisecond.

Less, perhaps.

Kitchens like this are a recent thing.

This quiet – an even more recent thing.

The shouting, the orders, the commands, the buzzing, the rushing

–
it all still happens.

But in silence.

Inside it is still the same – the rushing, ticking, hissing, beating,

heat rising –

it has nowhere to go.

No laughing.

No joking.

No cheering when something hits the floor.

Not a word.

We just tap on a screen now.

Order in.

Order out.

It tells us what to make, who is making it, and how long it should take.

First orange.

Then red.

Then flashing red – to let us know that this is taking way too long.

[URGENT]

Go. Go. Go!

This order has to leave the kitchen now!

We can ignore it, of course.

We often do.

Who does that screen think it is?

I have had years of training and experience.

Good food will take the time it takes.

And it is always on time.

I know when it is ready.

I can feel it.

I can feel when we are doing a good job.

When we are in sync and in time.

I know how things are supposed to feel –

to the touch, the textures, the smells, the sounds.

I know how to identify perfection.

[PAUSE]

Apparently... so do these ovens.

Press this button and then that – and it will come out perfect every

time.

Uniform.

Exactly the same.

Over and over again.

No flaws.

No nuance.

No need for me to touch, look or smell.

Just press a few buttons and my work is done.

Input the leftover ingredients and a recipe is generated.

Soon all I have to do is think up the dish...

and it will appear.

All in silence.

[END]

Housekeeper



Click to play narrative

Listen to housekeepers' everyday working realities and how technologies affect their work.



-- SCRIPT --

[A voice speaks in a foreign language.
It greets someone. The same voice
then transitions to English.]

Look.

I haven't got time.

I am sorry.

I just...

This is not a good time – okay?

I am working.

Do you understand?

All these rooms that you see here –
who has to do them?

Me!

That's my job.

And I just have 20 minutes for each
one.

An exact set amount of minutes.

They just reduced them from 24
minutes yesterday,
so today is going to be a challenge.

And I don't know what kind of mess is
waiting for me

when I open those doors.

So I don't have time to chat with you.

And she can see me.

I mean, that's not a problem.

That's the point.

See?

[Shows phone screen.]

This app on my phone?

Connects to her computer.

To all the housekeepers.

To the whole hotel!

Best thing to ever happen to us.

Keeps us safe.

Keeps us fast.

This flashing dot is me.

I am in the hallway.

Those – that's the rest of the ladies,
yeah?

We can see everyone, everywhere.

And how fast they are.

We can report everything on here.

No more paper.

No more walkie talkies.

No more trying to get hold of
reception.

No more chatting, running around,
wasting time

to find linen or maintenance or
whatever.

Just this app.

It's amazing.

Well... as long as my phone works
and I get things done in time.

And right now you are wasting my
time.

For the past three weeks I have been
the gold level housekeeper –
the fastest housekeeper – in this
hotel.

And for the past three weeks I have
been collecting the prize.

A voucher from Boots.

A box of chocolates.

A bottle of prosecco...

This week it is a big set –
shampoo, shower gel, conditioner.
The exact same brands they give to
the guests.

The good stuff!

I've got a friend's birthday this

weekend

so I really need that prize.

I don't have the time or money
to run around and buy gifts for
people.

Gifts like that!

This way I always have something
great to give people
without making a dent in my
paycheck.

Cost of living, you know.

You know they are reducing our
hours?

With all this going green and less
housekeeping service
and robot hoovers – that don't always
work, I'll tell you that!

I don't know if they will give me
enough hours next week.

Or the week after that.

But this is what I can do –
where else am I supposed to go?

We all have to live.

So I need to make sure that I am the
gold level housekeeper today!

So please get out of my way, man!

Have a good day!

Bye bye!

[Moves away briskly.]

[END]

Receptionist



Click to play narrative

Listen to how technological change affects receptionists, their everyday work and their interactions with customers.



-- SCRIPT --

[Fade in. Sounds of phones, chat pings, typing, mouse clicks.]

As I was saying...
Wait, sorry...
I'll just...

[PING from chat app.]

Sorry, I'll just answer this message quickly and then I can continue showing you the systems we use.

There are rumours that they are going to install some kind of bot to do this. Like an AI or something.

[Another PING.]

If it's like other changes here, it will take a while... Hopefully you will still be with us then!

It will answer all the messages about what time breakfast is, how do you turn the TV on, where is the hairdryer. That way we will be free to...

[Landline phone rings.]

Hello?
Yes, of course.
I will notify housekeeping immediately.

[PING.]

That's housekeeping notified.
Just a click on the app. See? It's easy, right? You'll get the hang of it soon.

[PING. PING.]

Okay, let's just ignore that for a minute or we won't get anything done.

[PING.]

Sorry – what was I saying?

Yes, those – those are the self check-in kiosks which allow our guests to check in themselves and the machine then prints a key for them. That way they don't have to speak to us and can go straight to their rooms.

And the great thing about them is that they hardly ever work!
Yeah.

So when they get to their rooms they will find that the key card doesn't work and they will have to come down to reception for me to print a new one for them.
Just like I am going to

do right now for that gentleman.

Trust me – he will be down in five minutes complaining about it. If you greet them with a smile and give them the key straight away, they are normally okay.

Hopefully it will get sorted at some point, because right now I am sick of having that conversation twenty times a day.

I mean I could chat to customers all day, but having to defuse angry guests all day is just a bit too much.

Anyway.
So now you know that bit. The rest you'll learn on the e-learning system.

Now let me just show you how to allocate rooms on our system. Basically, you have to be a bit of a detective – figure out what kind of room they might want without asking.

So like if a big family comes, make sure all their rooms are next to each other. If it's a business guest, put them in a quiet room.

If it's a group of guys on a stag do, well... you can put them in one of the noisier rooms. You know?

[Phone rings.]

Hello?
Yes, sure...
Really?
Okay.
I'll be there.

Okay, so a bit of a situation –

I am going to have to run and cover the bar while our bartender goes on break.
All part of the job!

Are you okay to sit here and man the desk while I am away?
I am sure you will be fine. Honestly, it's not that complicated. Just direct them to the self check-in kiosks and call or text if there is an issue.
You'll be great!

Oh – and be sure to mention your name. Our manager checks online reviews!

[Phones, pings from chat apps. Fade out.]
[END]

Fast Food Future



Click to play narrative

Listen to how technology is rapidly transforming fast-food outlets and what the future might look like.



-- SCRIPT --

You will just have to think it
and it will be in front of you.

You can just blink
and the order will be there –
just what you wanted
and just at the right time.

You won't have to tell us your favourite flavour of
milkshake –
the face recognition system on our screens
has your previous order on file.

Would you like onion rings with that?
Our system knows that you added it to your order this
day last year –
perhaps you fancy it now?

You normally order more when it rains.

If you don't feel like coming into the store – no problem!
Our system picks up how far away your car is
and our service robots will bring it out to you
as soon as you park.
Your meal will be at the perfect temperature.
Just for you.

For decades convenience has been our guiding word –
now we are also aiming for perfection.

Perfection every time.
With our machines that make perfect chips,
perfect nuggets,
perfect burgers,
and perfect drinks.

Wherever you are in the world –
your meal will be perfect.

You are now used to getting your meal
within 90 seconds of placing your order.
The combination of a well-oiled team

and a high-tech environment
will see us serving up your order in 30 seconds.
Then 20 seconds.

Our staff will move so fast
you will not even notice that they are there.

In fact...
soon they might not even be there.
Just someone to unlock the door and press the button.

We have great visions for this business.
We are creating extraordinary things
that you cannot even imagine –
and we will sell like never before.

You won't have to open your mouth anymore.
Or even lift a finger to tap the screen –
it will all be ready for you.

Total convenience.

We are bringing the fast food industry
into a new age of innovation.

[PAUSE.]

This is the solution.

The future is here.

[END]

Luxury Hotel



Click to play narrative

Listen to how technological change manifests in luxury hotels.



-- SCRIPT --

[Chimes and relaxing music.]

Voice 1:

Located right by the luscious greenery of Hyde Park, we offer you a peaceful oasis.

Take a break from the hustle and bustle of the city and indulge in the exquisite dishes of our world-class restaurant, soak in our chlorine-free pool, or experience the epitome of relaxation in our in-house spa.

Leave your worries by the door and let our experienced staff take care of you.

What are your plans tonight? Would you like a reservation at a fully-booked Michelin star restaurant? Don't worry. Leave it with us.

Are red M&Ms your favourite snack? What a coincidence – there is a bowl of them waiting in your room.

There you will also find freshly cut flowers in your favourite colour and complementary robes made of pure silk.

Step into the bathroom to enjoy the waterfall shower and your favourite brand of hair and skincare products.

We remember what you like.

Welcome to the Prestige Hotel!

[Sounds from a busy office.]

Voice 2:

Behind the scenes – it's a tech monster.

It's as ugly as those QR codes and self check-in kiosks you see in the budget hotels.

Apps, AI, booking systems and algorithms – all cogs on our intricate wheel.

The best part?

We can operate every single one without losing eye contact with you. That's part of our training – the customer always comes first.

We are your best friend away from home.

A personalised hand-written note in your room – did I use AI to write it? Yes. Of course!

How did I remember that you love Japanese fusion food? It's on file in our cloud system!

This machinery is the backbone of our whole operation. Every single detail from your last visit, every single communication, Instagram deep-dives and newspaper

articles about you – it's all there.

It might disappoint you to hear this, but how else are we supposed to offer the service our A-list guests demand?

We are not superhumans.

No one is. There are only so many details we can remember about you.

This tech is here to support us – to support you.

We are asked to do the impossible on a daily basis, with a smile on our faces. To do this, we need a little help.

It frees us up to offer the best customer service money can buy.

[END]

Hotel Manager



Click to play narrative

Listen to managers' perspectives of accelerated technological transformation in hotels.



-- SCRIPT --

Welcome.
Lovely to meet you.
Let's talk about tech!
Step into my office.

It's almost rare to have
face-to-face meetings like
this.

But really, really lovely
that you could make it.

Tech is just so exciting!

I've just come back from a
conference, actually.
With other... ehm... hotel
managers of the chain.
Our regional manager and
so forth.

And ehm... we've really
managed to hit our targets,
our KPIs, this year.
And we've been introduced
to the new strategies from
head office.

By implementing all
these new guidelines and
technology
we are really finding
efficient solutions
to deal with the pressures
of the industry.

You might have noticed our
self check-in kiosks as you
entered –
they have really freed up
our front-of-house staff
who now have time to tend
the bar,
help set up breakfast,
and help out with
managing housekeeping.

They have really become
all-rounders
and learned so much more
about the business.

Also, ehm... we recently
introduced our text chat
app
so that guests can contact
staff directly on their
phones
wherever they are,
without having to call or
come downstairs.
That's very efficient.
Very efficient.

Housekeeping has also
seen some changes –
and you know, more
efficiency.

We've been able to shave
off two minutes per room
clean

by having our receptionist
team remove the bed
sheets
before our housekeeping
team arrives.

We have been able to shave
off another five minutes for
each room

by introducing robot
hoovers
which can Hoover while our
housekeepers tend to other
tasks.

And to keep up with
the times and the
requirements of the chain,
our hotel has also adopted
a more environmentally

friendly approach.

Now customers can opt out
of the room cleans.
Just one customer opting
out can save up to 60L of
water
per room per day.

That has also reduced our
overall housekeeping costs
as we can now manage with
a smaller team.

So we have been able to
reduce staff costs and...
yeah.

Very efficient.
Very efficient.

[PAUSE.]

Not very pleasant though.

It's not very pleasant
letting people go.
In fact, it is really hard.
It has been really hard.

But what else am I
supposed to do?
This is how things are now.
Everywhere is the same.
The industry is struggling.
First the pandemic and
Brexit.
Now the new government
guidelines.

I have to do what is best for
the business.

I have to do what I'm told.

I try to do my best to keep
the team happy.
Because they work really
hard.

I try to make sure they
have a good time.
Try to give everyone a say
in how things should be.

I make sure that when they
are off, they are completely
off.

I don't chase them.
No texts or calls during
their free time.
All communication
happens here, face to face.
I know that doesn't always
happen in other places.

I make sure there are
phones they can use here
so they don't use their own.

I do what I can.
But it is hard.

Now they are saying that
AI is the next thing.
I don't quite know how or
why,
but it's what is coming
next.
To stay with the times.
To be more efficient.
To reduce more costs...

[Voice trails off.]
[END]

Fearful of the Future



Click to play narrative

Listen perspectives on changing working conditions and the future of hospitality work.



-- SCRIPT --

I am terrified.

I suppose I don't know that much about how it all works, but...
I'm terrified.

With all the recent changes – the pandemic, Brexit, the National Insurance increases...

The world just seems... destructive.

And working conditions in hospitality have worsened.

Businesses are struggling.
And that means that the workers are struggling more.

The message is always that technology will make our lives easier

–
but will it?

Or is it just making it all harder, but cheaper?

I am not convinced workers are finding it easier.
I am finding it harder.

It all just seems so complicated.

I keep hearing from people who are struggling more.

People who are struggling to learn.
Struggling to keep up.

Struggling to get enough hours.
Enough shifts.
Struggling to find joy in their work.

They came into this work because they are people people –

but now there is no time for people.

All this... stuff is just in the way.
There is just so much of it.
And so little that makes sense.

They say that now one worker will be able to do the job of three, because the machines can replace the other two.

Where are those other two supposed to go?

Where is the industry supposed to go?

And who works on the machines?
Who fixes them when they break?
And who is there to fill in when they malfunction?

Tech is being brought in that just creates more problems than it solves.

People are working.
Working harder.
Being asked to do more.

The machine can do the job of two workers so that one worker can do the job of four.

[PAUSE.]

Maybe I am very old-fashioned, but...

There are machines everywhere these days.

Cameras all over.

The machine in my hand that is almost a part of my body.

I am hearing of workers who are receiving messages from their employers at all hours of the day – the latest rota, the latest reviews, who did right and who did wrong, and can you please do X, Y, Z before locking up.

I am just seeing workers being monitored more and more. And this is opening more and more avenues for them to be penalised by employers.

Maybe it isn't the technology itself that is dangerous. But the people using it.

But how do we stop this from happening?
How do we regulate this?
How do we keep people wanting to work in hospitality?

How do we know...
that we are all going to be okay?

[END]

Bringing the project to life



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