



The New Landscape of Housekeeping and Hygiene:

Communications and Protocols
are Key to Gain Travelers' Confidence

Sponsored by



KNOWCROSS

The New Landscape of Housekeeping and Hygiene: Communications and Protocols are Key to Gain Travelers' Confidence

In almost any industry, the customer is king. Customer service is, after all, often the key differentiator between brands that succeed and those that do not. However, it's not just about the customer in a post-pandemic world – it's about their trust. Now, more than ever before, industries such as hospitality must work overtime to win back the trust of weary travelers who, after a year of pandemic-related fear and travel restrictions, may be hesitant to resume their former travel habits.

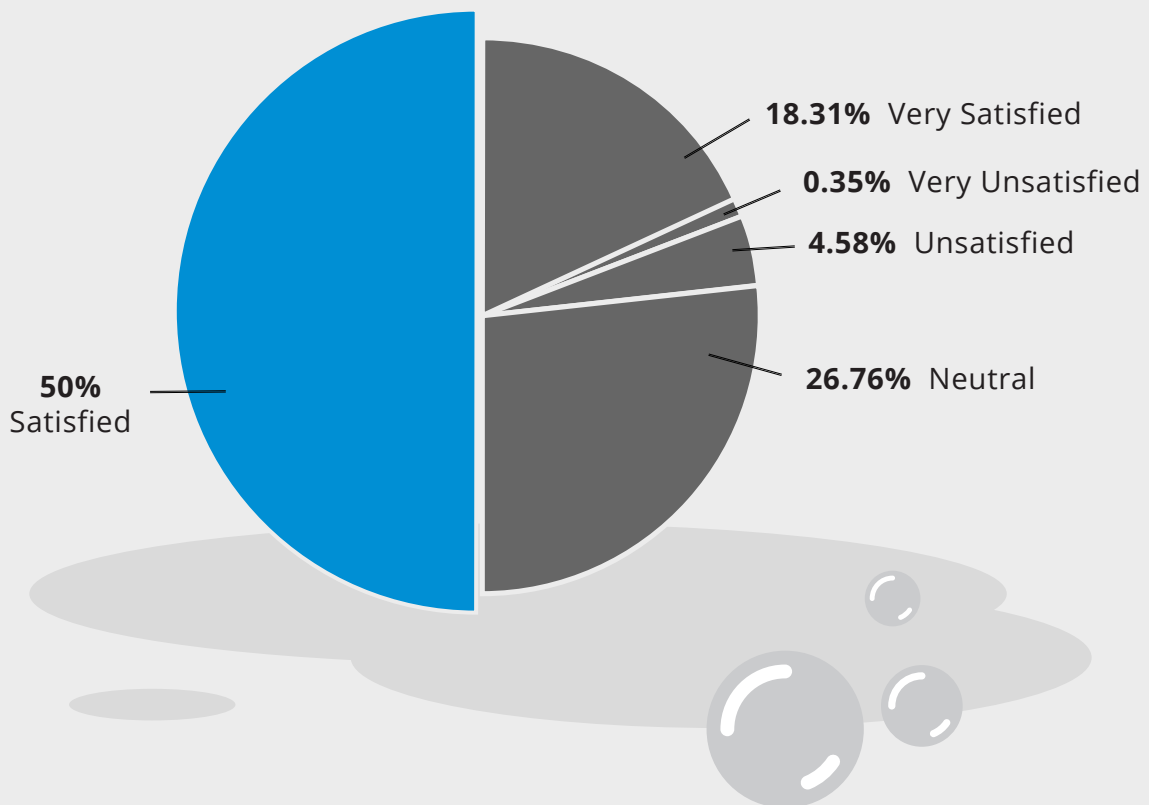
To examine the topic of Housekeeping and Hygiene from the perspective of guest expectations and reveal the predicted indicators of success and recovery over the coming months, Hospitality Net partnered with Knowingli Market Research to conduct a survey. Based on the findings, hospitality's long-awaited comeback hinges predominantly on transparency.

In 2021 and beyond, hotels and travel brands that are forthright in the development, commitment to, and communication of their health and safety protocols are in the best position to appeal to prospective guests. Understanding these expectations enables hoteliers to anticipate and respond to the enduring changes that will transform our industry.

Guest Perception of Current Hotel Safety Measures

Of the survey respondents, over 50% have visited a hotel since April of last year, and over 54% felt confident with the health and safety protocols put in place by their hotel of choice. The report also revealed that, based upon news coverage and word-of-mouth recommendations, over 70% of respondents feel satisfied that the hotel industry has effectively addressed sanitation, cleanliness, and hygiene.

Q: Based upon news coverage or talking with your friends, how satisfied do you feel that the hotel industry has addressed sanitation, cleanliness and hygiene?



These findings should come as no surprise, as the hospitality industry was quick to roll out an extensive list of cleaning and safety protocols and partnerships as the pandemic brought international travel to a standstill.

These protocols include, but aren't limited to:

- Contactless check-in and the elimination of common physical touch-points
- The elimination of high-touch items in guest rooms
- Enhanced cleaning standards and dedicated 'cleanliness' teams
- Intensive sanitization of common areas and guest rooms
- Physical distancing guidelines
- Mandatory PPE measures

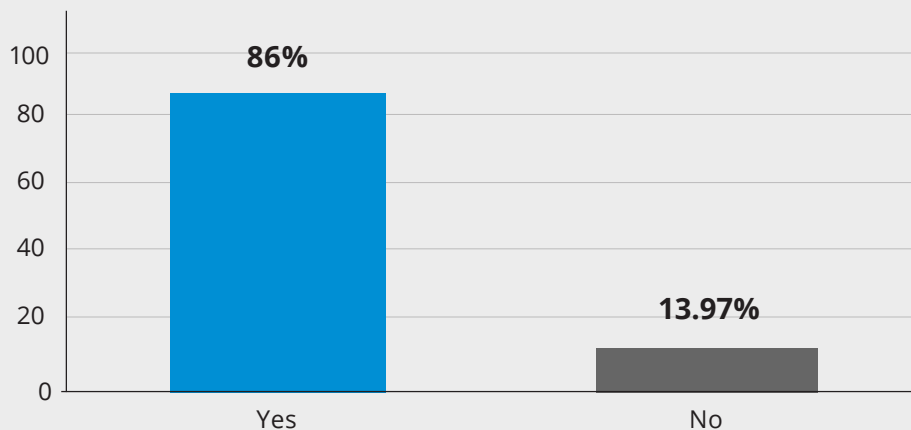
With newly reformed best practices and a commitment to health and safety transparency, hoteliers have worked hard to establish their properties as a safe environment for returning guests.



Hoteliers, Recovery is Imminent:

Over the last six months, we have alluded to our industry's recovery at great length. Fortunately, research reiterates that the travel demand will return, and hotels and travel brands can expect to benefit from pent-up demand. Our findings reveal that over 85% plan to book a hotel stay in the next 12 months, which aligns with recent reports indicating travel-related search behavior following news of a potential vaccine. Specifically, travel search engine Skyscanner revealed that when news of Pfizer's vaccine broke, searches for economy class round-trips from the US increased by 39%, and bookings jumped 25%. Similarly, when news of the promising Moderna vaccine hit, searches for economy class round-trips from the US rose by 63%, and bookings spiked by 17%.

Q: Do you plan to book a hotel stay in the next 12 months?



Of those planning to travel over the next 12 months, over 80% intend to look at health and safety protocols before choosing a hotel. Moreover, over 93% want each hotel to outline the safety measures it has in place. The writing is on the wall – both now and in the future; hotels must clearly identify and communicate stringent hygiene and cleaning measures to reassure guests while helping them to set accurate expectations for their travel experience.

“Following this report, the lesson was undeniable: there was no longer any room for error. Hotels are expected to practice precisely what they preach. That includes an extensive and thorough sanitization of everything a guest might come in close contact with – including the TV remote control.”

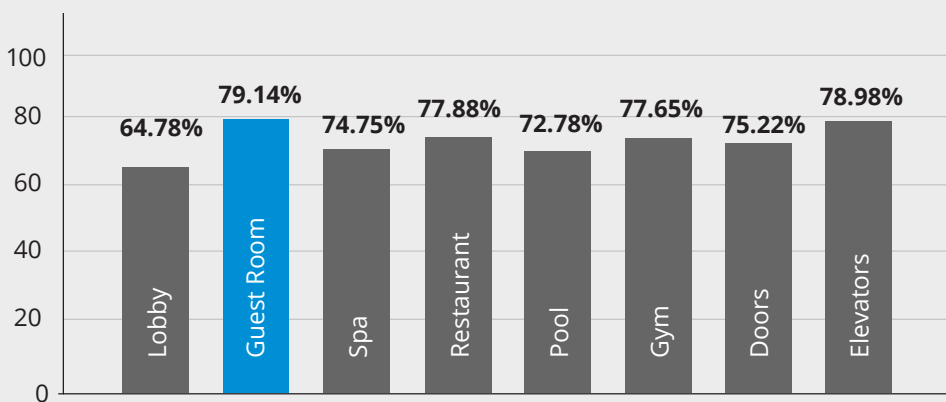


Don't Forget the Remote Control

In June of last year, [Inside Edition](#) put some major New York hotel brands to the test by going undercover to examine their 'newly reformed' cleaning protocols in the wake of COVID-19. To the dismay of hoteliers and guests alike, Inside Edition found evidence that some of these hotels had failed to change bedding or effectively wipe down high-touch items in the room between guests. Following this report, the lesson was undeniable: there was no longer any room for error. Hotels are expected to practice precisely what they preach. That includes an extensive and thorough sanitization of everything a guest might come in close contact with - including the TV remote control.

Our report reiterates this understanding, with 79% of respondents noting that they are most concerned about their guest room's cleaning and sanitation. Following close behind, we have concerns related to hotel elevators, restaurants, and gyms. Within guest rooms, prospective guests identify the cleaning of bathrooms, emptying trash, and sanitizing remote controls as the most important daily housekeeping services when staying at a hotel in the near future. Over 45% of respondents also noted that they are not willing to stay in a hotel when housekeeping services are not offered due to COVID-19.

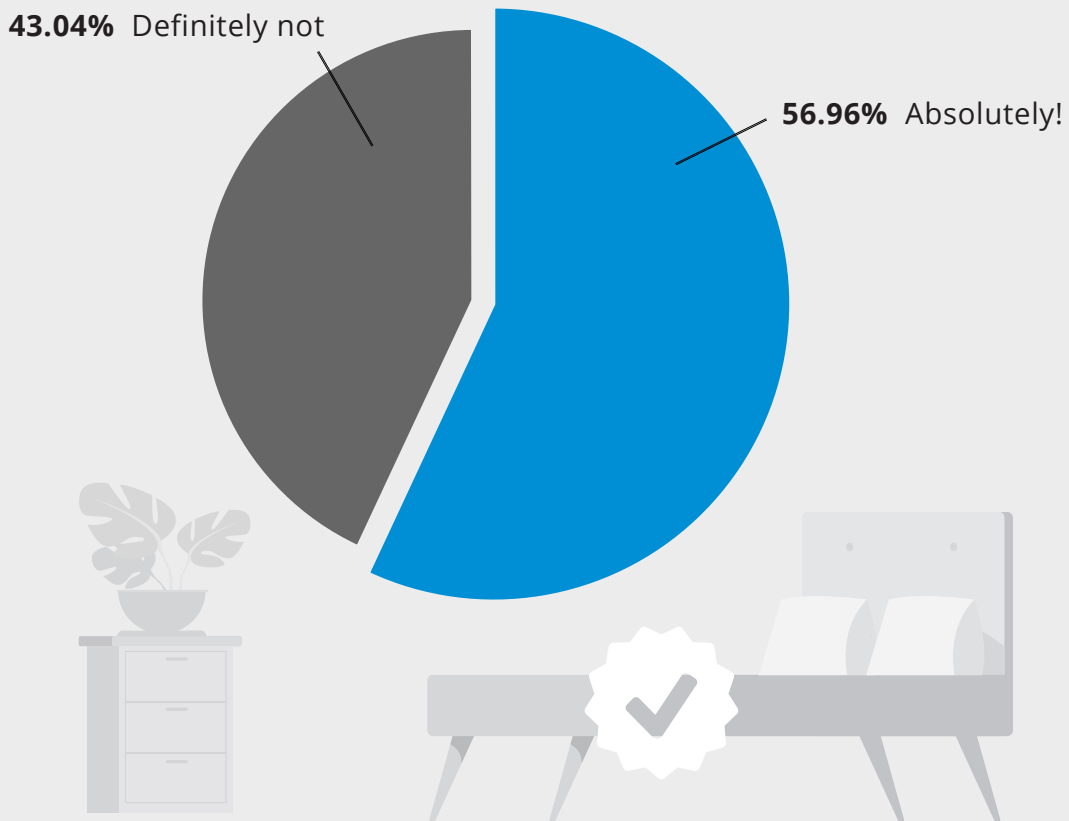
Q: What areas in a hotel are you most concerned about in regard to cleaning and sanitation?



Does ‘Certified Clean’ Come at a Cost?

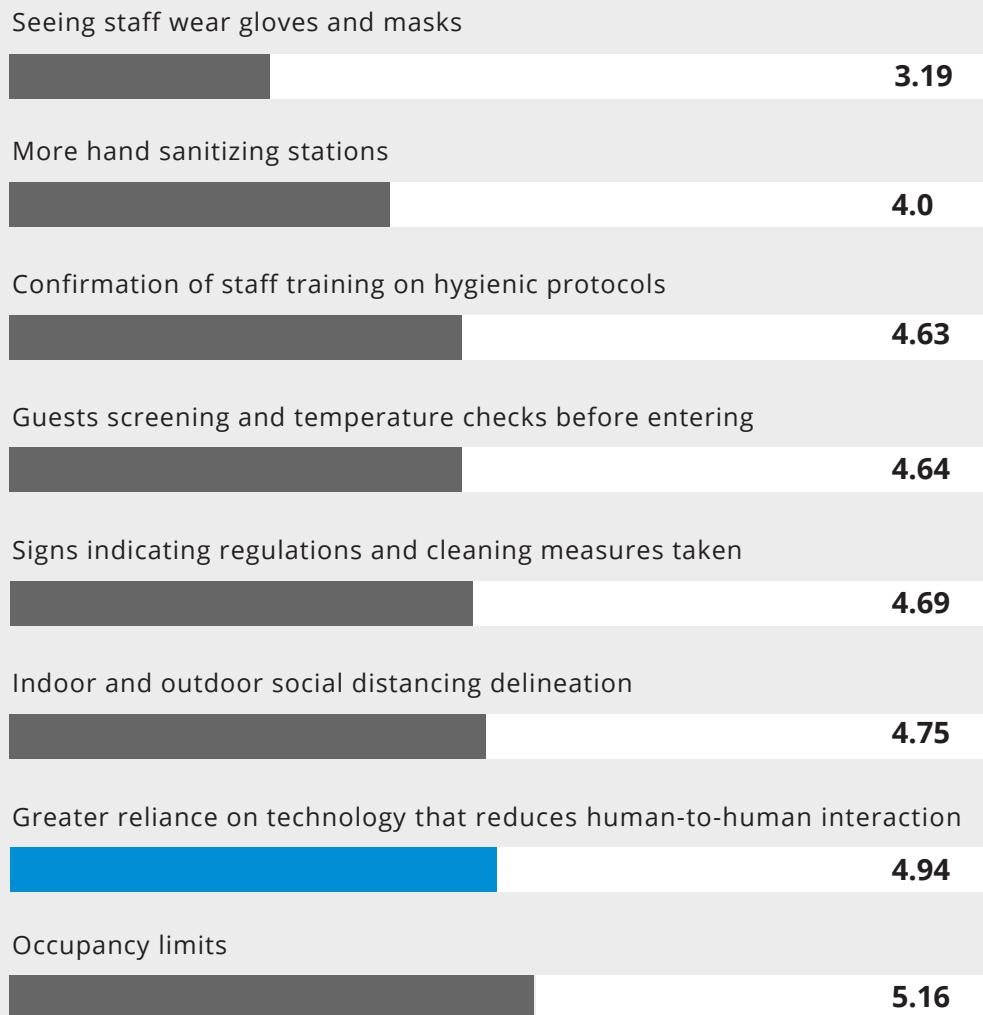
As hotels worldwide commit to more stringent best practices related to cleanliness and guest safety, hoteliers should also note that, in a post-pandemic world, some guests are even willing to pay more for a ‘certified clean’ room. Specifically, over 57% of respondents revealed that they would pay more for a room with this designation. Notably, this response was somewhat evenly split across age groups, indicating that each generational group shares an enhanced cleanliness desire.

Q: Are you willing to pay more for a hotel room that has been “certified”?



When asked to rank the importance of certain cleaning and disinfecting measures concerning guest confidence, global respondents revealed a preference for hotels that implement contactless technology, as well as occupancy limits.

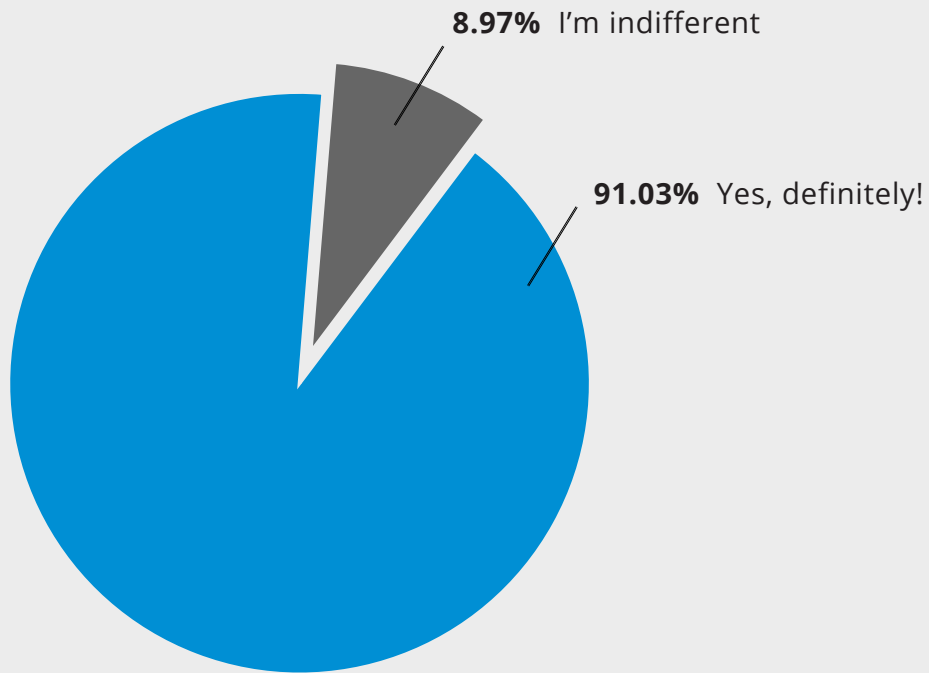
Q: Please rank the importance these cleaning and disinfecting measures would take to provide you with the most confidence for your next stay.



This insight speaks to the continued reduction of common physical touch-points with guests; however, it's important to note that high-touch service expectations remain the same. In the coming months, guests will expect hotels to redefine attentive, personalized guest service via digital mediums and new-age technology rather than the reliance on traditional hospitality practices.

Our findings also revealed that prospective guests care about whether or not a hotel has cared for their employees; specifically, over 90% of respondents stated they were more likely to stay at a hotel that took the initiative to help their own employees who permanently/temporarily lost their jobs during the COVID-19 outbreak.

Q: Are you more likely to stay at a hotel that took initiative to help own employees who permanently/temporarily lost their jobs during the COVID-19 outbreak?



In a post-pandemic world, a commitment to clean is a commitment to your guests and, subsequently, a commitment to the long-term success of your hotel. Establishing and maintaining guest trust; that is, reminding guests that your hotel has their safety and wellbeing top of mind at all times is the key to meeting and exceeding guest expectations.

The industry-wide cleanliness reform is here to stay and will continue to be the hallmark of extraordinary hospitality in the years to come. Now, more than ever before, hoteliers should leverage their internal policies and brand standards as an integral part of their marketing and communications strategy, as guests are increasingly in favor of brands that lead with transparency.



How to Meet (and Exceed) Guest Expectations

By Nikhil Nath, Founder & CEO, Knowcross

Hospitality, at its core, is an industry of people taking care of people, and has a long-standing commitment to cleanliness and service standards. While the housekeeping team is central in the delivery of those standards, it operates in the background, out of view. Room attendants and supervisors moved around discreetly to be as invisible as possible. However, COVID-19 has thrust housekeeping into the limelight.

As COVID has led to a surge in public health awareness, hotels are now put in a position of making their commitment to cleanliness part of their guest experience. As travel resumes, hoteliers are facing several operational challenges as they balance this new requirement with unprecedented losses, continued uncertainty around the return of business and most recently, staffing challenges. In the United States, the increase in minimum wage and tens of thousands of hoteliers who have found work in other industries are just two of the major challenges that the industry is faced with.

Rethinking operations, and re-designing housekeeping operations using technology is the only way to achieve the productivity and quality that is required.

At Knowcross, we focus on three central housekeeping areas: staff productivity, cleaning quality, and guest experience. We have moved swiftly to enhance our products to adapt to the negative impact COVID-19 has had on each of these areas.

The Safety of Front-Line Staff

There are no hotel operations without a healthy and available housekeeping staff.

The unpredictability of the virus means that your hotel must be vigilant in its adherence to new health and safety protocols. Your housekeeping technology has a critical role here. All staff should be prompted to submit a daily health check, ideally on their mobile device. While it may seem overly simple at first glance, it serves several purposes. First, it underlines that health and safety should always be top of mind every day and that your hotel fosters a culture of accountability. Secondly, health checks and associated reporting help support contact tracing in the event there is a positive test amongst the team. Quicker containment means that the hotel itself can be protected from shutdown and, most importantly, your staff stays safe. Lastly, health checks communicate to your staff that you are looking out for one another.

New Cleaning Protocols

As we learned in the report, the hospitality industry was quick to roll out an extensive list of cleaning and safety protocols after COVID-19 erupted. Housekeeping operations must support changes such as the elimination of high-touch items in guest rooms, enhanced cleaning standards, dedicated 'cleanliness' teams and the intensive sanitization of common areas and guest rooms. All of these changes impact staffing assignments and cleaning times, which have a direct impact on guest experience.

The truth is that most hotels, unfortunately, have had to let staff go, resulting in more work for the remaining people. Your housekeeping software must include the configurability to support these variations without adding manual management time. For example, when creating housekeeping tasks, you may now need to a "sanitation > full cleaning > inspection > sanitize & seal" cycle to prepare a departure room for a new arrival. Your system should support this new task structure while also accounting for the time and labor requirements.

At Knowcross, we've done this with a fully automated system called Dynamic Task Sheets that eliminate the need for a central coordinator in housekeeping to constantly create task sheets and juggle staff and rooms among them.

In some geographic areas, we have witnessed rules pertaining to a limited percentage of rooms in active rotation, with accompanying cleaning cycles. Once again, your housekeeping operations software should make the rotation and sanitation of room blocks simple, with few manual adjustments.

Evolving Guest Expectations and Requirements

As we read in this report, 80% of travelers have said they will actively look at health and safety protocols before choosing a hotel. Clearly, guests are on high alert. Vaccines may send the signal it is safe to travel again, but the fear and anxiety surrounding COVID has conditioned many people among us to have acute awareness of interactions outside of the home. So, hotels are set up for the challenge of enhanced cleaning requirements while reducing guest/staff interactions.

At Knowcross, we make it easy for guests to opt-out of cleaning – and we make sure it is instantly communicated upon request. Likewise, our customers can create custom alerts to inform the guest of cleaning progress and completion.

In both cases, the priority is to communicate to the guest that the hotel is taking measures to reduce interactions based on the guest's preference. The accommodation of guest preferences has always been the definition of Hotel Service. In this case, service levels are, in fact, raised by reducing facetime with guests.

Conclusion

New housekeeping technology enhancements have kept up with changing COVID-19 requirements, but it must be remembered that those hotels with housekeeping management automation solutions were already enjoying the labor efficiencies that are now so sought after across the industry. Whether it's using PMS data to map cleaning schedules, instantly communicating room status, or providing mobile at-a-glance guest histories, technology can improve productivity and accuracy of housekeeping departments – a must-have in the post COVID world.

I have no doubt that intelligent, data-driven housekeeping operations will soon become the norm and hotels will find new, innovative ways to deliver superior guest experiences that today's travelers yearn for more than ever.

A NEW WORKFLOW FOR TODAY'S CHALLENGES

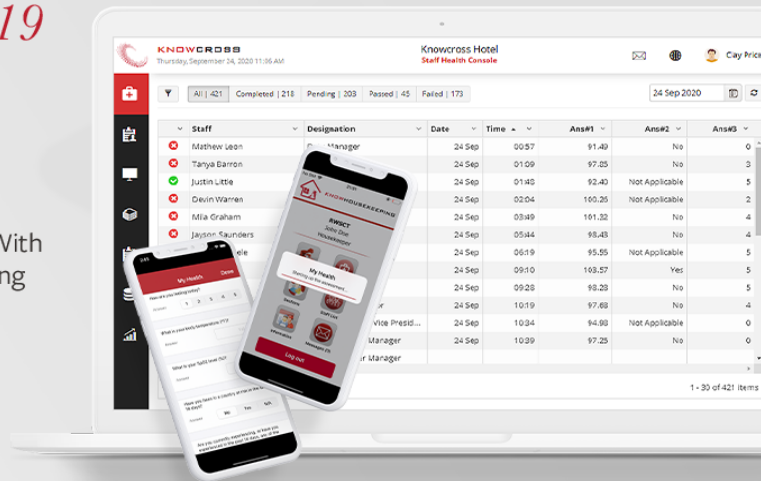


The Housekeeping Management Standard *Now Enhanced for COVID-19*



Your hotel is under more scrutiny than ever. With our latest enhancements, KNOW Housekeeping will make your job easier and safer.

LEARN MORE





ABOUT KNOWCROSS:

Founded in 2002, Knowcross is a global leader in hotel operations optimization software, developing proven service quality management solutions to maximize efficiency, productivity and elevate guest service - with a direct impact on increasing the bottom-line. The innovative Knowcross cloud-based (SaaS) platform includes a suite of pioneering applications including KNOW Service, KNOW Housekeeping, KNOW Glitch, KNOW Mobile, KNOW Inspection, KNOW Tenant and KNOW Maintenance. All Knowcross solutions support multiple languages, can be fully customized, and seamlessly interface to the leading PMS systems, in-room control systems, staff safety devices, messaging gateways, and fire alarm systems.

With a global customer base across 40+ countries, Knowcross is a trusted partner to some of the world's most well-known global brands including Aqua-Aston Hospitality, Capella Hotels & Resorts, Cheval Residences, Generator, Hoxton, Hyatt, Hilton, IHG, Kempinski, Minor Hotel Group, Oberoi Hotels & Resorts, Radisson Hotels, Rosewood, Sydell Group, Taj Hotels, The Doyle Collection, Sutton Place Hotels, Shangri-La and Sydell Group; as well as marquee independents such as Angad Arts Hotel, Dolder Grand Zurich, Inn at Perry Cabin, The Greenbrier, Le Barthélemy Hotel & Spa, Le Bristol Paris, Mandarin Orchard Singapore, Ojai Valley Inn, The Curtain London, The Mark New York, The Ned London and The William Vale Brooklyn.

To learn more visit [knowcross.com](https://www.knowcross.com)



Knowingli is a market research agency focused on delivering intelligence that fuels smart business strategies, content, marketing, and sales. With access to over 40,000 data points, 18 million panelists, 4000 brands, across over 46 countries, as well as custom survey-led research capabilities, we help companies across all industries to grow their business with better insights into their customers, prospects, trends, and emerging market demands.

Our data partners are the global gold standard used by companies like Google, Slack, Facebook, LinkedIn, Spotify, CDC, Sutter Health, Goldman Sachs, BMW, NBA, StubHub, Cirque du Soleil, Emirates, Hello Fresh, and eMarketer. Knowingli has reimagined the idea of integrated market research and content marketing services to make them accessible and affordable for companies and budgets of all sizes.

Knowingli has reimagined the idea of integrated market research and content marketing services to make them accessible and affordable for companies and budgets of all sizes.

To learn more visit www.knowingli.co



Hospitality Net, powered by Hsyndicate, is the #1 ranked website for the global hospitality community. Recognized as the most influential industry trade publication, Hospitality Net attracts the largest number of unique visitors, page views and targeted subscribers through its unparalleled network of sites and partners. Since its inception in 1999, Hospitality Net has been regarded as the most trusted source for industry leaders and experts to connect, share, and learn. Content is distributed to a network of partner sites and associations including HFTP, HSMAI, and HITEC, and supports all facets of the business including opinion articles, press releases, appointments, events, job openings, webinars, reports, sponsored content, and digital advertising. Hospitality Net has the most innovative publishing and distribution technology, as well as robust reporting capabilities to ensure clients can maximize their marketing ROI and measure their success.

To learn more visit www.hospitalitynet.org

Copyright © 2021 by HospitalityNet and Knowingly

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, distributed, or transmitted in any form or by any means, including photocopying, recording, or other electronic or mechanical methods, without the prior written permission of the publisher, except in the case of brief quotations embodied in critical reviews and certain other noncommercial uses permitted by copyright law. For permission requests, write to the publisher, addressed "Attention: Permissions Coordinator," at the address below.