There are hundreds of great causes to support at Boston University: everything from the BU Band to the Undergraduate Research Opportunities Program. Every time you give to BU, you can choose exactly where your donation goes.

MEET THE CONCIERGE

How mobile apps are changing hospitality—and what it means for customer service
Dear SHA Family,

This increasingly technology-driven world has made services and goods more immediate, available, and accessible than ever. Running late to a meeting across the city? An Uber driver will pick you up in minutes. Can’t decide where to eat? Yelp or TripAdvisor will provide a list of options. There is an entire world at our fingertips.

As a service-driven industry, hospitality faces challenges adapting to this mobile world, but also seeks to gain from these innovations. It’s our job as industry experts to anticipate and adapt to new ways of approaching services, and it’s our job as educators to prepare our students to participate in these industry advances—and to be innovators themselves.

Best wishes,

Arun Upneja

From the Dean

3 Steps to Success

On the hunt for your dream job? Career expert Marta McManus can help you prep for a new position.

1 KNOW WHAT YOU WANT

It sounds simple enough, but research is one of the most important steps in the job search process, says Marta McManus, who helped develop SHA’s new Marriott Career Center and is a director of special programs and initiatives at BU. “Figure out the kind of company that would be the best fit for you and determine the job you want,” McManus says. Consider the culture, environment, hours, and benefits of your ideal job. When you have a good grasp on what you are looking for, you can streamline the application process to target positions that are right for you.

2 FLEX THOSE NETWORKING MUSCLES

“Expand your network by getting involved in industry-specific organizations and events,” McManus recommends. For a good start, work your SHA connections (check out the suggestions to the right)—and don’t forget about face-to-face networking. Seek out informational interviews, says McManus, and “learn how those who have the career you want became successful.”

3 BREAK OUT THE PEN AND PAPER

“One of the most important and often overlooked gestures in the interview process comes after the interview: sending a thank-you note,” McManus says. The best way to leave an impression? Forget email. “A handwritten note shows you care,” McManus says. “One of the most important ways to leave a lasting impression is to send a handwritten note.”

Established with a grant from the J. Willard and Alice S. Marriott Foundation, SHA’s Marriott Career Center can help you polish your résumé, hone your interviewing skills, and find opportunities. Learn more at bu.edu/hospitality/careers —MARA SASSOON

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Check In

Location courtesy Boston Marriott Long Wharf

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Check In

Location courtesy Boston Marriott Long Wharf
Marketing Matters
WHAT CONSUMER BEHAVIOR DATA CAN DO FOR YOU

The consumer is at the core of the experience in our industry, so it’s only logical that what they do should determine how we design our marketing strategies and programs.

Impact on host communities, to connecting with friends through travel, to experiencing new lifestyles. The travel companies took into account these motivations to craft customizable itineraries and themed trips.

In the hospitality industry, consumer behavior data is critical to success at the operational level, Mody says. Collecting and analyzing data is not just a job for the marketing department; general managers benefit from evaluating the data, too. Mody adds, “The most savvy businesses are tapping this data to improve their product and services.”

Mody worked with responsible tourism companies in India to understand factors that motivate travelers to participate in that sector of travel. Mody found travelers could be grouped into Novelty Seekers, Socializers, and Responsibles, each of whom sought out different kinds of experiences—from making a positive economic impact on host communities, to connecting with friends through travel, to experiencing new lifestyles.

The airline collected approximately 12,000 forms every week, and Mody broke down the information into trends to determine what customers wanted.

“We observed the data, and we wanted to learn more about the consumer,” Mody says. “We are responsible for analyzing customer feedback.”

The airline worked with Kingfisher’s food and beverage team to redesign meals, we found these meals were not considered appropriate for meals served on the airline were dropped. Upon delving into consumer comments, we found these meals were not considered appropriate for meals served on the airline were dropped.

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Industry professionals can also use customer feedback data to tailor marketing campaigns. In an independent study, Mody worked with responsible tourism companies in India to understand factors that motivate travelers to participate in that sector of travel. Mody found travelers could be grouped into Novelty Seekers, Socializers, and Responsibles, each of whom sought out different kinds of experiences—from making a positive economic impact on host communities, to connecting with friends through travel, to experiencing new lifestyles. The travel companies took into account these motivations to craft customizable itineraries and themed trips.

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The efforts pay off, with positive reviews and returning guests, Reiser says. “The feedback culture and so on,” says Shilpakhana Rubia (CGS’16, SHA’18). “The Taj has gone to the next level” by establishing among its properties a quality it describes as a “common spirit” called “Taj-ness,” which is reflected in its guest experiences. Examples include delivering soup when guests feel under the weather and providing new arrivals with Indian tea and a traditional welcome garland and blessing, says Jagota. The Taj also makes the effort to meet special requests—like bringing an elephant into the hotel ballroom for good luck at a couple’s marriage ceremony.

“Taj goes the extra mile to create ‘Magical Moments,’ or meaningful touch points with guests to make their stay even more memorable.”

—Madeline Reiser (’16)
How thinking mobile can enhance customer connection

BY ANDREW THURSTON

AS THE GUEST APPROACHES HER HOTEL ROOM, THE DOOR UNLOCKS. Inside, the shades rise and the lights dim, showcasing the city’s view. The radio switches on to her favorite channel. The magical welcome is conjured by an exchange between an app on the guest’s cell phone and Bluetooth beacons dotting the room. Checking in is as easy as walking in.

Apps, software programs built for portable devices like smartphones and tablets, are changing how customers interact with businesses across many industries, including hospitality, travel, and retail. In 2014, Virgin Atlantic tested the beacons in London’s Heathrow Airport to send tailored deals and boarding notifications directly to the phones of passengers in its Upper Class cabin. In August 2015, Target began experimenting with the beacons in 50 of its stores to flag special offers.

Much of this new technology is consumer driven. Why read the views of one expert at Forbes when the ratings app TripAdvisor can tell you whether 5,000 customers liked a hotel? Businesses are driving the changes, too, as operators large and small download point-of-sale and reservation system apps to increase the efficiency of their processes and upgrade their offerings. The Bluetooth beacon system could prove just as valuable for the data it provides on customer habits as for its potential to wow vacationers.

And yet, with so much pressure to innovate, it’s difficult to know how to balance progress with more traditional customer service values. Ordering dinner on a tablet is convenient, but is it as enjoyable as chatting about the menu with a server? Checking into a hotel using a smartphone is quick, but is it as gratifying as testing your French à la réception?
CUSTOMER BASES OF ONE

At the Yotel New York, the front desk concierge is a self-service computer kiosk, the bellhop is a robotic arm that lifts your bags into a storage bin, and the TV armories have been abandoned in favor of audio streaming “techno walls.” It’s cool and modern, and it’s not for everyone.

You have to meet the customer where they are—“it’s customer bases of one,” says Michael Oshins, an SHA associate professor of the practice and the editor of Boston Hospitality Review. “You have to be able to give high tech and high touch;” a gadget-responsive service that doesn’t remove the hospitable from hospitality. “Even the same customer can be a different customer,” he says. “At Starbuck’s on a Tuesday morning at seven, I want to get my coffee and go—it’s about speed of service. On a Saturday or Sunday, it’s different; I want to talk to the barista. Most people are like that.”

In an industry where success has traditionally been built on the ability to personalize a customer’s experience, some businesses might be inclined to push back against technology. Oshins (SED’02) says that would be a mistake.

“I love old hotels,” he says. A property can have an old-style door key, “if that helps with the image of the place, but I still want Wi-Fi in my room. So, if you have an old hotel, you can either be an old hotel or you can be a historic hotel that meets the needs of the modern-day customer. You choose.”

Given the pace of change, it’s easy to get left behind. Airbnb, the private vacation rental website and app, was founded in 2008, but it already has a market value higher than Hilton and some other hotel companies. “Your past success guarantees you nothing,” says Oshins, “which means you always have to continue to look forward or adapt to change in business.”

Marriott, for example, has joined with TripAdvisor to offer instant checking on the chain’s hotels. TripAdvisor gets a new revenue source out of the deal, and, Oshins says, Marriott will likely “save millions of dollars a year in booking fees” by chopping

the commission it pays to traditional reservation sites like Expedia and Travelocity.

MONEY SAVERS—AND MAKERS

Marriott isn’t alone in using a mobile app to cost-effectively solve a problem in the hospitality business. Clothbound, a mobile hiring platform for restaurant professionals, is also pitched as a big money saver. The app allows job seekers to build a professional profile and search for positions; employers can post jobs and check out potential candidates.

If you have an old hotel, you can either be an old hotel or you can be a historic hotel that meets the needs of the modern-day customer. You choose.”—Michael Oshins (SED’02)

Eli Feldman, a former restaurant operations manager, cofounded Clothbound in July 2015 after noticing that Boston’s dining spots were having trouble filling open jobs. Recruitment agencies are a traditional option for rustling up staff, but in a high-turnover industry with a decent share of sole operators, that can get expensive fast. Clothbound is free for job seekers to download (visit clothbound.com for details) and, with launch offers, costs $50 per month for employers, which is “dramatically less expensive than traditional recruiting methods,” says Feldman (’02). Students in Oshins’s hospitality revenue class learn that back-of-house apps aren’t just money savers; they can be positive moneymakers, too. The lesson starts with lunch. While they’re tucking in at one of Comm Ave’s eateries, Oshins tells students to “think like an owner. How much money can the restaurant make if you think they think they make?” In the past, the students would come back to the classroom and scribble calculations on a chalkboard, crunching the number of seats, average check, and table turnover to figure out a dining spot’s revenue. Today, Oshins knows a good app for that—he’s the one who built it.

The BU Revenator (search for it in Apple’s app store) features sliding value bars for seats, turn, and average check. As the values are moved up or down, the app calculates breakfast, lunch, and dinner revenue by the day, week, or year. If you want to see what an extra 5 cents on a typical check would mean for annual takeaways, nudge the slider across. If you’ve got a potential outdoor dining area, you can quickly see how much it would bring in during a summer week.

“It’s primarily designed for a classroom exercise,” says Oshins, who built the app with Roy Madhok (’13), director of revenue management at Highgate Hotels, New York, “but there’s no reason you can’t take it and say, ‘OK, I’m opening a restaurant, let’s look at the competition and get some quick numbers.’”

Peter Szende, an SHA associate professor of the practice, says he developed a web-based app, RevPASH (bu.edu/revpash), with the express intention of bringing academic breakthroughs into the field. RevPASH calculates “revenue per available seat hour,” how much money every seat in a restaurant generates. Although the formula that underpins the RevPASH app (revenue + number of seats x time period) has been around since the late 1990s, it’s largely been stuck in academic journals. Few businesses employ the measure, though it would be helpful in the field, says Szende.

Szende designed his app, which launched in February 2015, to help restaurateurs identify ways to generate more revenue. By plugging in numbers such as average check and seat occupancy, managers might pinpoint and rectify common problems such as lower demand hours (potential solution: a new waiting list system) or a consistent pattern of dating couples hogging tables meant for four people (potential solution: more two-seat tables). Szende says the app might also help managers employ new strategies to increase the average check, like “redesigning your menu or implementing new pricing techniques, suggestive selling, or sales

According to the Pew Research Center, two-thirds of Americans have a smartphone; for 7 percent of people in the States, the smartphone is their only access to the internet.

FUTURE PROOFING

Restaurants in general have been slower than hotels to catch up to technology, says Feldman. Although the US restaurant business is worth $709 billion a year in sales, according to the National Restaurant Association, Feldman says it’s “an incredibly fractured market with very limited capital.” As a result, there has been limited investment in developing apps.

And yet, Szende says, restaurants could use the help. “If you look at how they are operating, look at the back-of-house, look at the order production methods, many of the techniques we’ve been using have been around for more than 100 years,” he says. But in an age when anyone can create an app (YouTube is stuffed with crash courses), Oshins offers a lesson to would-be-developers. He launched the Revenator in January 2014 and says time has already shown his biggest mistake was not future proofing it enough. The app is only available on Apple’s tablet, the iPad.

“For most people in restaurants, the Revenator would be much better on the iPhone,” he says of a deficiency he plans to fix. “You need to be on different platforms and Apple is only a small part of that.”

Thinking mobile is not just sound advice for developers targeting restaurateurs. It’s the best way to reach customers, too.

Despite the popularity of apps like Yelp and TripAdvisor, Feldman thinks the most successful technologies in the hospitality industry will be the ones that enable human connection. For example, the Four Seasons app, launched in 2015, allows visitors to book rooms and check out through a phone, and helps them customize their visit: they can tap a screen to request more razors blades from housekeeping or order spa sessions and room service.

“There will be a place for the Yotels, but there’s also a place for the Four Seasons mentality, where the technology is disappeared and is meant to enable deeper human interaction,” says Feldman. “It comes down to taking care of people, thinking like an innkeeper,” adds Oshins. “For thousands of years we’ve had hospitality. In some ways it hasn’t changed much; in other ways, the delivery is different.”

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In 2001, he was named Young Hotelier of the World, but just 12 years earlier, Javier Rosenberg was hailing guests to their rooms. In 1989, Rosenberg (‘94) was one year away from studying hospitality at BU, but he couldn’t wait for his education to begin. He spent the year before he arrived at SHA working at the Claridge Hotel in his home of Buenos Aires, Argentina.

He began as a butler, which taught him the importance of personalizing a guest’s visit. The hotel had a gold printing press on which Rosenberg printed “absolutely everything” with a guest’s name, he says. “I remember even printing the matchboxes. I spent hours preparing for guest arrivals, burning my hands on the machine that got very hot.”

Rosenberg also worked in the storeroom, where he sharpened his inventory skills; at the front desk, where he kept pace with the wildly fluctuating Argentinian exchange rate; and in food and beverage, where he specialized in banquets. “Experience is key in our industry,” he says, “and you quickly need to have faith that ‘their efforts will pay off.’”

Today, Rosenberg is the chief operating officer for Americas and executive vice president for Managed Hotels, Carlson Rezidor Hotel Group, but his early efforts began paying off before he even graduated from SHA. “The School’s then-director, Denise Dupre, recommended star student Rosenberg to Advisory Board member Hugh Andrews. Andrews, now president of International Hospitality Enterprises, hired him as assistant restaurant manager at the newly opened EC Computador, a Waldorf Astoria Resort in Puerto Rico. “I was still very young,” Rosenberg says. “It was the first time I had the opportunity to lead.”

He learned to lead through trial and error. Early in his tenure at the resort, a tip went missing from the staff’s reflection, and he offered to compensate the employees from his own savings. “The gesture wasn’t appreciated, he says, “It was a tough staff.” Though the incident did not have the impact he anticipated, it taught him that, “you can’t just buy respect. The team was looking for me to earn their respect.”

Still fresh out of school, Rosenberg keenly felt the pressure to prove himself. He was building a resume in the food and beverage department—when Andrews encouraged him to switch to the rooms division. The change felt like a setback.

“What I've come to understand that confidence has derived from knowledge,” he says, whereas “I've come to understand that confidence has nothing to do with knowledge.” He encourages managers to ask employees for input. “They may know more than you,” he says, “but you’re there to lead them and guide them.”

Rosenberg advanced in positions at hotels throughout the world—and every change felt like a setback.
RIVKA N. RAZON (’03) of Dana Beach, Fla., had a baby in May 2015 and started a new job as account director for groups at the W South Beach in Miami Beach, Fla.

ANTHONY “BEANO” GAROFALO (’05) was recently awarded a franchise from Expedia CruiseShipCenters. When he wrote, he noted that he planned to open a retail location fall 2015 in Florida’s Space Coast. He “looks forward to hearing from SHA alumni and helping them book their dream vacations!”

CHRIS MCADAM (’07) is a real estate attorney with Kirkland & Ellis LLP in Chicago, Ill. Now in his third year of practice, McAdam uses his hospitality background on a daily basis, consulting clients on acquiring hotels, and negotiating management and franchise agreements and multi-property financings. He can be reached at chris.mcadam@kirkland.com.

CAROLINE (COMBS) ADAMS (CSG’08, SHA’10) lives in Charlotte, N.C., and is married to Jason. When she wrote, she planned to begin a master’s of accountancy program at UNC Chapel Hill in fall 2015, and intends to become a CPA.

ERIN STEPHENS (’11) moved from Kona, Hawaii, to San Diego, Calif., and is a triathlete in Olympic-distance triathlons. When she wrote, she was planning to start work in June 2015 with the San Diego County Bicycle Coalition, a nonprofit to make San Diego more bike-friendly. She plans to do fundraisers, event management, and membership drives. Stephens writes, “Yo, SHA11—we need a reunion!”

ANNE FRUITEMA (CGS’12, SHA’14) moved to Geneva, Switzerland, two weeks after graduation and began working for the city’s Four Seasons Hotel. She started in the restaurant and has since worked in reception and guest relations. Fruitema has been nominated as employee of the month four times, most recently in April 2015. She also received the Four Seasons Pin, indicating that she has been with the company for a year.

SHA welcomes news of your professional and personal achievements and milestones. Please write to us at busha@bu.edu.

Connect with SHA online at linkedin.com. (Under Groups, search “BU School of Hospitality Administration.”)

ROGER WONG (’01) was selected as a Franklin Project Ambassador representing New York. He is a corporate social responsibility manager at March & McLennan Companies in New York, N.Y.

LAUREN VIRGINIA CARR (’02) married Jacob Lee Minford of Huntington Beach, Calif., on January 31, 2015, at Pelican Hill Resort in Newport Coast, Calif., and alums Douglas Lisi (’02, CAS’02) and Daniel Savada (CAS’02) were in attendance. Carr resides in Huntington Beach, Calif., and works as the director of sales and marketing for Las Ventanas al Paraiso, a Rosewood Resort in Los Cabos, Mexico. Email Carr at lauren.carr@rosewoodhotels.com.

DANIEL JACOBS (’03) was promoted from associate to shareholder in the New York City office of Jackson Lewis P.C., a leading national labor and employment law firm representing management exclusively in workplace law in January 2015. In fall 2015, he was recognized by Super Lawyers as a Rising Star for 2014-2015.

CLARA LEE (’10) wrote The Cupcake Theory (CLU Press, 2013), a self-help, inspirational book on self-worth and healthy relationships, which was reviewed by Kenneth Eilmore, BU dean of students, and Michael Ochs, an associate professor of the practice at SHA.

JESSICA VITA (’10) writes that she and AJ DUFFY (’09) are engaged to be married in April 2016.

ADOLFO FASTLICH (’89) of La Jolla, Calif., is CEO of the ICON Group, a Mexican real estate development firm, and CEO of Boflo Cinemas. Fastlich developed multiple movie theaters in Mexico, where he is currently involved in development projects, including W Hotel on the Pacific coast. In fall 2015, his company opened a luxury theater (The LOT) in La Jolla with another location in the works. Fastlich and his wife Sharon have four children; the oldest, Sam (CGS’19), hopes to follow in his father’s footsteps at SHA.
$50,000–$99,999

Sanjay v. Dosanjh (SHA'86), "21st Century Learning"

$10,000–$24,999

Carmel’s (CGS'07, SHA'11)

$2,500–$4,999

Dwight J. Brunk (CGS'73, SHA'82)

$5,000–$9,999

Catalina Restaurant & Bakery

$25,000–$49,999

ARAMARK

$2,500, 650–$5,000

Davio’s Restaurant & Lodging International, & President, Laguna Americas & Executive Vice President, Managed Operations & Development, Hilton Worldwide

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Carole L. Barnard (SHA'75)

$25,000–$49,999

Coors Banquet Company

$2,500, 650–$5,000

Bruce R. Wallihan (SHA'83)

$5,000–$9,999

Yuji A. Kato (SHA'90)

$25,000–$49,999

George Berkowitz (CGS'72, CAS'74)

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