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Do You Want to Talk to Your Hotel Room?

How an AI-Equipped Hotel Room in Palm Springs Could Be a Harbinger of Future

By Grant Broadhurst

At the Kimpton Rowan hotel in Palm Springs, California, one of the rooms is a bit different: Your request is the room's command.

Say "good night," and the room's lights will turn off, the shades will go up, and the TV will turn off. Say "good morning," and the opposite will happen as the room comes to life. And it can do a lot more.

The voice-controlled smart room is the first foray into the hotel space by Josh.ai; a technology company that has focused on smart homes, offering the ability for users to control their environments by speaking in a more natural way. Alex Capecelatro, CEO of Josh.ai, told *USAE* that IHG reached out to Josh.ai about doing a pilot since what Josh.ai does for homes is transferrable to hotel rooms.

"What Josh is primarily focused on is IoT devices," Capecelatro said. "These would be things like lights, shades, music, TV, smart locks, thermostats, and all that kind of stuff. It's actually pretty similar to a hotel room."

He said the key difference is that hotels have building management software with which to interface as well as IT departments. But the basic concept is the same.

"Once you're in the room, whether it's a hotel room or a house, you can say to Josh: 'turn on the lights,' 'open the shades,' 'play some music,' and all that is very similar," Capecelatro said.

So how is Josh.ai different from, say, an Amazon Alexa device in a hotel room?

"There are a few ways that we're very different," Capecelatro said. "The first is something like an

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One of the features of the Josh.ai-equipped room at the Kimpton Rowan hotel in Palm Springs, California, is voice-controlled Ketra lighting that can mimic natural daylight, use light to enhance mood and relaxation, or simply bathe the hotel room in fun colors.

Amazon Alexa is general purpose, meaning they want you to be able to talk to it about anything. You can ask it lots of questions, and then it's going out to the cloud, and so it's meant to be working with Amazon orders and a lot of the data they've got, and as a result, there are a lot of privacy concerns. It's probably the number one reason people don't put Amazon Alexa in either a home or a hotel room."

Josh is designed to not contact the cloud unless necessary, and none of the data ever goes to a third party, Capecelatro said.

"On the Josh side, we're not trying to

be a general purpose assistant," Capecelatro explained. "We're trying to be hyper-focused on the experience in the environment, and so what that means is while we're not going to be able to order you toilet paper and answer all sorts of random questions, we're going to be really, really good when it comes to controlling everything around you. It's a lot more natural speech in terms of wanting to control your lights and shades and TV and stuff."

So, for example, Josh.ai keeps the context of what's going on. Capecelatro said that "turn it up" could refer to the TV, the

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temperature, the music volume, the light brightness, or more, but Josh knows that if you just turned on the lights, then you probably want the lights brighter.

But Josh can do a lot more than that. As noted above, saying "good night" or "it's time to go to bed" will transform the room according to presets, and saying "good morning" will turn on the lights, open the shades, and more. A guest could even just say, "Wake me up at 6:30," and Josh will run the good morning routine at 6:30 a.m.

"It's something I use every day at home," Capecelatro said.

Using Ketra lighting, the hotel room can also adjust the light spectrum to be more energizing or warmer to promote relaxation. Or bathe the room in multicolored lights.

Josh is also fully integrated with the television, so if a guest says they want to watch a particular channel or even a particular episode on Netflix, Josh will start playing the requested show or channel. The same goes for music. While Josh is more limited than, say, an Amazon Alexa, Josh can also answer basic questions such about the weather or the population of France.

Of course, staying in a hotel room

for a night or two doesn't give one much time to learn what Josh can do. So there's a little card in the room that lists a couple of sample voice commands and a QR code that will take guests to [Josh.ai/IHG](https://josh.ai/IHG) to see more commands.

Capecelatro said they also added a card with ten of the most common voice commands – basic ones like "Turn on the lights."

He said the next step is adding a three-minute video that can be played on the TV to demonstrate the technology by having the video even speak to Josh so that the room will respond in real-time.

That all may sound great, but right now it's still just a pilot with one hotel room. Will there be more?

The technology may be there, and IHG is certainly interested in testing out how it could work, but there are still hurdles.

"There's a lot that needs to be figured out in terms of the business model," Capecelatro said. "Is there a way to help a hotel make more money? And figure out different cost savings. But right now from the experience perspective, it's just an obvious direction to go. People want to easily control their environments, which is where voice really helps out, and so my assumption is over the next probably five years we're

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going to see almost every hotel room having voice control."

Other major challenges include multiple languages, privacy, and cost, according to Capecelatro.

However, he certainly wants to see Josh.ai become part of that voice-controlled future of hospitality.

Turn on the future, Josh.