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Utility and Disruption: Technology for the Entrepreneurs in Hospitality: Highlights from the 2015 Technology Entrepreneurship Roundtable

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Abstract

The inaugural Technology Entrepreneurship Roundtable brought thirty leading tech professionals and entrepreneurs to the Cornell University School of Hotel Administration during the spring 2015 semester. Participants examined the growth of the cloud and the resulting opportunities for entrepreneurs to break into established markets, notably by using mobile devices in remote and shared office spaces, streamlining documents and systems to prevent redundancy, and decreasing operating and switching costs while minimizing the need for established infrastructure. Given the economic flexibility afforded by renting assets, rather than owning them, consumers and entrepreneurs have driven the expansion of the so-called sharing economy. The support of venture capital has been critical for such entrepreneurial technology in the hospitality and travel industry. Technology is also key to the growing customer desire to have a personalized travel experience, which can become a challenge to established brands. Many of these tech-supported enterprises are disruptors that respond to consumers' desire for options as they travel. To counter the disruptions and re-emphasize their standing, brands need to use market analytics when engaging with customers and to plan for using predictive analytics.

Keywords

Cornell, entrepreneurship, conferences, technology

Disciplines

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Comments

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Highlights from the 2015 Technology
Entrepreneurship Roundtable

by Mona Anita K. Olsen and Kelly McDarby

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The inaugural Technology Entrepreneurship Roundtable brought thirty leading tech professionals and entrepreneurs to the Cornell University School of Hotel Administration during the spring 2015 semester. Participants examined the growth of the cloud and the resulting opportunities for entrepreneurs to break into established markets, notably by using mobile devices in remote and shared office spaces, streamlining documents and systems to prevent redundancy, and decreasing operating and switching costs while minimizing the need for established infrastructure. Given the economic flexibility afforded by renting assets, rather than owning them, consumers and entrepreneurs have driven the expansion of the so-called sharing economy. The support of venture capital has been critical for such entrepreneurial technology in the hospitality and travel industry. Technology is also key to the growing customer desire to have a personalized travel experience, which can become a challenge to established brands. Many of these tech-supported enterprises are disruptors that respond to consumers' desire for options as they travel. To counter the disruptions and re-emphasize their standing, brands need to use market analytics when engaging with customers and to plan for using predictive analytics.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS



Mona Anita K. Olsen is an assistant professor and the associate academic director of the Leland C. and Mary M. Pillsbury Institute for Hospitality Entrepreneurship. Olsen teaches courses in entrepreneurship. She is the recipient of a Small Private Online Class (SPOC) Grant from the Office of the Vice Provost for her course Technology for Bootstrapped Entrepreneurship, and of the Zalaznick Teaching Assistantship Award. Olsen also serves as the Cornell representative for the International Academic Partnership Program Norway. Prior to joining the SHA faculty, Olsen was a U.S. Fulbright Grantee to Norway. She was awarded a Fulbright U.S. Student Program scholarship in education by the United States Department of State and the J. William Fulbright Foreign Scholarship Board. While in Norway, Olsen continued to build the growing structure for the educational nonprofit, iMADdu, which she founded in 2010. iMADdu stands for “I Make A Difference, Do you?” and empowers young entrepreneurs through mentoring and participation in its Student Apprenticeship Program. Previously, Olsen was the assistant director of the Mason Small Business Development Center in the Mason Enterprise Center at the Office of Research & Economic Development at George Mason University. She also worked as a worldwide sales analyst for Four Seasons Hotels and Resorts. Olsen received her PhD from the Graduate School of Education at George Mason University. She holds a master’s in management of information technology from the University of Virginia’s McIntire School of Commerce, and a Bachelor of Science with distinction from the Cornell School of Hotel Administration.

Kelly McDarby is a senior at the Cornell University School of Hotel Administration, where she is working on her bachelor of science degree. Kelly is interested in pursuing a career path in either corporate strategy for a hotel company or entering the healthcare space, specifically the development and operations of senior living facilities. During summer 2014, Kelly was an intern at Marriott International in the global operations division, working in the Department of Communications and Change Management and the Department of Program Evaluation. At Cornell University, Kelly holds several positions: head teaching assistant for the Conversations with Entrepreneurs course, event manager for the varsity track and field team, program coordinator for the Coleman Foundation Faculty Entrepreneurship Fellows Program, and president of Ellevate Cornell.



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The hospitality industry may not be entirely ready to make use of the vast communications and data capabilities created by the cloud, but that day is not far away, based on participants' analysis during the inaugural Technology Entrepreneurship Roundtable. Regardless of the cloud, technology in many forms creates both perils and opportunities for entrepreneurs and established brands alike, by creating disruptions and innovations in existing hospitality businesses and also by allowing greater communications and personalization of services. Critical to development of technology is investor support. Given that technology is capital intensive in its start-up phase, investor interest is the fuel that ignites technology development.

The Cloud: Impact on the Industry

Moderator: Larry Hall '81, President & Chief Executive Officer, PAR Springer-Miller Systems, Inc.

Student Perspective: Jacob Miller, SHA '15

Facilitator Larry Hall opened the discussion of the cloud's impact on technology in the hospitality industry by pointing to the opportunities for innovation that the cloud has created for entrepreneurs. In particular, businesses have the opportunity to become more mobile, streamline documents and systems, and decrease operating costs. Partly offsetting those benefits are the security and privacy concerns surrounding the cloud. In that regard, panelists highlighted the need to be a voice to regulators who are writing legislation.

As use of the cloud, also called ubiquitous computing, expands in all areas, the global hospitality industry has seen two notable effects. The cloud (1) changes the traditional structure of people working in office space to working from anywhere, and (2) leads to rapid innovation. SHA student Jacob Miller commented that "the cloud allows the team at Flavour (a dining app) to communicate seamlessly remotely." This seamless communication allows the student entrepreneurs to work together and spark innovation.

One question that has not yet been answered is whether the industry will be able to absorb the rapid innovation created by the cloud and technology. The group noted the success of Amazon's cloud progress over the past ten years, and panelists concluded that scaling the technology has not been a problem thus far. Other big players have tapped into Amazon's cloud, including Netflix and the Central Intelligence Agency. Ian Ford of Undercover Tourist suggested that if we do not embrace the cloud, "we may as well go back to the caves and start writing books." Ford further commented: "Every time you innovate, there'll always be missteps. It is our responsibility to learn from those missteps and grow."

Although several roundtable participants were alarmed at the idea that the federal government is using the cloud, several people emphasized how critical the cloud is to the future of business and industry. Ford pointed out that the cloud has been extremely useful for his seasonal business. He can use technology infrastructure and IT resources only when needed rather than investing in expensive equipment or software that sits

Readings:

Architecting the Cloud: Design Decisions for Cloud Computing Service Models (SaaS, PaaS, and IaaS) by Michael J. Kavis
Rework, by Jason Fried and David Heinemeier Hansson



Larry Hall: In addition to its structural impact, with servers moving out of buildings and cost models changing, the cloud has an innovation dimension which has spawned tremendous attention and rapid innovation. The question is whether our industry can absorb that.

idle in off seasons, as occurs with seasonal resorts, for example.

Hall described the benefits that technology on the cloud provides, including lower initial and overall computing costs, ease-of-integration with other cloud-based businesses, and lower switching costs for using different technologies. Jules Sieburgh, principal at Jules A. Sieburgh LLC, pointed out an additional benefit of the cloud, which is a reduction in redundancy of information and an increase in transparency among business partners.

The group discussed ways to mitigate the issue of threats to security. John Balen, general partner at Canaan Partners, stressed the idea that the true number of cases of security breaches is unknown. Barry White, former CEO at Foley Hoag LLP (and retired U.S. Ambassador), shared the perspective of a law firm and the challenges of ensuring security of data for clients that are being represented. He pointed out that the cloud provides benefits but the migration to the cloud for sensitive data has been slow. Ford said, "the third most likely way you are going to get hacked is internal," opening up the discussion to the risks created by the human element in technology innovation. On balance, all were in agreement that businesses that do not embrace this technology will be left behind.

On that note, Christopher Sansom shared that his customers now request that all of their software be available via the cloud. For that reason the group focused on reactive approaches to security breaches, rather trying to



Ashwin Kamlani: We need to think not only about the impact of the cloud on the industry, but also the impact of the crowd, since everyone is going to TripAdvisor to see what the crowd is saying.

forecast what breaches might occur. Some participants suggested that data acquired from a hacked system is not pertinent to those who obtain it, but others felt that every bit of data must be secure and never exposed.

In that context, the roundtable discussed the inevitability of security breaches occurring, with the idea being that a company would plan for what do when the breach occurs rather than trying to proactively mitigate security breaches. One concern is that spending time and resources to prevent breaches can slow a company down and cause it to lose its business momentum to competitors. Further, given regulatory concerns in specific areas of the industry, such as vacation home rentals, for example, compliance can involve significant cost and effort. Andrew Bate, founder and CEO of Safely Stay, highlighted the considerations for security policy as he discussed the implications of complying with fair credit reporting and fair housing laws in the vacation rental market.

This session concluded with a challenge to ensure that industry participants vote, especially when regulatory changes are on the docket that will affect the global hospitality industry, and that companies hold their vendors accountable to security excellence in contracting agreements. As a closing note, Ashwin Kamlani, founder and CEO of Regatta Travel Solutions, encouraged panelists to think not only about the impact of the cloud but

also the impact of the “crowd.” Since customers demand technology convenience and generational perspectives continue to shift, attitudes regarding the need for privacy also will continue to shift.

Venture Capital: Fueling the Travel Revolution

Moderator: John Balen, General Partner, Canaan Partners

Roundtable panelists examined the many opportunities for investing in the hospitality industry, particularly with the rise of the sharing economy. Such businesses as Uber and Airbnb give consumers more economic flexibility, and this type of approach allows entrepreneurs to find opportunities in the market.

That market is huge. Opening the session on venture capital and legal issues, John Balen, general partner at Canaan Partners, offered the following statistics: \$7 trillion is spent in the hospitality business, the travel industry makes up 10 percent of the global economy, and Airbnb has a market capitalization of \$20 billion, as compared with Marriott’s market capitalization of \$27 billion. These dramatic figures demonstrated how lucrative the current global hospitality market is, and it shows the importance



John Balen: With the internet now, all of a sudden CIOs are touching the revenue line... and it’s putting a lot of pressure on them to allocate resources.

Readings:

Conscious Capitalism, With a New Preface by the Authors: Liberating the Heroic Spirit of Business by John Mackey and Rajendra Sisodia
Seeing What Others Don’t. The remarkable ways we gain insights by Gary Klein

Venture Deals: Be Smarter Than Your Lawyer and Venture Capitalist by Brad Feld and Jason Mendelson

of integrating technology into that marketplace. Balen highlighted the tremendous opportunity to have more smartphone integration and app development within the industry.

In the context of Airbnb, the panel examined the relative equities of sharing assets versus owning them. Despite some hitches caused by regulators, the peer-to-peer sharing industry is growing. For example, although Uber has experienced push back from some governments, people continue to patronize the service. Several people viewed the sharing economy as a generational phenomenon, but Cornell Professor Rohit Verma countered that assertion with the idea that the sharing economy was a “natural evolution” for the hospitality industry—regardless of generational differences.

In any event, consumers have more economic flexibility when they do not own assets. Additionally, sharing resources embodies the idea of conscious capitalism, in another demonstration of how the crowd has affected the industry, supported by the strength of the cloud. Consumers are trusting the private homes of Airbnb and the consumer reviews on TripAdvisor as opposed to the traditional hotels and hotel ratings. Thus, it appears that upcoming generations are placing value on authentic experience over the consistency they can find with established brands. While sharing-oriented consumers are a major market to engage, Cornell’s Bill Carroll encouraged panelists to consider the opportunity to focus on the rapidly increasing aging population in the market.



Michele Sarkisian: Even with the tremendous disruption of the internet, do not underestimate the existing hotel brands. They will adapt to the new normal.



Zeev Sharon: Priceline designed a creative way to create parity among hotel brands.

The perception that a wide swath of hotel rooms constitutes essentially undifferentiated commodities is a risk to traditional hotel brands. Priceline, for example, took advantage of that perception by designing a “creative way to create parity,” as expressed by Zeev Sharon co-founder and CEO at Hotelied. Although Priceline.com is one of many OTAs, its model was a substantial industry disruptor. Instead of continuing to have consumers book hotels through hotels’ direct websites, Priceline aggregated the information and allowed consumers to book in one place. Although the largest part of Priceline’s business is a conventional OTA where the consumer is aware of hotel brands, the site’s opaque model gained substantial traction, and other companies followed the opaque bid concept. However, these companies were often purchased by Priceline so that the giant could maintain its vertical integration in the market.

Although technology seems to be a major disruption driver, there are still some examples, such as Chipotle, that do not expressly apply technology changes but instead use process control and brand features to disrupt the market. The group returned to a discussion of Priceline’s role as a disruptor at a later roundtable session.

Hotel brands are not standing idly by in the midst of these changes, especially given that established firms can also benefit from a sharing economy. Michelle Sarkisian, president of P3Advisors.biz, encouraged the participants “not to underestimate the existing brands,” since those brands are “taking note and will adjust.” On

that note, Stacy Nadolny, partner and director of operations at HVS, noted that various types of hospitality firms will continue to do well because “there’s different types of customers. You can’t have a meeting like this at an Airbnb, or a wedding.” Sarkisian and Nadolny focused on the importance of a defined target market in any service offering. Felix Laboy, chief executive officer at WayBlazer, pointed to various market segments: “We are starting to find that it is not necessarily a generation gap, but rather a preference gap of people staying and using sharing services.” Brands are beginning to understand the shift in customer demand to a shared economy option where the value of trust and connectivity directly affect a user’s experience. The Netherlands-based citizenM boutique hotel firm is one example of a shifting brand.

In terms of venture capital, the conversation jumped into the topic of whether firms should own assets or not. For instance, Uber and Airbnb compete in the travel industry without owning tangible assets other than a technology platform. In that context, Balen stated, “I do not own any assets; thus, I am more flexible and nimble in a downturn.” Investing in asset-light or asset-less businesses is becoming highly profitable.

Rather than replace the traditional hotel company, many roundtable participants believed that sharing firms such as Airbnb serve a segment that is complementary to hotels, which themselves are still serving different segments of the economy. Moreover, also they agreed that soon a majority of hotels will have listings on Airbnb.



Stacey Nadolny: Given the many different market segments, traditional hotels will still serve large segments of the market—meetings, for example.



Karim Abouelnaga: Disruption means innovation. The sharing economy is an example of this as people become closer and stronger.

While some technology firms have discovered new ways of distributing inventory, AirBnb fundamentally changes customer behavior. Karim Abouelnaga, CEO of Practice Makes Perfect, believes that the sharing economy “helps us as a society because become closer and stronger.” To Abouelnaga, “disruption is rewriting tradition.”

Guest Service Technology Innovation

Moderators: Josh Weiss, Vice President of Brand and Guest Technology, Hilton and Rohit Verma, Ph.D., Professor, Cornell University School of Hotel Administration

Student Perspective: Kelly McDarby, SHA ‘16

Guest-facing technology is being installed throughout the hospitality industry. In that regard, Cornell’s Verma suggested that “Technology is just an innate enabler to customer satisfaction.” Verma reviewed reasons that technology adds value for not only guests, including convenience, control, engagement, and knowledge of pricing.

Readings:

The App Generation: How Today’s Youth Navigate Identity, Intimacy, and Imagination in a Digital World By Howard Gardner and Katie Davis
 Show Me What You See, Tell Me What You Think: Using Eye Tracking for Hospitality Research
 CHR Vol 14 No 17 Stephani K. A. Robson and Breffni Noone
 Customer Preferences for Restaurant Technology Innovations
 CHR April Vol 9 No 7 Michael Dixon, Sheryl E. Kimes, and Rohit Verma

ing and information in general. Beyond that, he pointed to technology that adds value to providers, including decreased labor cost, increased efficiency, and enhanced optimization of existing resources.

Technology applications are most valuable when they mesh with customers' craving for convenience, choice, and control. The customization of personal experience and the ability to make valuable connections dramatically increase customer satisfaction.

In view of customers' desire for greater technical control, session leader Josh Weiss presented some of Hilton's recent initiatives, including mobile check-in, mobile room selection, and using a mobile phone as a room key, as well as working with tech firms to develop new business models. These changes stem in part from consumers' wanting choice and personalization in their travel experiences. In that regard, participants noted that customized personal experiences increase customer satisfaction. Other guest desires are for control and visibility. Moreover, convenience frequently trumps service. Strictly in terms of convenience, several participants noted that the airline industry has been doing electronic seat selection and mobile ticketing for years, and the hotel industry is really just playing "catch-up" with "housekeeping."

Participants acknowledged this "catch-up" practice as a potential fault in the technology model for hotel companies. However, the connection of convenience with service remains important to the hotel industry. In that light, Sarah Kennedy Ellis, vice president of global marketing at Sabre Hospitality Solutions, posed the question



Josh Weiss: Hilton is moving ahead with mobile technology applications that will give guests more control over such things as room selection and check-in.



Sarah Kennedy Ellis: One issue to be considered is whether the hotel industry should be outsourcing technology so that it can focus on its core business of hospitality.

of whether the industry should be outsourcing technology and just keeping hotels focused specifically on hospitality. Jules Sieburgh, principal at Jules A. Sieburgh LLC, reinforced the key difference between airlines and hotels by expressing that hotels are in the hospitality business and not the technology business. Thus, it may be that hotel companies should outsource technology to other companies and focus on their core business in hospitality.

Market Disruption—Innovative Technologies and Companies in the Hotel Industry

Moderators: Felix Laboy '86, Chief Executive Officer, WayBlazer, and Bill Carroll, Ph.D., Clinical Professor, Services Marketing, Cornell University

Student Perspective: Regine Desroches, MMH '15

To begin the session on market disruptors, presenters Felix Laboy and Bill Carroll discussed what it meant to be a disruptor, how market disruptors can completely change the way consumers travel, and the difference between disruption and innovation. Such well-known disruptors as Uber, Priceline, and Airbnb have changed the way many

Readings:

An Examination of Internet Intermediaries and Hotel Loyalty Programs: How Will Guests Get their Points?

CHR Vol 6 No 4 Judy Siguaw and Bill Carroll

The Mobile Revolution Is Here: Are You Ready?

CHR Vol 15 No 6 Heather Linton and Robert J. Kwortnik

Network Exploitation Capability: Model Validation

CHR April Vol 13 No 5 Gabriele Piccoli, Bill Carroll, and Paolo Torchio

consumers plan and conduct their travel. Laboy and Carroll outlined disruption drivers and what they termed “Shark Fin Growth,” a term that captures a critical moment in a relatively new company’s growth pattern. This is the point at which the firm’s growth either takes off exponentially or the firm tanks because it’s not ready for growth. Once customer adoption slows, the company’s growth plummets. If the firm is solid its growth should continue, albeit on a more modest bell curve–type growth pattern. Participants spent time analyzing the nature of this shark-fin pattern of disruption, with some suggesting that disruption occurs when traditional processes are rewritten, while others see disruption as something that threatens current business norms. Ian Ford of Undercover Tourist proposed that “disruption is effective innovation.”

Although technology seems to be a major disruption driver, there are still some examples of disruption that do not depend directly on technology, such as Chipotle, which developed an innovative business plan.



Felix LaBoy: Disruptive firms must survive the moment of exponential growth and sudden pullback depicted as “shark fin growth.” .



Joe Tagliente: Technology disruption occurs as consumers’ preferences and expectations change in response to changes in market technology.

Brand Activation through Social & Mobile Apps and Development of a Social Mobile Company

Moderators: Joe Tagliente ‘89, President, Lenrock Management Group and Smoke Wallin ‘89, Chief Executive Officer, Sugar Skull Rum

Student Perspective: Parth Detroja, Dyson ‘17

The final session dealt with the effects of social media on brand development. Co-facilitors Joe Tagliente and Smoke Wallin discussed the idea of using market analytics when engaging with customers and how to plan for using predictive analytics in the future. Tagliente characterized the change in consumers’ approaches to travel with this idea: “When you’re in a hotel, you feel entitled to be there. When you’re in an Airbnb, you feel privileged to be there.” The disruption occurs as consumers’ preferences and expectations change in response to changes in market technology. The panel agreed that major companies would have to change their strategy to stay relevant in the hospitality industry.

One of the more interesting insights was that successful disruption may not come from the first firm with a particular concept. So, for example, Airbnb has been suc-

Readings:

Trust Me, I’m Lying: Confessions of a Media Manipulator by Ryan Holiday

Born Digital: Understanding the First Generation of Digital Natives by John Palfrey

cessful—and has disrupted the lodging business—while predecessors such as Homeaway did not catch on. Participants agreed that Airbnb has been more user friendly and reliable. Overall it has made good use of the internet and social media to create an experience that feels closer and which consumers can relate to.

Disruption arising from Priceline’s model of asking consumers to bid on rooms in unknown hotels has affected some customers’ attitude toward brands. The opaque bid process pioneered by Priceline seems to have desensitized some consumers’ feelings toward brands—or has captured an existing but hitherto unseen neutral attitude toward brands. Noting the push away from differentiation, Zeev Sharon suggested that although brand may still be a consideration, hotel guests give strong consideration to guest ratings, price points, or amenities, and they can easily compare these features on an online travel agency’s webpage such as Priceline or TripAdvisor. Additionally, Priceline challenges brand loyalty programs by giving customers points that they can use on any bookings on that site regardless of brand.

Another factor that potentially diminishes the power of brands is that hotel guests are looking to personalize their stays according to their own preferences. Some guests prefer the authentic and local experience of an Airbnb, while others still want a hotel stay but would prefer to choose their own price and amenities using Priceline. Only one roundtable participant admitted that she still used a brand.com website to book her hotels. If this trend continues unabated, brand affiliation may become obsolete as a criterion for hotel bookings. As it has adjusted to so many other trends, the industry must adjust to the changing consumer outlook.

Social media have also been disrupters, and companies have learned the importance of engaging their customers via social media channels. As Cornell student Parth Detroja put it: a business participating in social media “is not a matter of thriving, but of surviving.” In the ensuing discussion, participants noted the importance of companies committing to social media as opposed to simply going through the motions. Social media have been particularly disruptive for traditional methods of communicating with customers, such as print or broadcast advertisements. Social media have expanded marketing channels to the masses and have provided a constant opportunity for communication between a brand and customer. The content of marketing and advertising needs to be relevant and create value, although, as Wallin noted, “No brand is relevant to everyone.” Therefore, it is important to know your customers and make sure that the brand is relevant to your target demographics. Other feedback is just “noise.”



Ian Ford: You don’t have to have everything in the cloud. You can hybridize this. You can have your own internal systems for hyper-sensitive information.

Another disruption from social media is that the technology has given small businesses the opportunity to compete in a market dominated by large firms with familiar brand names. Social media by-pass legacy media gatekeepers and allow direct communication with the many people who participate in social media networks. Unlike the large amount of money required to reach people with traditional media, the cost of entry for social media is relatively modest. Wallin’s example of this is small brands’ use of social media through Pinterest to tell their personal story through a stream of photos. Story telling of this type has been a valuable way for businesses to connect to their customers, especially millennials. Participants suggested that social media actually lean toward small businesses which can then take advantage of story telling, while bigger brands have more difficulty using this technique. Tagliente brought up “this FOMO and YOLO thing.” This is the idea that millennials are attracted to the experiential products with a story behind them. They don’t want to miss out on great experiences and are willing to take risks for a once-in-a-lifetime experience.

Beyond the use of social media for communicating with customers, the group also discussed the idea of knowing your market and applying that knowledge for predictive marketing. The fundamentals of “knowing your customer” remain relevant, and it is important that businesses use technology to their advantage in this process. When John Balen suggested that in a few years, a major part of marketing will be data related, most roundtable participants agreed that predictive analytics will be

increasingly important. Facebook Insights, for example, is already beginning to predict what users will want. Additionally, roundtable participants discussed using “geo-fences” to track customer movement. This can be valuable in upselling—utilizing phoned or texted notifications to alert customers to deals once they enter within a specific range of a store. The new part of this analysis is not the data, since that has always existed; the difference is that now the data are widely available and accessible.

Closing Comments: Opportunity Abounds

Roundtable chair Olsen’s closing commentary encouraged everyone on an entrepreneurial path to appreciate the value of the cloud. As the cloud has become a utility within the global hospitality industry, there are tremendous opportunities for innovative technology entrepreneurship. Olsen focused on the shared experience that the panelists have in cloud-based applications, as a unifying principle. She proposed: “As we decide what business we are in and look to control the path forward, we must ensure that we are focusing on adding value by making effective use of the cloud, continuing to foster innovation and disruption, and remaining open to possibilities to adjust operations via cloud-based applications.”

The panel concluded with Olsen challenging panelists to focus on “learned intelligence” as they approach their journey forward and to find ways to share these lessons in formats where global hospitality leaders can benefit in order to make a difference in the industry. ■

Roundtable Participants

- Karim Abouelnaga '13**, Chief Executive Officer, Practice Makes Perfect
- John Balen '82**, MBA'86, General Partner, Canaan Partners
- Andrew Bate**, Founder and Chief Executive Officer, SafelyStay
- Marco Benvenuti**, MMH '05, Chief Analytics and Product Officer and Co-founder, Duetto
- Bill Carroll**, Clinical Professor of Marketing, Cornell University School of Hotel Administration
- Sarah Kennedy Ellis**, Vice President Global Marketing, Sabre Hospitality Solutions
- Allison Fitzpatrick**, Partner, Davis & Gilbert
- Ian Ford**, Chief Executive Officer, UndercoverTourist.com
- Larry Hall '81**, President and Chief Executive Officer, PAR Springer-Miller Systems
- Ashwin Kamlani**, MMH '03, Founder and Chief Executive Officer, Regatta Travel Solutions
- Felix Laboy '86**, Chief Executive Officer, WayBlazer
- Ben Littauer '78**, Angel Investor, Boston Harbor Angels
- Faith Marshal**, Director of Business Development, Tata Consultancy Services (TCS)
- Stacey Nadolny '05**, Partner, Director of Operations, HVS
- Josh Ogle '08**, Founder and Chief Executive Officer, Fresh Spin Advertising
- Mona Anita K. Olsen '04**, Assistant Professor, Associate Director, Pillsbury Institute, Cornell University School of Hotel Administration
- Sam Pollaro**, Chief Executive Officer, Venga
- Christopher Sanson**, MMH'06, Co-founder, Handsome Code
- Michele Sarkisian**, President, P3Advisors.biz
- Zeev Sharon '04**, Co-founder and Chief Executive Officer, Hotelied
- Jules Sieburgh '72**, MBA '74, Principal, Jules A. Sieburgh LLC
- Joe Tagliente'89**, Managing Partner, Lenrock Management Group, LP
- Sachin Venugopal**, Director, Travel, Tourism, and Hospitality, Tata Consultancy Service (TCS)
- Rohit Verma**, Professor of Services Operations Management, Singapore Tourism Board Distinguished Professor in Asian Hospitality Management, and Executive Director, Institute for Healthy Futures, Cornell University School of Hotel Administration
- J. Smoke Wallin '89**, Chief Executive Officer and Founder, Taliera
- Josh Weiss**, Vice President, Guest Technology Innovatino, Hilton Worldwide
- Ambassador (Ret.) Barry White**, Former Chief Executive Officer, Foley Hoag LLP
- Bernard Yu**, Senior Vice President Marketing, ADARA, Inc.

Student Participants

- Regine Desroches**, MMH '15, School of Hotel Administration
- Parth Detroja '17**, Dyson School of Applied Economics and Management
- Kelly McDarby '16**, School of Hotel Administration
- Jacob Miller '15**, School of Hotel Administration



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Susan Helstab, *EVP Corporate Marketing, Four Seasons Hotels and Resorts*

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Brian Payea, *Head of Industry Relations, TripAdvisor*

Umar Riaz, *Managing Director – Hospitality, North American Lead, Accenture*

Carolyn D. Richmond '91, *Partner, Hospitality Practice, Fox Rothschild LLP*

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