



## 8 Key Questions to Ask Your Distribution and Revenue Systems Integration Provider

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It might seem simple, but choosing a technology partner to help integrate your hotel distribution and reservation systems, and build connections between revenue-driving applications is a critical decision. It can have a huge impact on your ability to grow and on your property's bottom line. Here are eight key questions to ask potential vendors, in order to ensure that your systems integrator is the best choice to meet your specific needs.

**Question 1: Does your solution provide two-way integration with our property management system (PMS) or central reservation system (CRS)?**

Distributing inventory across various channels is great, but its value is lessened if a completed reservation can't be sent back directly to your hotel's PMS. A lack of two-way integration means additional staff time spent on manual data entry and, more importantly, often results in lost or inaccurate reservations. Seek out a vendor product that enables two-way integration, and make sure it is compatible with your existing PMS. An integrated automated solution allows you to manage rates, availability and inventory from your CRS or PMS, and returns resulting reservation data from the various channels directly back into these systems, with no need for additional data entry.

**Question 2: Does your solution meet current industry standards for data security and redundancy?**

Meeting and exceeding PCI regulations is critically important for both liability and guest satisfaction. Inadequate data security can be disastrous, resulting in lost revenue and a damaged reputation that can cost your property far more in the long-term and be almost impossible to recover from. Although many hospitality technology vendors claim to be PCI-compliant, this assertion often essentially amounts to a self-assessment. Make sure your chosen vendors

have achieved third-party Payment Card Industry Data Security Standard (PCI-DSS) certification, which means that an audit has been conducted by a Qualified Security Assessor certified by the PCI Security Standards Council, the international umbrella organization that governs the security standards for the payment card industry. **Level 1 certification**—the highest grade of compliance—is recommended for high volume online guest transaction environments.

**Question 3: How can you assure me that your company and your solution will still be around to support me in several years?**

It is important to understand the industry reputation of any vendor partner, but it is an especially crucial consideration when comparing systems integrators. With ever-evolving technology and a roster of potential channel partners that grows on an almost daily basis, a product built by a fly-by-night firm that can't or won't provide long-term support can quickly become obsolete or even worthless. Make sure to go with a proven systems integrator that can boast both longevity and financial stability, and who can provide plenty of references to that effect.

**Question 4: How robust is your roster of channel partnerships?**

There are many hundreds of online distribution channels available to your property on a global scale. Some of those channels are the big online travel agencies that everyone knows about and everyone integrates with, but there are also plenty of less known but high performing local and regional sites that you may not even realize exist. You may be looking to attract more guests from certain markets or demographics, and a good systems integration provider not only knows which channels to target, but it also has relationships and integrations



with those channels. Make sure to ask your systems integration provider how many channels they integrate with, how they build relationships with those channels, and how often new channels are added.

**Question 5: How agile is your client service and support network and how extensive is its technological expertise?**

Even the best technology platforms have hiccups from time to time, so it is critical to make sure that your systems integration provider will be there to solve any potential issues that may occur. It's a good idea to choose a vendor that provides global multilingual customer support around the clock and every day of the week, especially if you are part of a global hotel group or chain. Your vendor's solution should also be backed by an information technology team with extensive hospitality industry experience co-located with your product teams, not an outsourced team that may not be knowledgeable on your systems or implementation. Ask your vendor for customer service references before you sign the agreement.

**Question 6: How reliable is your solution?**

Even the most robust systems are useless to you if you can't count on them to work the way they should with little to no downtime. Currently, the uptime norms for the industry average around 98%, so make sure that you require that or better from your vendor. Since no solution is perfect, try asking for 99% uptime rates. Success rates should also be in that range, reflecting that data updates have high accuracy in addition to scalability. . Choosing technology that exists in the cloud can also provide data redundancy, ensuring that your network always remains fully functional and secure—and guarantees that no crucial data will be lost in the event of a sustained outage.

**Question 7: What type of testing has your solution undergone?**

Many distribution integration solutions may work fine in theory, but adequate testing in the real world of hospitality is crucial to its success—and yours! Make

sure you're your vendor's product development has undergone extensive QA testing and certification with your distribution partners, and that it has been beta tested in a live load environment before being released. This will ensure that the solution integrates properly with your other hotel systems and can avoid any unexpected problems down the road.

**Question 8: What references can you provide?**

This may seem obvious, but make sure that the client references that your system integration provider gives you address not only the solution's performance, but the track record of the company's development and project management teams, in terms of staying on schedule and within budget. Following up on these references before committing to a long-term relationship with a vendor can save you headaches and help maximize your property's revenue for many years to come.



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