

Executive Voices: How seven hotel chains are transforming their hotel lobbies



The Lounge. Photo: AC Hotels Marriott.

By: [Jessica Festa](#) | January 8, 2016 2:30 pm

Hotel lobbies are [being rapidly reinvented](#). No longer is the lobby simply a place to check-in; today, brands are realizing traveler's growing desire for more experiential travel, and brands are adding food, drink and social elements for guests as soon as they walk in the door. We caught up with seven hotel executives to see how their properties are transforming their common spaces.

Tina Edmundson, Global Officer, Luxury and Lifestyle Brands, [Marriott International](#): At AC Hotels by Marriott, lobbies feature a curated collection of inviting furnishings, modern designs and textures that evoke the feeling of a well-curated art gallery. Ambient lighting and cozy seating in the AC Library & Lounge areas invites travelers to relax in chic surroundings, while also creating an effortless space in which to conduct a business meeting or connect with friends over cocktails. Moxy Hotels' "living rooms" become the center of activity in all of the brand's hotels around the globe. The NOW public spaces are ignited with games – from table top to game tables to amp up the fun. There are four zones whose intensity subtly shifts from calm to energetic.



Cambria Times Square lobby. Photo: Choice Hotels.

Michael Murphy, SVP of Upscale Brands, [Choice Hotels](#): The lobbies in all Cambria hotels & suites provide seating that includes modern, plush couches and chairs to give the lobby a living room feel so that guests can be as comfortable working (from) the lobby as they would in their room. The lobbies also include business centers and free Wi-Fi — which is available throughout the hotel — and access to our Social Circle™ bistro and full bar where guests can grab a simple, yet interesting bite to eat, or a craft beer or signature cocktail.



Lobby and Business Bar – GLô. Photo: Best Western.

Ron Pohl, Senior Vice President of Brand Management for [Best Western](#): Travelers want an area where they can congregate with fellow travelers or work and relax alone. For example, one

of our firstGLō properties will be in a college town and the developer wants to incorporate a microbrewery, and many new properties will feature bars and local food offerings.



Aerial lobby shot. Photo: Radisson RED.

Roger Chacko, Executive Vice President and Chief Branding and Marketing Officer, [Carlson Rezidor Hotel Group](#): For Carlson Rezidor, our new Radisson RED brand, which will see its first hotels open in 2016, is about doing things differently. ...A hotel's traditional "lobby" is reinvented as a social gathering place. We create energy in the hotel through art and music, we don't have front desks — instead staff will be equipped with tablets — and we don't have meeting spaces in the traditional sense, but instead we have multi-functional flexible spaces that can be used to meet or can be used to play.



Hilton McLean lobby tech lounge. Photo: Hilton.

Jim Holthouser, executive vice president, Global Brands, [Hilton Worldwide](#): Technology and personalized experiences are key ways that we're driving more energy into our lobby spaces and, at Hilton, we're spending a lot of time testing out new concepts that show how smart technology can help our guests stay connected, interact with a new city, or just stay entertained in our lobby spaces. At the Hilton McLean Tysons Corner, for instance, we're testing a concept with iRobot. Ava the robot is our lobby ambassador that can be manipulated by our Team Members to interact with guests in real-time.



The Market at Hyatt Regency Cincinnati. Photo: Hyatt Regency.

Samie Barr, Vice President of [Hyatt Regency and Grand Hyatt](#): The Hyatt Regency brand is all about fostering connections. Our hotel common spaces are a critical piece of that experience because they're no longer just places where you wait. Hyatt Regency lobbies are places to be social, work, meet, relax and eat. For example, Hyatt Regency lobbies increasingly feature markets with grab-and-go gourmet items that guests can get around the clock for a late night snack or quick meal as they work. We have also been testing new furniture layouts including semi-private pods that help people escape a meeting for a phone call and designated areas intended for enhanced collaboration and wireless printing that allows our guests to be connected in more and better ways.



Aloft Chicago City Center. Photo: Aloft Hotels.

Brian McGuinness, Global Brand Leader for [Starwood](#)'s Specialty Select Brands: Our guests are the main inspiration behind our hotel lobbies, and we keep them top of mind when we design them for each of Starwood's Specialty Select Brands: Aloft, Element and Four Points. For example, our guests checking in at an Aloft Hotel are seeking modern, urban style at a smart price point and are often looking for "something different." Aloft lobbies are not places where guests can check into the hotel, but they can sip on a hand crafted cocktail at the W XYZ Bar, play a game of pool in the re:refresh lounge, grab a snack at re:fuel (Aloft's 24/7 grab-and-go pantry) and even catch a live show during Aloft's signature Live at Aloft Hotelsconcerts. Jessica Festa is the founder on the solo and offbeat travel blog, [Jessie on a Journey](#), and the online responsible tourism and culture magazine, [Epicure & Culture](#). She's constantly searching for local experiences beyond the guidebook.