

THE HOTELIER'S GUIDE TO A CONTACTLESS GUEST EXPERIENCE

Housing frontline healthcare workers provided a stress-test moment for hospitality's digital transformation.

Medallia Zingle



How the true story of one hotel staying open in the epicenter of the pandemic to serve frontline workers provides a blueprint for the future of hospitality.



Introduction

While COVID-19 has forced every industry to make drastic shifts to their operations, few have been impacted to the degree hospitality has. Hotels across the country closed their doors or saw occupancy percentages plummet to single digits in March and April as fears and shelter-in-place restrictions limited travel and in-person interactions.

Many hotels across the country are now welcoming guests back in larger numbers and others are beginning to reopen, but the reality is the pandemic has not been forgotten. New research shows how consumer behavior has changed, as well as

the pervasive anxieties hotels must overcome to deliver exceptional experiences:

77% of consumers say that in the future the amount of in-person interaction required at a business will factor into their decision of whether or not they visit the business.

79% of consumers say that going forward they will seek out information on the type of health & safety standards and processes businesses have in place before visiting them.

In order to keep employees and guests safe, hotels have introduced new health and

sanitation standards and are working to find new ways to serve guests with less in-person interaction.

What follows is the true story of how one hotel stayed open in the epicenter of the pandemic to serve frontline healthcare workers. With the general manager's quick and decisive actions and the use of contactless and real-time communication, the hotel was able to create an efficient and contactless guest experience that kept staff and guests safe and now provides a blueprint for the future of hospitality.

Answering the Call

In mid April, after being closed for several weeks, the owner of a luxury Midtown Manhattan hotel answered the city's call for hotels to reopen in order to help serve front-line healthcare workers.

Doctors and nurses battling COVID-19 in New York City feared that in treating patients they would be putting their families at risk. Many had taken to sleeping in their cars and even treehouses at their homes to keep their families safe, or staying overnight in city garages to avoid long commutes on top of very long days.

When the hotel decided to offer free housing and open several hundred rooms to nurses, doctors and other medical workers, the hotel's general manager leapt into action. Employee safety was her top priority and she knew keeping them informed was vital. She also knew the hotel needed a reconfiguration of both the physical space and the hotel's processes to minimize the need for face-to-face contact and keep guests and employees safe. Critical to her strategy was using text messaging for proactive and contactless communication to engage both staff and guests in real time.



Rapid Response

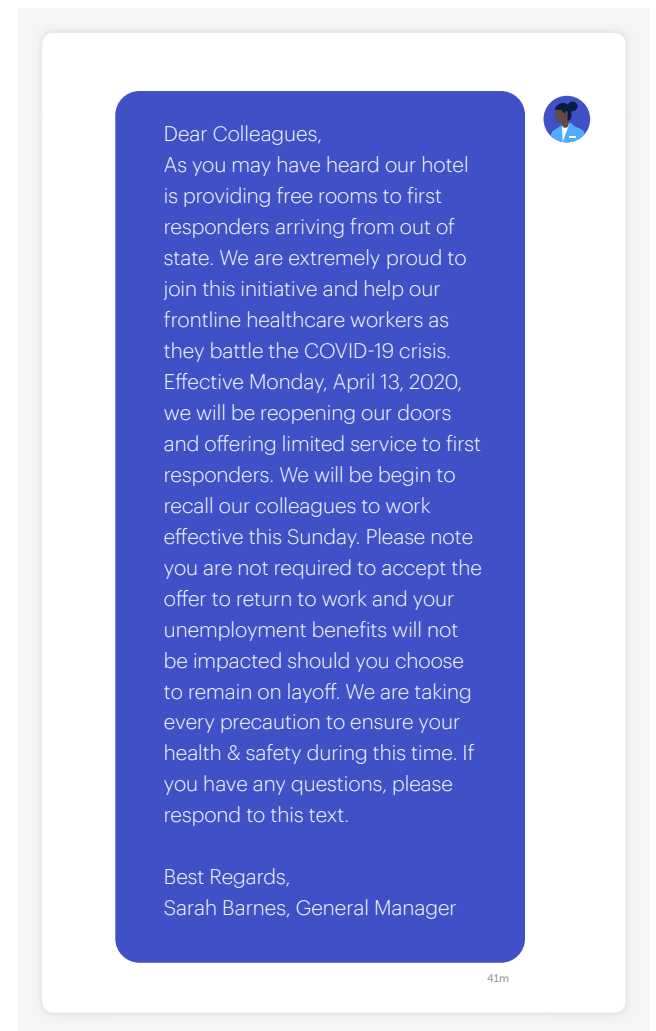
The hotel had been closed for nearly a month and now had an enormous challenge on their hands. In one of the country's hardest hit cities, how could the team quickly ramp up operations to accommodate frontline responders without compromising the health and safety of both guests and staff?

For the GM, getting staff safely to the hotel was the first challenge. The hotel was already leveraging its guest text messaging platform to communicate with employees, initially to provide HR support in helping with unemployment benefits and other resources.

Now she sent news of the reopening and asked for volunteers to return to work. She also stressed the steps being taken to keep not only guests safe, but employees, and offered them rooms to stay in to minimize the risk of going to and from the hotel.

The team responded and undertook a rapid reconfiguration of the hotel — from how to enter and exit the property, redesigning rooms to minimize touchpoints that need sanitized, instituting new cleaning protocols and creating a new set of safety procedures following CDC guidelines. Instrumental in this swift pivot was the ability to use text messaging to proactively communicate changes in configuration and procedures with staff as they unfolded in real-time.

Some of the first doctors that checked in were coming off 24-hour shifts. The hotel's entire team was focused on making sure those frontline workers were comfortable, safe and had easy access in and out of the hotel. The GM also needed to find a way to stay in touch without the need for in-person contact throughout the entire stay to ensure guests had what they needed and remained safe.

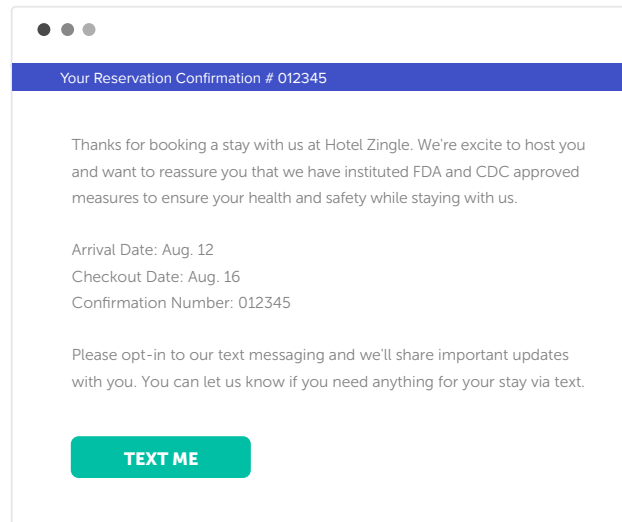


7 Steps to a Safe & Contactless Guest Experience

Here are some examples of how the hotel used text messaging to keep guests safe and satisfied and seven steps you can take to create a seamless and contactless guest experience.

1 Booking Confirmation

After guests book a stay at your hotel, send an email confirming the booking, reassure them of your new health and safety standards and include a button and description inviting guests to opt into text messaging for fast, easy and contactless communication throughout their upcoming stay.



PRO-TIP

Make sure you're communicating on the channels your customers prefer. With Zingle's intelligent messaging platform, consumers can message the hotel using not just SMS or MMS text, but also Facebook Messenger, webchat, WhatsApp and other popular apps. Your staff can manage all conversations in one place.



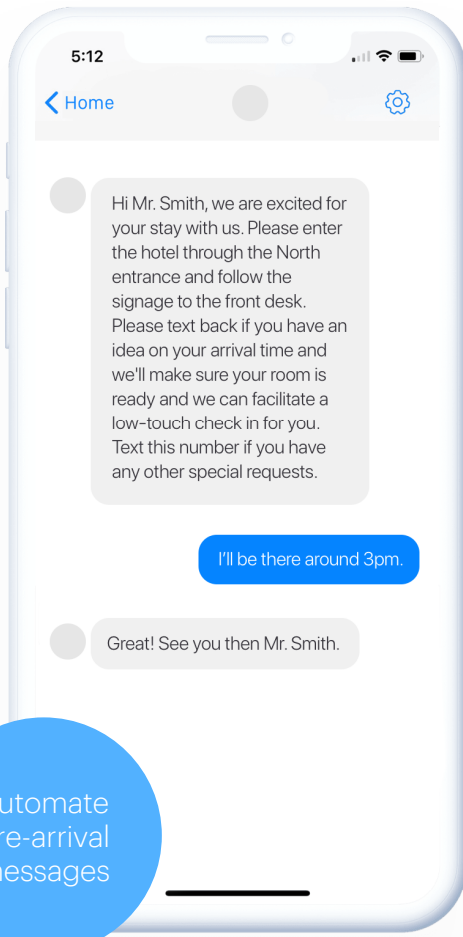
62%

of guests say they would communicate more with a hotel if text messaging was an option.

Source: Value of Service & the ROI of Guest Experience 2020 Study (Zingle)

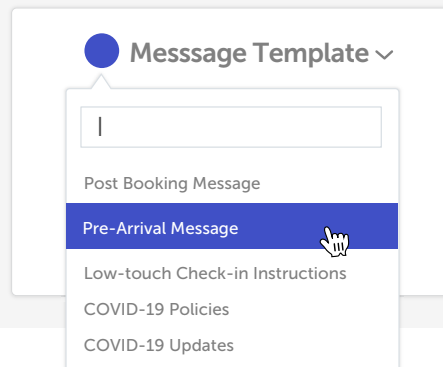
2 Pre-Arrival Message

On the day of check-in, send guests a pre-arrival text message to communicate to guests the new check-in procedures and ask if there are any special requests. The NYC hotel used this message to coordinate the time healthcare workers planned to arrive, ensuring staff was prepared and could facilitate a low-touch check-in.



PRO-TIP

Proactively communicate to your guests and respond quickly by eliminating manual processes. And use customizable message templates and automated workflows in the Zingle platform to make it easy. The hotel in New York was able to identify special requests and better serve healthcare workers, many of whom asked for mini-fridges for their long stays.



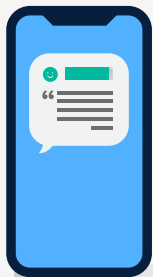
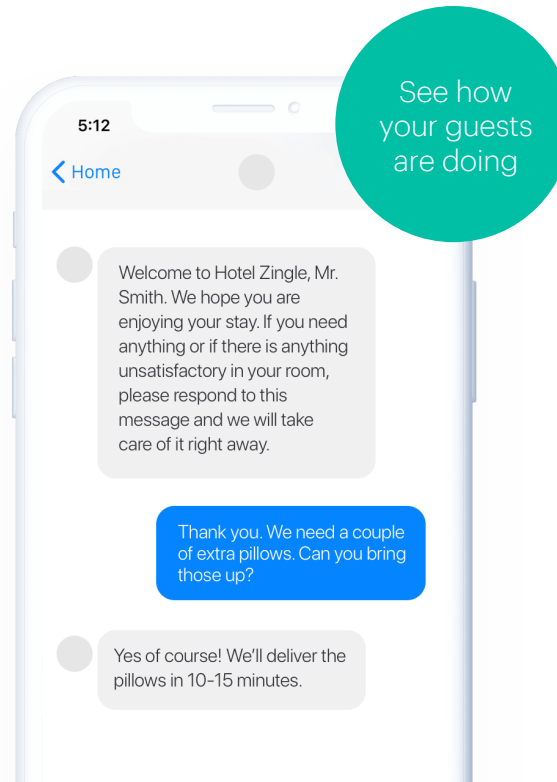
60%

of guests say they won't wait in line or on hold for more than 5 minutes to get a response. With increased consumer anxiety, guests want answers quickly.

Source: Value of Service & the ROI of Guest Experience Study (Zingle)

3 Post-Check In Feedback Pulse

After guests check into their room, automate a post-check in message to make sure guests have everything they need and the room is what they expected. This also provides an opportunity to remind guests to use messaging for any questions or requests.



PRO-TIP

Ask for feedback throughout your guests' stay and find opportunities to improve their experience and increase the likelihood of positive reviews and return trips to your hotel.



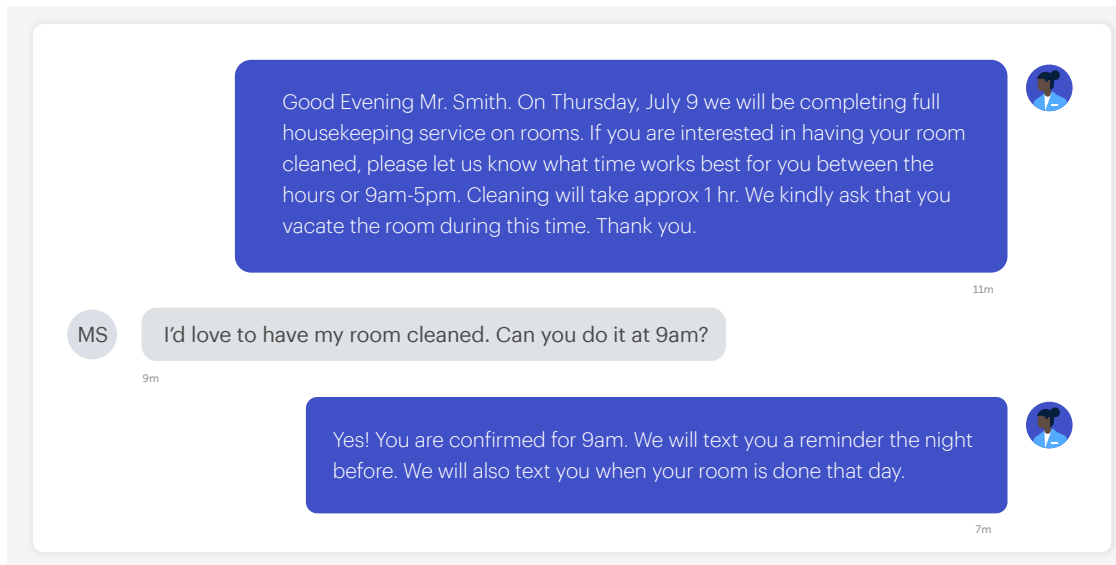
75%

of guests say they don't report all issues that affect their experience, meaning hotels never learn of areas they could improve.

Source: Zingle's 2019 Guest Service Report

4 Housekeeping Message

With many guests permanently posting the Do Not Disturb sign to avoid in-person interaction, messaging can be used to coordinate the drop off of clean linens and to schedule times to service the room when the guest knows they'll be away from the hotel. This is how the New York City hotel was able to safely provide service to healthcare workers.



PRO-TIP

Let your guests text message requests and then coordinate contactless interactions like housekeeping, room service or the delivery of any requested items. Many guests prefer this to visiting the front desk or using the guestroom phone to make requests.



77%

of consumers say that going forward the amount of in-person interaction required at the business will factor into their decision of visiting it.

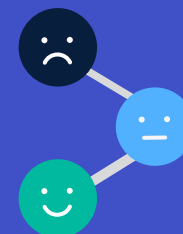
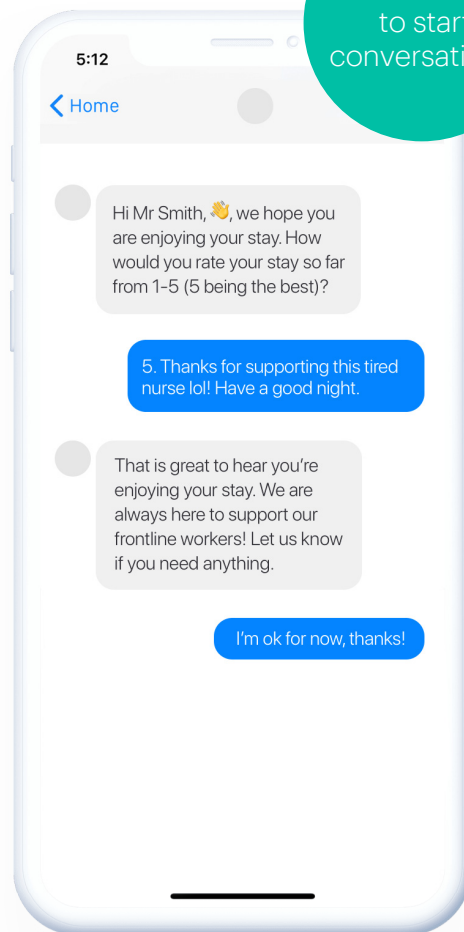
Source: COVID-19 and the Future of Commerce Report (Zingle)

5 Mid-Stay Feedback Pulse

Send a mid-stay checkup message to guests staying longer than two days and ask them about their experience. This can be automated when the messaging platform is synced to the property management system and even customized to be a specific number of days after check-in or before checkout.

PRO-TIP

Engage your guests in two-way conversation throughout their stay and add a mid-stay feedback pulse to your standard operating procedures to help identify guests not having a great experience while you still have time to turn them around.



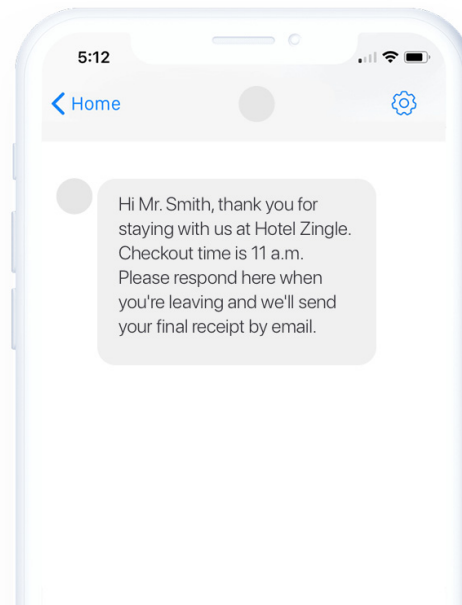
42%

of guests say they would return to a hotel if it was able to turn a poor experience into a positive one by solving the problem immediately.

Source: Zingle's 2019 Guest Service Report

6 Checkout Message

On the morning of guests' scheduled checkout, automate a message to remind guests of the checkout time and encourage them to check out via text rather than visit the front desk in person.



PRO-TIP

With additional inventory available as hotels come online and consumers begin to enjoy travel again, hotels can use messaging to offer an extended checkout time or even additional nights at reduced rates to provide added value to guests and to drive more revenue to the hotel.

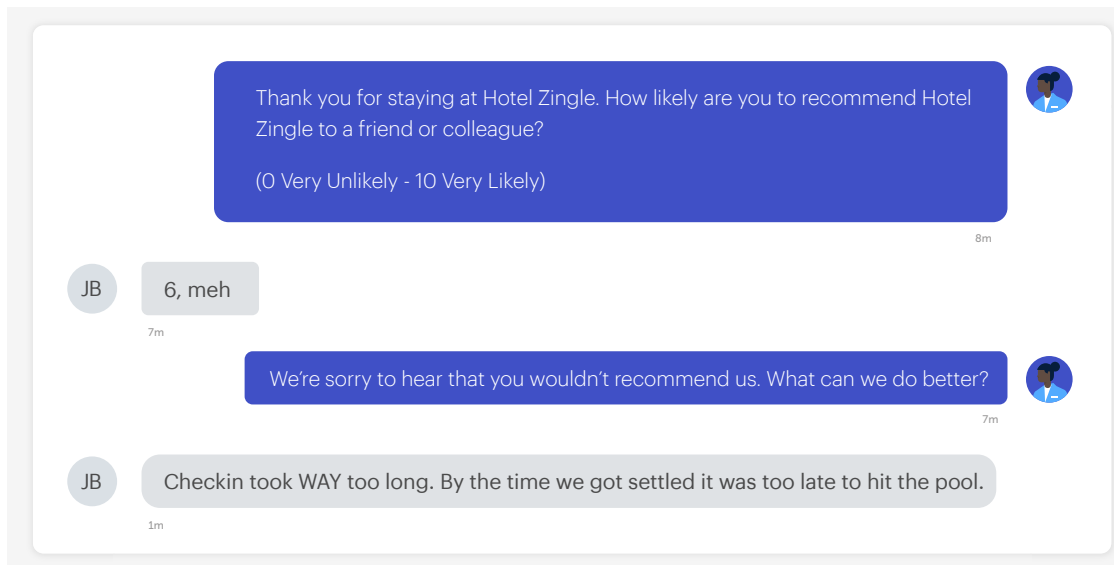


\$5k

The Talbott Hotel in Chicago used text messaging to generate an additional \$3,000 in late checkout revenue per week and another \$2,000 per week from guests extending their stay an extra night.

7 Post-Stay Feedback Survey

After checkout is complete, automate a thank you message to guests and ask how their experience was with a simple one-question survey. With NPS, you can ask how likely guests are to recommend your hotel to others on a scale of 0-10 and with CSAT, you can ask how satisfied the guest was on a scale of 1-5.



Thank you for staying at Hotel Zingle. How likely are you to recommend Hotel Zingle to a friend or colleague?
(0 Very Unlikely - 10 Very Likely)

8m

JB 6, meh
7m

We're sorry to hear that you wouldn't recommend us. What can we do better?

7m

JB Checkin took WAY too long. By the time we got settled it was too late to hit the pool.
1m



PRO-TIP

By sending in-message NPS or CSAT surveys, hotels can understand how they're doing and drill into what went wrong when guests respond negatively. With text analytics, these scores can be tracked over time, identifying trends and uncovering opportunities to drive engagement and improvement.



82%

of guests say they're willing to pay more for a hotel with a 4-star rating over one with a 3-star rating. On average, guests are willing to pay 9% more for the hotel with a 4-star rating.

Source: Zingle's 2019 Guest Service Report

7 Steps to a Safe & Contactless Guest Experience

Here's a quick reference guide on how to utilize mobile messaging to manage real-time guest service at scale with almost no physical contact.



1 Booking Confirmation

Share text number for opt-in in confirmation email.



2 Pre-Arrival Message

Send check-in process & ask if guest has any special requests.



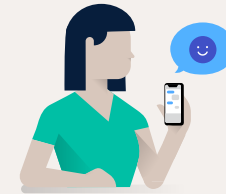
5 Mid-Stay Feedback

Check in & ask guests about their experience so far.



4 Housekeeping Message

Coordinate drop off of clean linens & to schedule service.



3 Post-Check In Feedback

Make sure guests have everything they need & are happy w/ room.



6 Checkout Message

Encourage guests to check out via text instead of at front desk.



7 Post-Stay Feedback Survey

Thank guests & ask them to rate their stay on a scale of 1-5.

Medallia Zingle

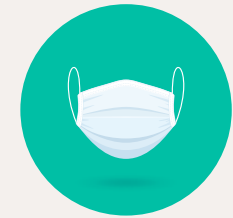
Conclusion

While this was a defining moment for the New York City hotel, the stress test also allowed the hotel to evolve its operations in a way that has prepared it for reopening to the general public. For hotels now deploying new cleaning protocols and contactless solutions as they begin to welcome guests back, it provides a playbook for how real-time communication can be used to proactively engage anxious guests and then facilitate safe and seamless experiences with reduced in-person contact.

Despite having a much smaller team, the luxury hotel was still able to provide a high level of service to its very important guests

efficiently using text messaging and workflow automations to minimize manual processes. In fact, the hotel did so with 50% of its usual front-line staff as the pandemic limited both expenses and the number of available employees because of shelter-in-place restrictions.

With shifting consumer behavior and continued uncertainty, operating environments will remain challenging well into the future. By using real-time communication, hotels can inform, support and engage staff and guests at scale and create safe and contactless guest experiences.



79%

of consumers say that going forward they will seek out information on the type of health & safety standards and processes businesses have in place before visiting them.

Source: COVID-19 and the Future of Commerce Report (Zingle)



Explore More Hospitality Resources

- [Zingle Hospitality](#)
- [Value of Service & the ROI of Guest Experience](#)
- [COVID-19 & the Future of Commerce](#)
- [2019 Guest Service Report](#)
- [New Research Exposes Hidden Service Risks and Opportunities for Hoteliers](#)
- [Talbott Hotel Taps into Text Messaging to Drive Incremental Revenue](#)
- [How Effective Communication Can Help Brands Through Extraordinary Times](#)

About Medallia Zingle

Medallia Zingle empowers businesses to engage, support and respond to customers in more meaningful and impactful ways. Zingle's customer engagement platform combines artificial intelligence and machine learning with workflow automation and mobile messaging, allowing brands to easily deliver exceptional customer experiences in real time. Leading brands across different verticals, including hospitality, food & beverage, retail, and more, use Zingle to increase efficiency, improve operations and delight their customers. Zingle is a division of Medallia, the pioneer and market leader in experience management. Find out more at zingle.com.

Contact Us: sales@zingleme.com | Follow Us: [in](#) zingle-me [twitter](#) @zingleme

Medallia Zingle