

Hilton Worldwide and IBM collaborate on a Watson-enabled robot concierge.



Named "**Connie**" in honor of Conrad Hilton, IBM has developed a robot specifically for the hospitality market that uses knowledge from Watson and WayBlazer to answer guest's questions about local attractions, dining recommendation, hotel features and amenities.

On display at **CeBIT 2016** (as well as the recent **ITB Berlin**), the 2.5-foot-tall (.76m) robot uses Watson APIs that include Dialog, Speech to Text, Text to Speech, and Natural Language Classifier. It's able to greet guests on arrival and answer questions about amenities, services, and operations. It uses WayBlazer's travel domain knowledge to be able to suggest local attractions off property.

The first hospitality robot of its kind to use IBM's Watson, it offers applications for assisting hotel front desk staff, as well as playing a role in meetings and events.

And Connie may be the first IBM in her category, but she is not alone. *Business Intelligence* estimates that

the market for corporate and consumer robots will grow to \$1.5 billion by 2019.

Written by Bob Snyder
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Scholars at Oxford have predicted the computerization of almost half of the jobs now performed by humans, as soon as the 2030s. In the next two years alone, global sales of service robots—like the dinosaur that checks in guests at the **Henn-na Hotel** in Japan, or the robots who deliver room service in a group of California hotels, or the tri-lingual robot that assists **Costa Cruise Line**

passengers—are expected to exceed 35 million units, according to the International Federation of Robotics.

Starwood's Aloft brand debuted **Botlr**, a robotic bellhop in 2014. Last year in Japan, a new hotel opened that uses robots for nearly all of its hotel operations. This spring, humanoids ("Pepper") are sailing in Europe on two of Carnival's ships. And Toshiba is now showing off [Chihira Junco](#), the world's first tourist information android, at Tokyo Waterfront City.

Hotel guests also appear to be receptive to robots. A *Travelzoo* survey of 6000 travelers (in Asia, Europe, No. America, and So. America) shows nearly 80% of respondents expect robots to play a big part in their lives by 2020--and **almost two-thirds of travelers say they would be comfortable with robots being used in the travel industry**.

Here at **DIGITAL SIGNAGE NEWS EMEA** we believe this creates a new category in digital signage, a category that integrators need to consider (and possibly embrace). Robots will increasingly be used to deliver signage (as well as services). They will be bought by your current customers-- they may replace or complement other solutions you are proposing.

There is an odd reaction in the travel industry where this concept of **hospitality robots** is treated with the attitude, "This is not something new."

Of course, it's not. But this is like saying "flying cars" are not new. We've dreamed of them (and even seen many prototypes) over the years. So when they finally land in our lives—will flying cars be "new?"

What's new is the reality, not the concept. Robots are not coming; they are already here.

Hilton Hints at Robot's Future in Digital Signage

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