Improving the host experience

Hosts with better tools and more insights provide better guest experiences

Jonathan Steiman

January 2015

Introduction

2015 is the year of the host. My goal is to help Airbnb improve the host experience. If successful, an improved host experience translates to better guest experiences and additional revenue.

In the following presentation, I layout opportunities where Airbnb could improve the host experience. I developed these tools and concepts while hosting over 150 guests across multiple listings.

CONTENTS

- **Calendar:** Provide hosts with flexibility without complicating the guest experience
- **Account permissions:** Enable hosts to outsource account management to a virtual assistant
- **Data:** Provide actionable insights with a few simple data analysis tools
- **Other:** Offer a host store for hard-to-find essentials and offer a loan program

CONTENTS

- **Calendar: Provide hosts with flexibility without complicating the guest experience**

- **Account permissions:** Enable hosts to outsource account management to a virtual assistant

- **Better data:** Provide actionable insights with a few simple data analysis tools

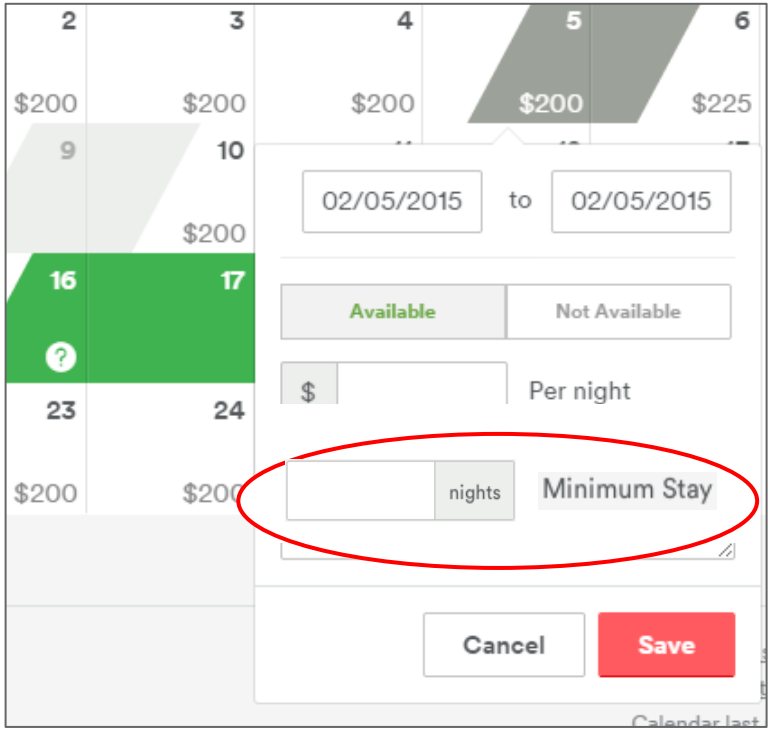
- **Other:** Offer a host store for hard-to-find essentials and a loan program

Calendar: Flexible Minimum Stays

What
Allow hosts to set different minimum-night stays for different dates.

Why
Hosts want to set longer minimums for high-traffic periods (e.g. graduation week), weekends, and distant dates. Improving host control will reduce the number of declined reservation requests.

Proposed enhancement:

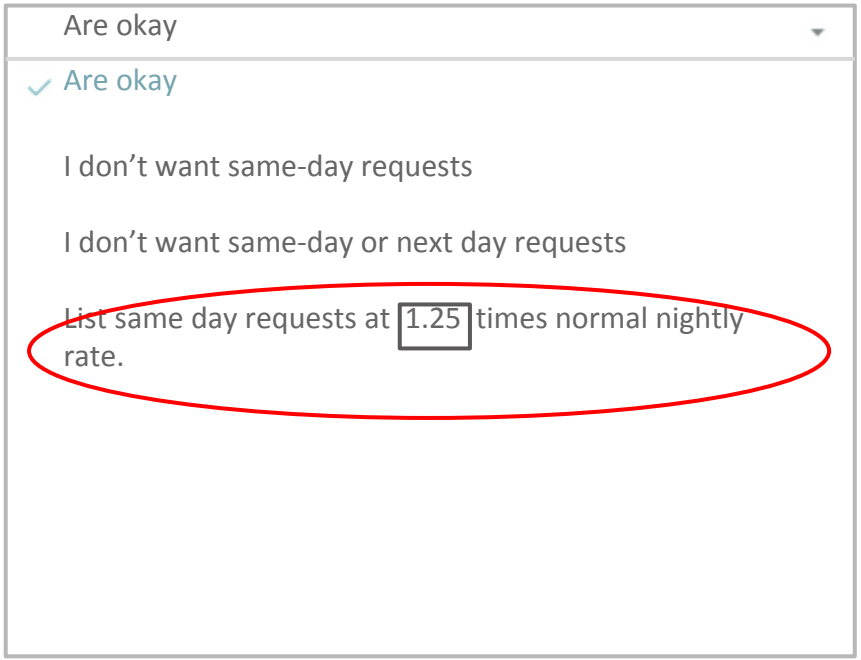


Calendar: Same Day Requests

What
Incentivize hosts to accept Same Day Requests with an option to increase the list price.

Why
Airbnb must encourage Same Day Requests. This system encourages more same-day reservations, allowing hosts to make more money and enabling Airbnb to better compete with hotels.
Approximately 13% of our requests are same-day requests.

Proposed enhancement:

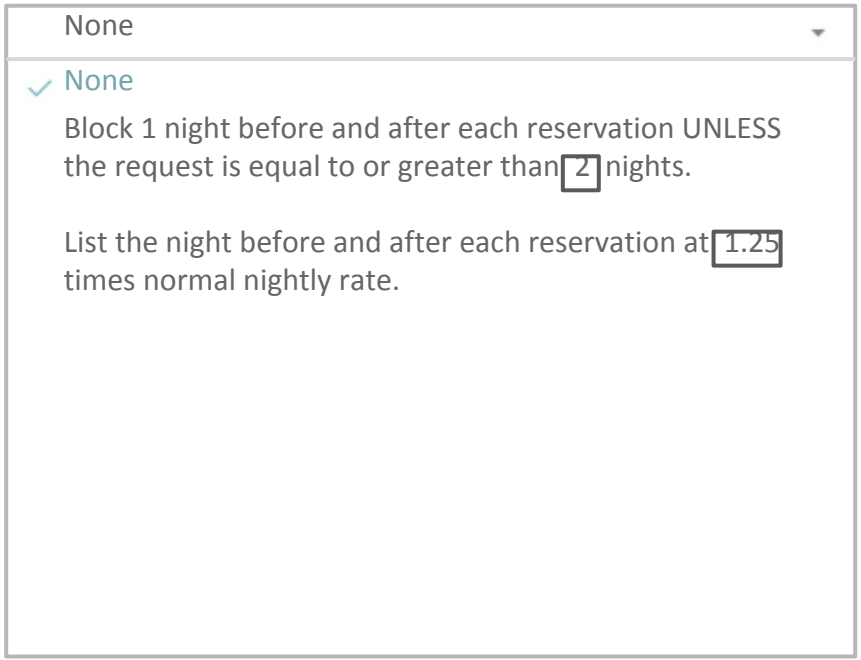


Calendar: Preparation Time

What
Provide more flexibility for hosts to accept requests during "buffer days"

Why
Under the current system, a host could miss an attractive reservation (e.g. a one-week request) because of a buffer day. Also, hosts would be motivated to turn over if the prices was right.

Proposed enhancement:



Calendar: Display pertinent data

What

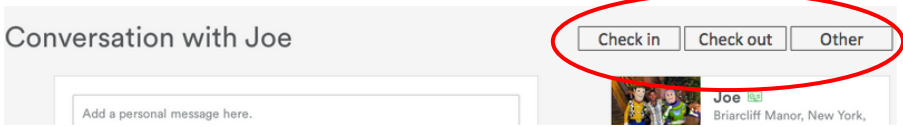
A more robust calendar that shows number of guests, expected arrival/departure and other information like “Parking” or “w. Baby”. As hosts gather info from conversations, they populate via the Conversation Page.

Why

Great hosting requires preparation and anticipation. Host can easily understand how many towels to lay out / beds to prepare; turnover time-windows; and other requirements.

Proposed enhancement:

	Sunday 4	Monday 5	Tuesday 6	Wednesday 7
Name	Prema		Daniela R	
# Guests	2		2	
Check in	<--- 3 PM		<--- 9 PM	
Check out	11 AM --->		7 AM --->	
Other	--		Parking	



CONTENTS

- **Calendar: Provide hosts with flexibility without complicating the guest experience**
- **Account permissions:** Enable hosts to outsource account management to a virtual assistant
- **Better data:** Provide actionable insights with a few simple data analysis tools
- **Other:** Offer a host store for hard-to-find essentials and a loan program

Account permissions: Faster responses for guests, time-savings for hosts

What

Develop an account permission system that enables different people to perform different tasks at Airbnb.com. For example, Jane Doe can do everything but manage financials.

Why

Guests love quick, helpful responses. Hosts, unfortunately, cannot always respond quickly. By enabling permissions, a host could tap into the power of a personal assistance all while protecting his/her account and finances. Airbnb could partner with Elance-oDesk to promote and foster Airbnb Concierges.

Proposed enhancement:

Name	Can communicate with guests	Can book guests	Can update listings description	Can change prices	Can manage financials
Jane Doe	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Janet Doe	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No

CONTENTS

- **Calendar: Provide hosts with flexibility without complicating the guest experience**
- **Account permissions:** Enable hosts to outsource account management to a virtual assistant
- **Better data:** Provide actionable insights with a few simple data analysis tools
- **Other:** Offer a host store for hard-to-find essentials and a loan program

Data: A/B Testing

What: Enable hosts to test different Titles, pictures and prices in order to optimize listings performances.

Why: Hosts are marketers and marketers need to understand how different messages and offerings resonate.

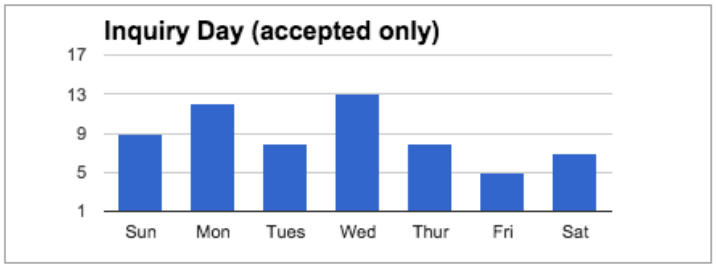
Listing Name	Primary Picture	Reach	Clicks	Bookings	Click - Through Rate	Booking Rate (Clicks)	Booking Rate (Reach)
Sunny Home Near Havard, MIT		1,532	15	8	0.98%	53.33%	0.52%
Sunny Home w/ Parking, Harvard/MIT/BU		1,199	43	22	3.59%	51.16%	1.83%
Big 3 Bedroom in Central Cambridge		1,801	30	13	1.67%	43.33%	0.72%

Data: Bookings by Day of Week

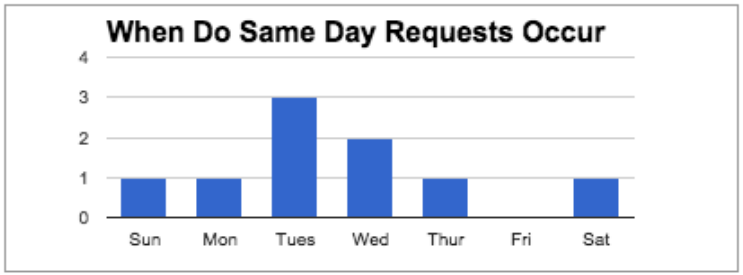
What: A dashboard showing when when critical actions occur. The below are actual dashboards I built and continuously review.

Why: Hosts are operators and operators need data to plan and forecast. For example, I know that Mon-Wed are when I'm busiest managing inbound requests.

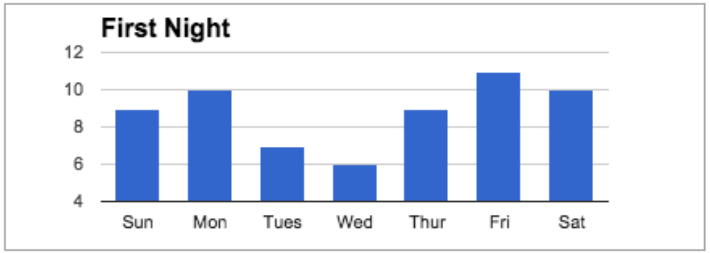
Date of Inquiry	
Sun	9
Mon	12
Tues	8
Wed	13
Thur	8
Fri	5
Sat	7



Same Day Requests	
Sun	1
Mon	1
Tues	3
Wed	2
Thur	1
Fri	0
Sat	1



First night	
Sun	9
Mon	10
Tues	7
Wed	6
Thur	9
Fri	11
Sat	10

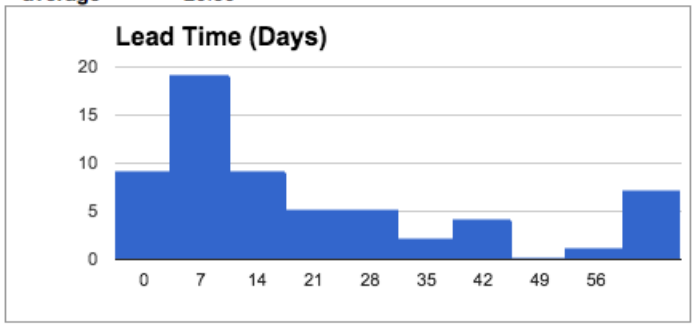


Data: Booking Lead Time & Duration

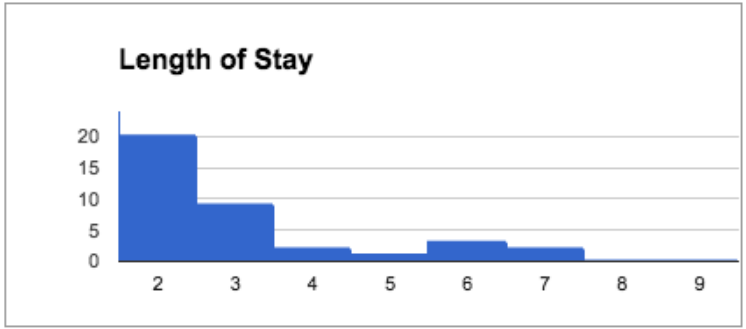
What: In addition to Day of Week studies, I've built and study a dashboard showing critical statistics like lead time (time between inquiry & first night) and Length of Stay.

Why: By understanding when bookings occur and the probable length of stay, hosts are better equipped to optimize bookings.

Lead Time		median	8	Max	229
0	9	average	26.59		
7	19				
14	9				
21	5				
28	5				
35	2				
42	4				
49	0				
56	1				
56+	7				



Length of Stay		median	2	max	7
1	24	average	2.23		
2	20				
3	9				
4	2				
5	1				
6	3				
7	2				
8	0				
9	0				



Data: Occupancy

What: A dashboard showing Occupancy & Average Revenue. This is the actual dashboard I've built and continuously review.

Why: These two metrics are key to understanding the health of your host business.

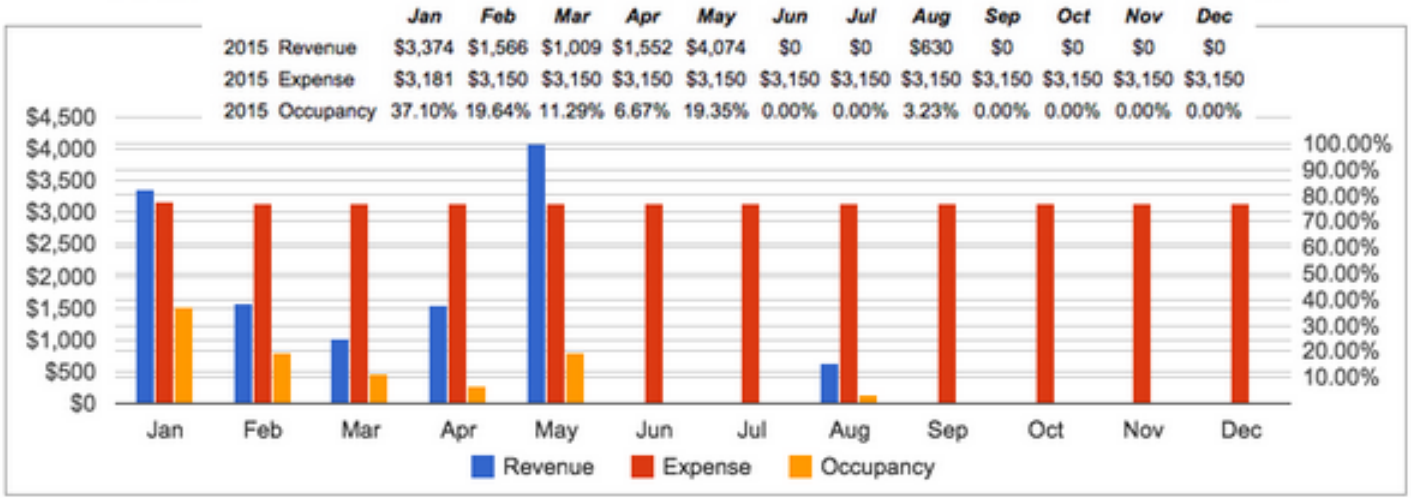
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
NIGHTS	*2015_1*	*2015_2*	*2015_3*	*2015_4*	*2015_5*	*2015_6*	*2015_7*	*2015_8*	*2015_9*	*2015_10*	*2015_11*	*2015_12*
Studio	12	8	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Penthouse	11	3	2	4	12	0	0	2	0	0	0	0
TOTAL	**23**	**11**	**7**	**4**	**12**	**0**	**0**	**2**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**
CAPACITY	*31*	*28*	*31*	*30*	*31*	*30*	*31*	*31*	*30*	*31*	*30*	*31*
Studio	39%	29%	16%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Penthouse	35%	11%	6%	13%	39%	0%	0%	6%	0%	0%	0%	0%
TOTAL	**37.10%**	**19.64%**	**11.29%**	**6.67%**	**19.35%**	**0.00%**	**0.00%**	**3.23%**	**0.00%**	**0.00%**	**0.00%**	**0.00%**

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
	2015_1	*2015_2*	*2015_3*	*2015_4*	*2015_5*	*2015_6*	*2015_7*	*2015_8*	*2015_9*	*2015_10*	*2015_11*	*2015_12*
Studio	$108	$114	$110	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0
Penthouse	$189	$218	$231	$388	$340	$0	$0	$315	$0	$0	$0	$0
TOTAL	**$147**	**$142**	**$144**	**$388**	**$340**	**$0**	**$0**	**$315**	**$0**	**$0**	**$0**	**$0**

Data: Financial

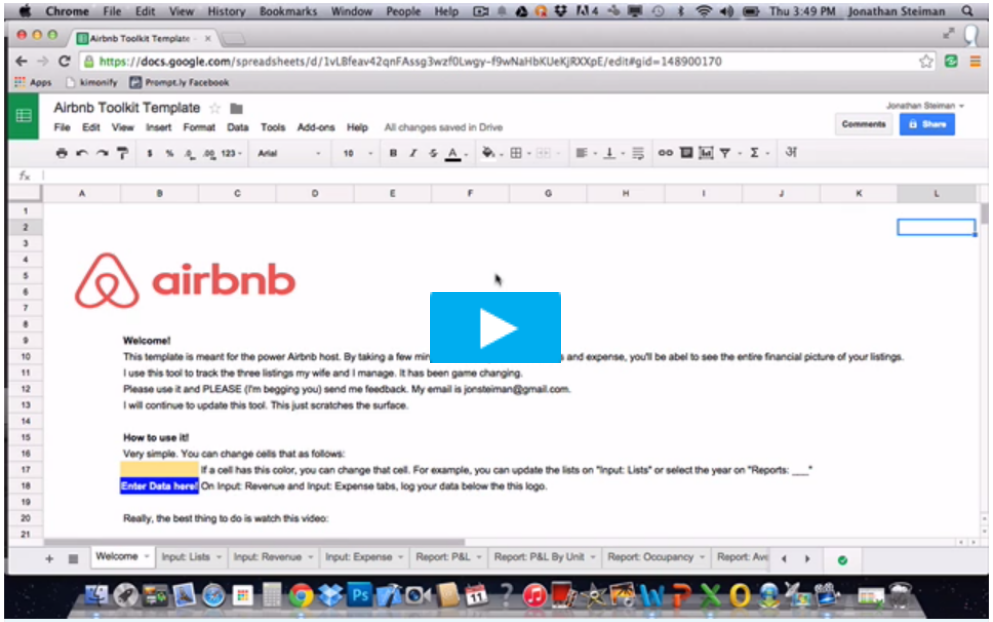
What: One version of a P&L I've built. It shows revenue, expense and occupancy for all my listings combined.

Why: Hosting is a business so the definitive metrics is Revenue v. Expense. Building this inside Airbnb would require an input tab to collect expenses or a bank gateway. Doing so, would provide Airbnb with amazing data; the company would be able to understand every aspect of the host business. Lastly, incorporating expense tools would elevate host switching costs.



Data: Test Drive my Toolkit

To better understand the tools I've built, please check out this video and also the template from Google Docs.



https://vimeo.com/114290137

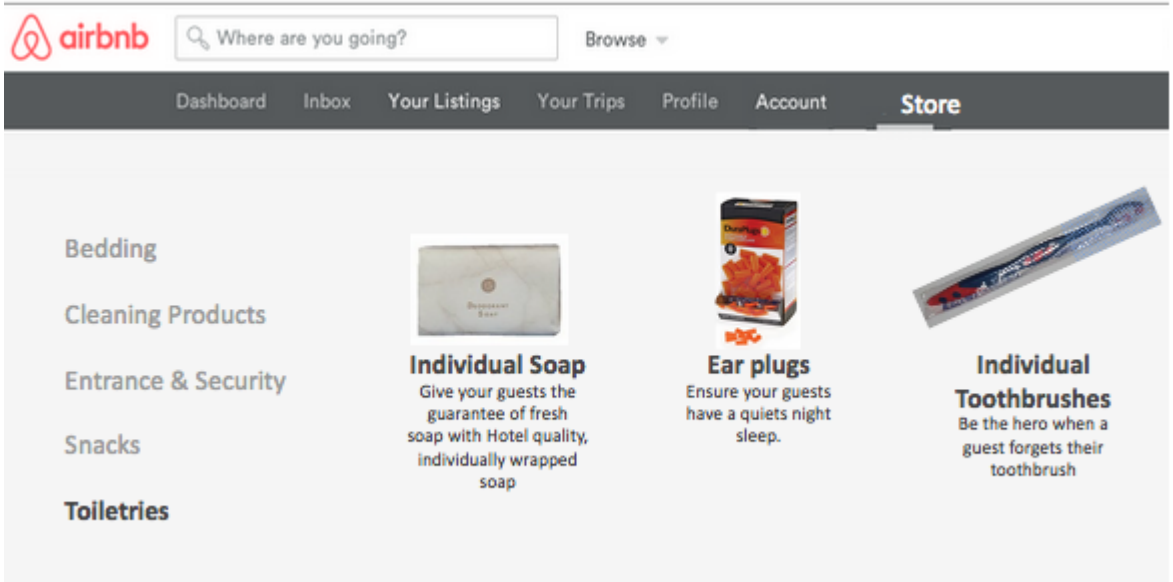
Get the template

https://drive.google.com/previewtemplate?id=1vLBfeav42qnFAssg3wzf0Lwgy-f9wNaHbKUeKjRXXpE&mode=public

CONTENTS

- **Calendar: Provide hosts with flexibility without complicating the guest experience**
- **Account permissions:** Enable hosts to outsource account management to a virtual assistant
- **Better data:** Provide actionable insight with a few simple data analysis tools
- **Other:** Offer a host store for hard-to-find essentials and a loan program

Driving Revenue: Host Store puts the essentials in one place



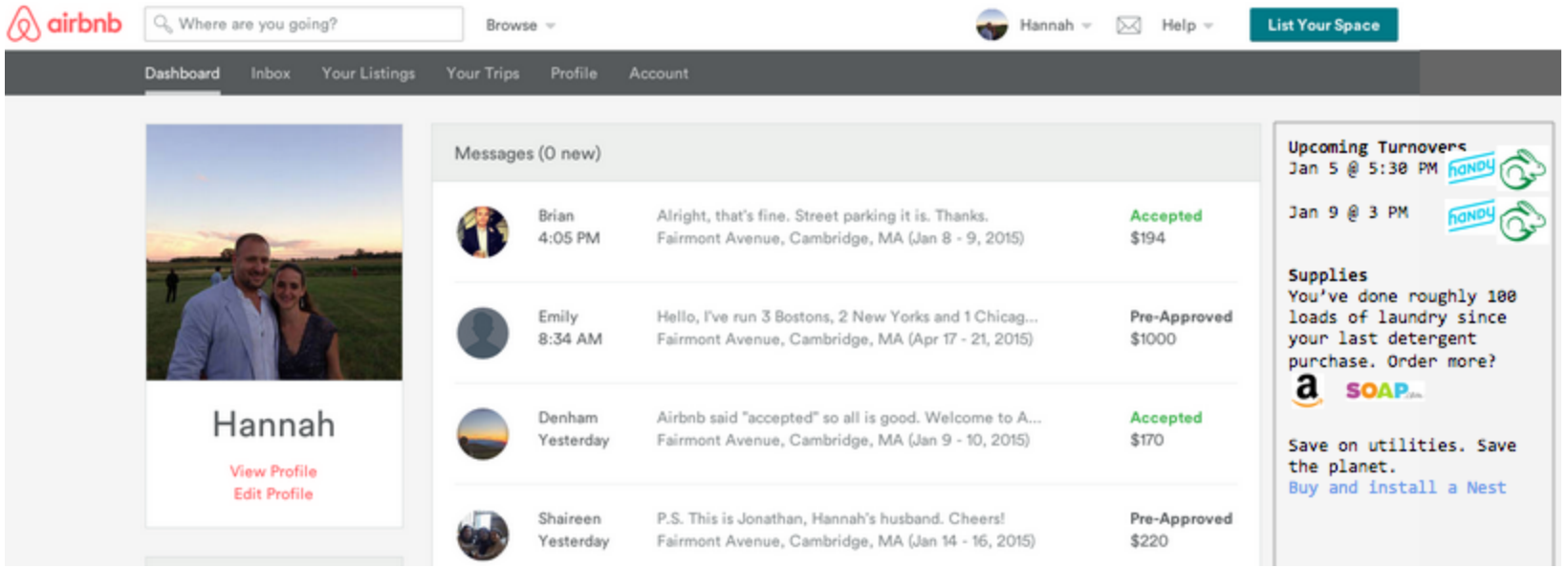
Hosts need special products to make special guest experiences. Having hosted 300+ nights, I've learned that I need durable but nice bedding; baby safe cleaning products; individual toiletries; smart locks; smart thermostats; and snacks...tons of snacks.

Having these hard-to-find essentials in one store would be invaluable. Furthermore, by approving/promoting a list of products Airbnb will be able to standardized products related health/sanitation and safety.

Lastly, purchases could be automatically incorporated into the Listing profile. For example, if a host buys 800 count sheets that could be automatically published on the listing.

Driving Revenue: Using data to provide the essentials

In addition to a Host Store, Airbnb could tailor product and service offerings to the hosts current needs.



Loan Program: Empowering hosts to encourage new customers

Over the past year, I have fielded several requests from older guests that are concerned about accessibility (stairs, bathroom supports, bed types). My guess is that these customers are being underserved among the Airbnb community - not because Airbnb hosts are bad people; rather because they do not understand the needs of this market.

This market is growing due to increased number of retirees who are increasingly accustomed to the Internet / Mobile world. They are also cost-conscious.

How does Airbnb foster this market? Airbnb could lend a small amount of capital on favorable terms ($2,500, 0 interest for 2 years) to hosts so they can upgrade their properties to be accessible. Participating hosts will be able to advertise “Accessible Property.”

Loan Programs can be utilized to encourage other customer segments.

The End

Thank you!

jonsteiman@gmail.com

jonathansteiman.com

Appendix: Our Listings

Sunny Home by Harvard/MIT w PARKING

Cambridge, MA, United States ★★★★★ (8)

"Both Hannah and Jon are amazing host. They made us feel welcomed and even accomodated an extra guest that arrived last minute."

Studio near Harvard/MIT, w/PARKING!

Cambridge, MA, United States ★★★★½ (63)

"I stayed with a friend in this studio apartment and we LOVED it."

Cozy home by Harvard, MIT w/PARKING

Cambridge, MA, United States ★★★★★ (4)

"This was a great experience. The house is beautiful, clean, and comfortable for two couples. Jon (Hannah's husband) was extremely accommodating and helpful."