The Moscow Times
30 YEARS
INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Practical Notes About Marketing Aspirations and Hotels' Sales Approaches

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November 28, 2012





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This question became almost rhetorical for a sales person: How and where do I invest my time and efforts to get the biggest return?

I would not call the below paragraphs a guideline but practical notes that are probably useful for sales people and hopefully could capture the attention of the hotel industry audience.

Direct Sales — A face-to-face sales call is always No. 1 among sales methods! Developing relationships is at the core of the sales effort and should always be a priority. It is imperative that you have a focused pro-active sales plan in place, as well as an entire hotel team who is meeting your customers daily and can provide invaluable information and leads for your sales team.

Hotel Websites — Most branded websites now contribute at least 25 percent of a hotel's reservations. Ensure that your hotel utilizes all of the brand tools to enhance your website for maximum effectiveness and efficiency. You should review your site regularly and keep it up-to-date with well-rounded information and various photos. You should also periodically make reservations from your site to assure that rates are displayed appropriately and the booking can be completed with ease.

Travel Review Sites — Over half of the travelers today will visit a review site prior to booking their stay at a hotel. While you cannot track revenue from these sites, they have the ability to influence the buying decision of the traveler directly. It is important to reply to all comments on the site (positive as well as negative) and consistently work to get your ranking to the top of the list. Your hotel should have a strategy in place to drive comments to these sites. Not only does a higher ranking influence people's decisions to book with a hotel, it also allows a hotel to command a higher rate if it has the positive feedback to support that rate.

Local Marketing Efforts — The partnerships in your local market with chambers and associations remain a high priority for a hotel sales staff. These organizations are the building blocks of your community and want to help your hotel be successful. The more involved you are, the more return you will see.

E-Commerce — Take the lead and make sure your hotel is relevant on the Internet. Hotels are partnering with E-Commerce companies or hiring E-Commerce managers to make sure that they can be found on all of the distribution channels. The goal of E-Commerce is to drive the traveller directly to your website so you can get more conversions.

Brand Initiatives — Brands have a lot of revenue generating power. Make sure your hotel is taking advantage of all of the brand initiatives both online and offline. The many opt-in programs should be reviewed on a regular basis to determine if they are suitable for your hotel and your market.

Online Travel Agencies (OLTA's) — They continue to have a large presence in the travel industry. The revenues produced from an OLTA ad can be measured to ascertain that you are receiving a return for your investment. There are different ways to promote your property through package paths, stand-alone paths, and even corporate options

Internet Prospecting — Use the Internet as a tool to help facilitate your offline sales efforts. With so much information on the Internet, it does take a little time to do a series of searches and find viable leads for your sales department.

Community Involvement — It's important to make sure your hotel is giving back to the community. Get your associates involved in a project that is meaningful to them and the rewards you reap will be huge. Not only does the project create a great sense of "team" for your hotel, but the community benefits and will reward you with business.

Social Media — The social media sites such as Facebook, Twitter and others are engines that promote and direct end-users to your hotel. The desire to participate in this space is growing as hoteliers realize that travelers are using these sites to share their experiences.

Training — Never stop learning! Training is a huge component of a successful sales effort. Not only do you gain new ideas or are reminded of old ones, but the relationships that you develop during training can be revenue generating.

Revenue Management — The definition of revenue management is selling the right room to the right person at the right price and the right time through the right channel. An effective revenue management strategy will only happen if you have a dedicated effort, great cooperation and skillful sales and revenue teams.

As you can see, there are plenty of opportunities for selling and promoting your hotel. Take the time to determine which options create the most business for your hotel. Prioritize your options so that you balance the efforts of your sales staff to gain the biggest return for your property.

Original url:
https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2012/11/28/practical-notes-about-marketing-aspirations-and-hotels

-sales-approaches-a19761