

Best Western partners with VFM Interactive in unprecedented rich media strategy

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Best Western International has selected VFM as its exclusive North American provider of rich media production and distribution services in order to roll out a rich media strategy at a scale the travel industry has not previously seen.

VFM will be producing rich media for more than 2,400 Best Western properties across North America, including 360s, videos and Photoflicks®.

Additionally, Best Western will be utilizing VFMs recently-announced Vscape®, a comprehensive online media management and distribution system that will allow the hotel chains properties to better store, manage and selectively distribute all still images and rich media across all electronic channels.

With more than 60 percent of our web bookings originating from the bestwestern.com site this year, its important that we implement the most innovative technology available to provide our customers with the highest quality online experience, said Dorothy Dowling, SVP of Marketing for Best Western International. Rich media offers so much more than photographs alone, giving Best Western customers the tools with which to book in complete confidence.

The addition of rich media is part of Best Westerns ambitious electronic distribution strategy, which, in the first five months of 2005, has resulted in a 61 percent increase in worldwide revenue via the bestwestern.com site from the same period a year ago. New online features such as rich media are expected to support the continued growth of the companys own website bookings.

The new Vscape system will allow Best Western to develop its electronic strategy with even more confidence and reliability. It offers hotels one simple point of contact for online distribution of all still images and rich media, replacing the existing distribution model that requires hotels to deal with multiple points of input. VFMs vast distribution network also enables hotels to market to a much wider online audience, including thousands of travel and travel-related sites as well as primary portals and search engines all through one, single point of contact. In addition, VFMs daily technology-driven relationships with distribution partners ensures Best Westerns images seen anywhere online will always be absolutely current and reliable.

VFM offered us the most comprehensive solution, from excellent production services to impressive rich media management, to an extensive distribution network, said Dowling.

The project is estimated to take 7 to 9 months to complete and will include production of 360° images and digital photography for each Best Western property, along with other rich media for selected properties. In order to meet the aggressive timeline, VFM will be leveraging an existing partnership with VR National, known for high-quality, affordable virtual tours.

We are tremendously excited to have been chosen by Best Western, said Paolo Boni, president and CEO of VFM. This commitment to rich media at the corporate brand level indicates how critical rich media has become in having a strong marketing presence online.

About Best Western International

Best Western International is THE WORLDS LARGEST HOTEL CHAIN® with more than 4,100 hotels in 80 countries and territories. It is a membership association of independently owned and operated hotels that provides marketing, reservations and operational support to its members. For more information, please visit: www.bestwestern.com.

About VFM Interactive

VFM Interactive is the leading distributor and producer of rich media content for the lodging and travel industry. Operating the largest and fastest-growing distribution network, VFM enables hotels to maximize their presence online using the power of rich media on more than 5,000 travel and travel-related sites where consumers are researching and purchasing travel products. In addition to sites such as Travelocity, Orbitz, Priceline and TripAdvisor, VFMs distribution network also includes major search engines and will shortly include both meta-search and GDSs. VFM also produces a variety of rich media marketing content including videos, 360° virtual tours and Flash productions. VFMs clients include over 3,000 hotels and resorts from brands and management companies such as Best Western, Choice, Crowne Plaza, Hilton, Holiday Inn, Interstate, Marriott, MGM, Outrigger, Radisson, Regent, Sheraton, W, Westin, and Wyndham properties.

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