

## Hate Cold Calls? - Discover The New Paradigm Of Hotel Sales - By Carol Verret

2007-01-08

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There is a huge difference in 'pushing' a product to new business prospects and 'pulling' or attracting new business to the hotel. The sales paradigm is shifting - not just in hotel sales but also in terms of the sales processes in most industries.

The 'cold call', in person or on the phone, is pretty much dead -- no one misses it much. Anyone who is still using directories that begin with the letter A and end with total frustration know exactly what a waste of time it is. Many potentially talented hotel sales people have been totally burned out by this method because the ROI is simply not there.

Potential clients check us out on the internet before they ever make contact with us. They receive industry newsletters and belong to organizations that discuss hotel experiences, both group and transient. People talk to other people in their positions in other organizations before they talk to you. These people are influencers who can make or break you.

Our potential clients also access the travel review sites. They know the difference between trivial problems and major issues - they are sophisticated enough to make judgments based upon the specifics in the online reviews. Do you know what the reviews say about your property?

How can you 'attract' a potential new business prospect to you and the hotel? It all begins with image, presence and reputation - both the hotel and the sales person.

- **The Web Site.** Put yourself in the client's perspective. Are you easy to find on the search engines, do you have a presence in key word searches? On the meetings and conventions page, is there a call to action? Does the list of key contacts have pictures and a brief profile of each sales person for each market segment? This is the age of communities, think MySpace, where people are more comfortable contacting people they feel they know. For that matter, does the GM have a picture and profile? (The profiles should not include info on the person's family or the dog!)

- **Testimonials.** The positive reviews you get on guest comment cards or in post convention surveys should become an integral part of all marketing initiatives. Ask permission to use names and organizations - these become a third party reference that resonates with potential clients. These should be on the web site, electronic sales kits (you do have electronic sales kits and brochures, don't you?), one should appear on all correspondence, electronic and traditional as well as embedded in all presentations.

- **Become a Resource.** Become a resource to your clients in terms of the lodging industry and how trends in the lodging industry might affect them in terms of impacting their travel or meeting planning. Offer to talk about the local industry to meetings and associations of people in your market segment. This cannot be commercial for the hotel. Everyone belongs to the obvious meeting planner organizations, you know what they are and they are a wonderful resource. However, there's a lot of competition in those - seek out business organizations in your market segment and become a resource for them. Even if the planners themselves do not attend the meeting, let them know what you are doing and seek out others from their company or organization at the meeting.

- **Develop a Blog.** Create a community with your clients and potential clients by developing a monthly or quarterly blog. Sales people are always looking for ways to stay in touch with their contacts without annoying them with 'Hi, how are you?' It's incredibly easy to do and you can send the link to all of your contacts when you add new stuff to the blog. Again, leave out the family and the dog!

- **Develop 'Attractive' Electronic Communication.** Cold calls may be dead but an attractive email approach with the WIIFM of your potential client in mind is alive and can be awesome. Give them value in the form of information that is useful to them and let them know that you have researched their business by approaching them with insightful references to their special requirements.

There are many other aspects to this 'attractive' business development paradigm and not enough space to detail it all in this article. Stay tuned for more. This is creative selling at its best - it's fun and a whole lot less frustrating than the directories that begin with A.

Carol Verret And Associates Consulting and Training offers training services and consulting in the areas of sales, revenue management and customer service primarily but not exclusively to the hospitality industry. To find out more about the company click on [www.carolverret.com](http://www.carolverret.com). To contact Carol send her an email at [carol@carolverret.com](mailto:carol@carolverret.com) or she can be reached by cell phone (303) 618-4065.

This article comes from Hotel News Resource

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The URL for this story is:

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