

## Social Media Solicited and Unsolicited Chatter

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Speaking from a day to day encounter with social media, I can tell you that much of the social media chatter about products and services is spontaneous, but with the escalating volume of viewers visiting these websites, it should come as no surprise that some social media websites are actually paying for consumer reviews, photos and even videos.

Consumer research does tell us that word of mouth advertising, and this is not limited to friends and relatives, has a tremendous impact on buyer decisions. So where can you find a better place to develop or defend your service or product's online reputation or build your word of mouth endorsements?

There are millions of social media websites and many of them rely on advertising dollars to support their websites. The more chatter the website receives and the quality of the chatter will generate more unique visitors and page views. In the travel space, [www.TripAdvisor.com](http://www.TripAdvisor.com) is a classic success story for building this type of consumer forum. The website's unique visitors and page views are what Internet advertisers pay for. Of course the advertisers will target the social websites that focus on their specific markets, but there are social media websites and blogs for all products and services. So, it is no surprise that many of these consumer driven websites do solicit consumers to express their unbiased opinions about services and products that they have purchased. Some social media websites do actually pay for this consumer input.

If the Democratic political party can have a televised debate based on video questions delivered via [www.YouTube.com](http://www.YouTube.com), it should come as no surprise that the world of social media has found its place in cyber space. This is no real Internet phenomenon. The Internet has always been an open forum for communications. These worldwide web communities, comprised of people with same or similar interests, have evolved from online bulletin boards, chat rooms and instant messages to My Space, You Tube, TripAdvisor and millions of social media websites and blogs. More recently, social media has gone from text to audio and video to make it even more convincing.

Social media clearly has a direct affect on all businesses simply because it is where billions of shoppers go to find non-commercial feedback from what is believed to be real users of the services and products being researched. The actual purchase may or may not be concluded online, but the information has a tremendous impact on the buyer's decision. For those who are still critical of the social media and feel it is unfair, well, consider that paid advertising is not a whole lot different, where quit often the service or product claims and offers being advertised may be untrue or at best a bit exaggerated.

My suggestion is: the best way to deal with social media from a commercial perspective is to join in and know what is being said about your business and respond quickly to the chatter where your business is being discussed. Rule number one for a creditable business response to a social media review or comment is not to be too apologetic or appreciative, keep your reply simple and directed to the individual making the comment. Remember, this is a conversation not a negotiation or a place for a sales pitch.

### **About Lodging Interactive**

Lodging Interactive is a leading provider of Internet Marketing Services to the travel and lodging industries. The company provides a portfolio of effective Internet Marketing Services to hundreds of hotels, resorts, timeshares and bed and breakfasts worldwide.

The Company also offers effective online tools and services: [hotelBLAST.com](http://hotelBLAST.com), a self-service email marketing system, [ChatterGuard.com](http://ChatterGuard.com), an online social media monitoring and reputation management system, [CommentCards.com](http://CommentCards.com), a full-service business-2-consumer comment card service, interactive [Google mapping services](#), [eProposal Rapid RFP Response System](#), an online RFP response tool for Sales Managers, and [RFPLink.com](http://RFPLink.com), a group RFP lead generation and reporting system.

Lodging Interactive clients include branded properties such as Marriott, Sheraton, Hilton, Radisson, Crowne Plaza Hotels, Doubletree Hotels, Candlewood Suites, Best Western, Wyndham Hotels plus numerous independent properties.

The Company is headquartered in Parsippany, NJ and can be reached at 973-402-4970 or by visiting its website at [www.LodgingInteractive.com](http://www.LodgingInteractive.com). Lodging Interactive's [HotelCast2.0](#) can be heard by visiting [www.LodgingInteractive.com/podcast.htm](http://www.LodgingInteractive.com/podcast.htm).

Lodging Interactive is a proud member of the American Hotel & Lodging Association (AH&LA), The California Hotel Association, and a supporter of the Hotel Sales & Marketing Association International (HSMIAI). For more information you can also contact Richard Walsh, Vice President of Business Development at [rjwalsh@lodginginteractive.com](mailto:rjwalsh@lodginginteractive.com) or at 973-402-4970.

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