

GMs - How User Generated Review Sites Can Make you a Better Manager! - By Carol Verret

2007-09-23

User generated review sites are the ultimate mystery shopping experience - only they are free! This is the guest speaking directly to you and the staff - this is better than a comment card. It is easy to be critical of the review sites just as the industry has had a love/hate relationship with the online travel agencies.

It all began with Trip Advisor that engendered the same reaction from many hoteliers as the online travel agencies did when they first arrived - platforms that many loved to hate. Neither Trip Advisor, the online travel agencies or Web 2.0 are going away - they will only become more dominant in how our customers find us, research us and ultimately select their travel and hotel arrangements.

If one has followed the studies beginning primarily at the beginning of the year, they confirm this trend. In a recent survey, Yahoo Travel found that 61 percent of people now go online for vacation recommendations. In addition, the study suggested that a property's reviews replaced price as the deciding factor in hotel selection. Travelers are no longer just searching for a hotel based on price, they are now making decisions based on user reviews, user ratings and photos.

The line between review sites and Online Travel Agencies is now totally blurred - review sites are becoming OTAs and the OTAs are (and have been for a while) user generated review sites! The industry just didn't pay a lot of attention to the reviews on Travelocity, et al, until Trip Advisor came to the conclusion that since people were selecting hotels based on the reviews, it may as well let them book hotels while they were there.

How can user generated reviews make you a better GM?

Guest Service. Print and discuss all service related issues at staff meetings. Use the reviews to coach and mentor department heads and employees. Use positive reviews as a recommendation to potential associates that you are interviewing for employment - everyone wants to work for a winner! When you post responses to a review, print those out to indicate that you are responsive to what guests are saying about your hotel and that you take guest comments seriously.

Monitor Operational Deficiencies. If an issue is recurring in several reviews across several sites, that constitutes a trend - take action! Rooms that are perceived as less than clean, persistent maintenance issues, front desk processes - engage the staff in brainstorming solutions. If a video is posted of an area with a deficiency, show it at staff meeting. This way it isn't personal coming from you - it is coming straight from the guest who recorded it. Set an incentive for reviews that are good and fail to mention previous operational issues.

Revenue Management. Don't just monitor your reviews, have your Revenue Manager monitor the reviews of your competition! This is a window as to how your competitors are perceived by their and potentially your customers. If your reviews are consistently better than those of your competitors, is it an opportunity to enhance your standing in the competitive set and even increase your rates? When you are positioning your hotel in the competitive set, don't forget to include the reviews of each of them in your positioning exercise. TravelClick has a new tool called SearchView debuting in October that allows you to see not only your reviews but ranking with your competitors and it sorts the types of reviews by operational areas.

Sales and Marketing. The GM is still the CMO -- Chief Marketing Officer of the hotel. Use the status of good reviews on Trip Advisor et al, in promotional emails to your customers. Incorporate your standing on the review sites as a third party recommendation to close the business. This can be your trump card to beat out the competition when rate and offering are similar to a competitor whose reviews are not as good as yours. Get up to speed on how your hotel is positioned on the small group booking sites as well as the meeting planner sites.

Recommendations to Owners. If a capital expense issue is consistently mentioned in reviews and illustrated by photos and videos posted about your property, you have a good third party reference as to why you need to make physical changes. Justify your Capital Expenditure request with the videos and photos. Quote and/or show them the studies of the influence of these sites and estimate how much revenue this issue is costing them.

Don't fear the influence of these sites - make these sites a management tool to assist you in making your operation better --- and the best news is, they're FREE!

We want to engage in a conversation with you about your hotel sales training issues at our new [Hotel Sales Blog](#). We will also be featuring seminars and web casts that deal with how you can use Web 2.0 to your advantage.

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. To contact Carol send her an email at carol@carolverret.com or she can be reached by cell phone (303) 618-4065.

This article comes from Hotel News Resource

<http://www.hotelnewsresource.com>

The URL for this story is:

<http://www.hotelnewsresource.com/article29346.html>

© 1998 - 2007 Nevistas and the author.

Brought to you by Hotel News Resource

Distribute your news on our Network

See what all the buzz is about at:

http://www.hotelnewsresource.com/Info-news_account_info.html