

Habits of Highly Successful Hotel Sales People - A Seismic Shift in 2008! - By Carol Verret

2007-09-25

This annual update of successful habits finds that the process of hotel sales (and hotel sales training that goes with it!) has undergone a seismic shift.

If anyone doubts this, read the HSMAI report on the recent hotel sales strategy conference where a panel of meeting and event planners tells hotel sales people that they had 'better get online for RFPs and bookings'. (HSMAI, 9/07)

'It's not big that eat the small, it's the fast that eat the slow'* applies more than ever - if your sales people are busy making cold calls to directories and Top 100 lists - you are not on board with the impact of the online space in terms of online RFPs, bookings and user generated content sites like blogs and review sites like Trip advisor.

The fast eat the slow by responding to online RFPs in warp speed, responding to negative reviews on online review sites, managing the hotel's online presence to ensure that the information and rates are transparent across all channels and participating in online RFP sites that are appropriate to the hotel's position in the market. Small group booking sites are increasingly important - both those on the franchise site and the OTA sites.

Effective communication is critical - both email and being able to 'sell' over the phone when a planner finally is reached. A planner on the HSMAI panel indicated that hotel sales people need to be able to sell over the phone once an RFP has been responded to. After three years of taking orders, telephone selling skills are critical - a hotel sales person may only get one shot at letting a planner know why they should choose their hotel over the rest.

Long term relationships are still the 'best' but the planner is under pressure to put every piece of business out to bid in order to demonstrate the effective use of budget. Building relationships often begins at a later stage in the meeting planning process - the planner has already prequalified the hotel online.

How do these developments impact the habits of hotel sales professionals?

Brush up on your and telephone sales skills. While planners are locating hotels online, the fact remains that we still have to skillfully build a relationship and CLOSE them! Get the sales department some training in telephone sales skills so that regardless of who is communicating there is a skill level and polish that is characteristic of the hotel's sales department. Phone skills that are often neglected include building rapport, qualifying, presenting then closing on the contract or next contact point. Remember - you can 'hear' a smile!

The art of effective email communication. Whether it is in response to an inquiry or an email approach, always put yourself in the position of the recipient. If you were to receive your response, what would you be looking for in a return email? Make it a habit to review your emails for tone, grammar and spelling errors that spell check doesn't catch! Always insert your signature line so that the recipient can find the phone number and web site address.

Select RFP sites carefully and by market segment specialization. Many RFP sites specialize in certain types and quality of property - make sure your property is represented on those that target planners interested in your type of hotel. Don't forget government sites if that is one of your target markets. In the same HSMAI panel discussion, a government planner revealed that they will be expected to use an online RFP site in planning meetings.

Establish a process to follow up on RFP requests in hours. This is sometimes difficult if a hotel sales person is out on the road making calls or at a trade function. Have a designated inside person that monitors all RFP requests from all channels and can respond to an RFP with details and creativity.

Routinely monitor the competitions reviews. Negative reviews about the competition are a sales opportunity! While you are not going to trash the competition to a meeting planner, you can subtly suggest that they take a look at Trip Advisor reviews of you and the competition in operational areas that are important to them. Be careful - your reviews in those areas had better be perfect! Set a Google alert for the hotels in your competitive set so that you are alerted every time there is a new post for one of them.

Participate in small group sites. Many of the small group sites sort the hotels in the location requested by amenities that you either enter yourself or they are pulled from the GDS. Make sure that all of the amenities that would appeal to small social and corporate groups are listed clearly on your GDS description. Respond in the same timely fashion that you do to the RFP sites.

Do these habits replace the habits from last year - no, we still need to be proactively prospecting for new biz on the internet that fits the revenue management strategy. These 'new' habits open up new opportunities for prospects to reach you and your hotel -- the playing field looks different but the game is still the same!

*(Jennings and Houghton, 2003)

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/article29376.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