

Stars Want to Meet the General Manager & Other Misconceptions - By Daniel Edward Craig

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These days it seems every brand wants to hop on the celebrity bandwagon, and hotels are no exception. Having a star in-house can create great buzz, but pursuing the entertainment market is not always in a hotel's best interest. Next time Beyoncé is coming to town, take a few minutes to evaluate your hotel before calling her travel agent.

1. **Play by their rules.** Entertainment business can be volatile. Bookers require flexibility and are often unwilling to sign a contract, which means the hotel takes the hit when there are last-minute changes. Music groups reserve large room blocks but stay only one or two nights, making it difficult to fill rooms before and after. Don't allow the excitement of a celebrity's arrival distract staff from getting a credit card-collecting after departure can be challenging. I'm still mad at an uber-rich rock star who left without paying and has never paid up.

2. **Is your service star-caliber?** Entertainers work hard on the road and sleep irregular hours. Hotel staff must be on-the-ball around the clock. Hotel riders used to be full of bizarre demands until they started getting published online, now they're less about which vodka to stock in the suite and more about the mineral water. To ensure there are no surprises, review details with the booker in advance. And don't believe rumors. A colleague warned me that Janet Jackson doesn't like to be looked in the eye, which made check-in a little awkward, but she looked at me squarely, smiled, and said, 'Hi, I'm Janet!' No 'Miss Jackson if you're nasty' though.

3. **Beware of rising and falling stars.** I've hosted bad-ass rockers who were perfect gentlemen and honey-voiced pop stars who were total nightmares. Seasoned stars rarely cause trouble, it's the rising stars and falling stars who are more likely to seek reaffirmation through outrageous demands, tantrums and binges. The ubiquity of tabloids and celebrity blogs-not to mention credit cards on file-means stars can't get away with trashing hotel rooms anymore. In 1992 I tried to shut down a raucous hot tub party held by U2 and was assailed by f-bombs. When I hosted them again years later they were as gracious as elder statesmen.

4. **Don't issue a media release upon arrival.** Yes, you want the world to know that Brad and Angelina love your yam fries, but privacy must be paramount. The hotel should have one appointed spokesperson and all other staff should be forbidden from comment. Name-dropping to the media has become acceptable, but wait until after departure, phrase it as 'spotted at', and don't provide details. Appearing on Entertainment Tonight with the contents of Madonna's trash might get you exposure, but it's the quickest way of ensuring she'll never come back.

5. **Careful with pseudonyms.** When asked if a celebrity is in-house, staff should always answer an unequivocal no. Some stars use pseudonyms, but even these aren't foolproof. Years ago, a local woman who got cozy with a star at my hotel was given the boot when his wife and kids arrived. She used his pseudonym to be put through to the room and had a little chat with the wife. Minutes later, a duty manager was summoned to the room to play interference while the wife hurled objects like lamps at the star.

6. **Don't expect stars to pay for suites.** Suites are part of the glamorous Hollywood image, right? Not necessarily. Stars frequently stay in regular rooms, often due to production budget limitations. Bookers like to exploit the hotel's eagerness by demanding upgrades and other concessions. As a result, celebrities may stay in suites, but they're often paying far less than your average cash-strapped traveler. Don't expect a lot of incidental revenues either, most of a star's time is spent off-property.

7. **Don't ask for tickets to the show.** Sometimes a tour manager will offer tickets, but they should never be solicited. Are they asking for free rooms? If your general manager coerces you into asking on behalf of his tween daughter, don't bother the band, ask the tour manager-and offer something in return. When tickets are offered, they should be distributed equitably and winners should be required to show up. A while back, REM gave my staff a block of front-row tickets and several of them no-showed. Not cool.

8. **Stars don't want to meet the hotel manager.** GMs, suspiciously absent when a VIP group convener from Kansas needs an escort, miraculously materialize for a star meet-and-greet. But stars don't want pomp, they want to be left alone. A GM's time is better spent ensuring everything is immaculate in advance and leaving a handwritten note and thoughtful amenity. But don't go overboard. Once I had an actor check in for a three-month stay, only to move to an apartment the next day, taking the \$150 gift basket with him. If you want to know if Fabio is enjoying his stay, ask housekeeping, they always know what's going on.

Yes, hosting celebrities can be glamorous, but unless you're willing to play by their rules it might make better business sense to take that lackluster corporate group.

About The Author

Daniel Edward Craig is a hotel consultant and author of *Murder at the Universe* and *Murder at Hotel Cinema*, mystery novels set luxury hotels. His blog provides a frank and entertaining look at issues in the hotel industry at www.danieledwardcraig.com.

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