

## How to Connect with your Guests through Social Media

2008-07-30

---

Web 2.0 is no longer considered an 'innovation'. It's a standard. The internet is now a place for sharing and social interaction. The smartest businesses in the world are using this social interaction to their benefit - through blogs, streaming video, and online communities, where people come together to trade links, ideas, and information 24 hours a day. There's a good chance that your hotel can benefit from marketing through social media. I'm going to walk you through some of the ways you can do so, and increase your profits along the way.

Blogs have become one of the most effective ways to connect with internet users. A blog is a regularly updated web page where a writer or writers post articles for personal or business use. As a hotel, a blog is a way to keep your guests up to date on the latest happenings of your hotel or the hospitality industry. It is this informal setting that 'conversational marketing' occurs, and relationships are built with your public.

Here are some tips for maximizing the effectiveness of your blog:

**Build relationships with other bloggers.** Check for blogs similar to yours and try to connect with them, through direct email or comments on their blog posts. Doing so can open up a whole new venue of traffic to drive to your own blog.

**Spread your blog content in various ways.** If you are using your blog to market your hotel, then you want your blog content to be viewed in every way possible. Two ways to do this are through an RSS subscription and an email alternative. An RSS subscription allows one-click subscribing to your blog, and the reader will then be notified of new posts through an RSS reader. An email alternative would email the latest posts to the reader.

**Offer valuable content on your blog.** Your blog should not just be a thinly-veiled glorified advertisement, it should provide valuable, useful information that equips your reader with information about your hotel and/or destination.

**Don't be the only one doing it.** What about your employees? Why not train and encourage them to blog, either on your website or on a personal site - the first hand experience can be very beneficial to any company. For example in addition to you General manager blogging about your hotel, why not have your Concierge blog about upcoming events in your destination? Have a well respected Chef in the kitchen, share some of the Chef's signature dish recipes in a blog.

**Measure your blog's traffic.** Pay attention to what your readers are reading most, and offer more content similar to it.

**Couple your blog content with your email newsletter.** Crossover content brings greater exposure to both forms of online media, which your hotel can only benefit from.

**Podcast.** Whether audio or video, experiment with podcasting. Start out once a week and gauge the response. In many cases, it can drive more traffic to a blog. We have our own podcast which we produce and distribute on a monthly basis. [Click to listen to Lodging Interactive's podcast.](#)

**Add social bookmark links to your blog.** Many social bookmarking sites and communities encourage users to share their favorite posts, articles, and pages with others. Offer them the opportunity to share yours.

**Tag your posts.** Be organized. Make searching for information easier on your site. The more user-friendly it is, the more popular it will become.

While blogs continue to rise in influence and popularity, a well-produced or clever online video can spread like wildfire. While many businesses may not benefit from streaming video, there are plenty of products and services today that can generate a lot of business from it, including hotels. Here are some ways to do it:

**Provide an embeddable web version of your video.** This is automatically done through the major video websites (i.e. YouTube, etc.). If hosting on your own, then you need to make sure that you can do this. For your video to pop up on other blogs or social networking sites, you need to give your viewer the ability to embed it onto their sites using an HTML code. Many video services offer 'one-click' sharing as well, to further ease the process.

**Stream live video.** Depending on your needs and intentions, a live video stream may be useful if done correctly. Services such as uStream.tv and Mogulus can help you set this up.

**Use video to complement your text.** Text on your web site and blog can only be helped with video. Experiment using video interviews or press releases (Chef, General Manager or Concierge....even past guest interviews). Augmenting your text with video gives your site a personal touch that viewers appreciate.

**Experiment with different lengths and formats.** There is no magic formula to video success. You need to experiment a little. Try filming something humorous. Maybe do a long, informative piece. Either way, experimenting is how you find out what works the best.

The basis for social media is the online community. The community is where, hopefully, your material will be shared with other people. When tapped into the online community effectively, viral marketing can occur. Viral marketing is where something you create is shared with other people in rapid succession. It can be some of the most effective marketing in the world, and is unmatched in terms of driving traffic. Here are some tips for fostering your relationships with the online community:

**Listen to your market.** At any given point, your potential guests are talking. At the same time, people are talking about your potential guests. Pay attention to this, and use it when crafting your marketing plans. We offer a great Social Media monitoring tool, Chatter Guard. Click to visit [ChatterGuard.com](http://ChatterGuard.com).

**Build a community around a specific event.** Do you hold any major events during the course of the year? Take some video of it and post it on YouTube. Take your photos and put them on Flickr. Link them all together, and use them when marketing next year's event. A simple idea such as taking pictures at your recent hotel's wine tasting event and posting them on Flickr will help.

**Start a community on a major social network.** It's incredibly easy to start a group on Facebook or MySpace. Use this group to tap into your audience's interests.

**Attend a major social media conference.** There are plenty out there: New Media Expo, BlogWorld Expo, New Marketing Summit, etc. Attending one of these can put you on the cutting-edge trends of social media marketing.

**Cultivate long-term relationships.** It's a general habit to survey your guests to try and find out as much as you can about them. Take your time. Foster the relationships and don't be overbearing. Your guests will thank you with repeated business. [Check out CommentCards.com](http://CommentCards.com) for a cost-effective online comment card solution.

**Take your time in getting established.** In many social networks, the people who are involved have probably been there a while and know the others. They will recognize that you are new. Take some time to build familiarity with the other people. Don't go right into 'selling mode'.

**Get a good widget.** Widgets are little customizable tools that can provide information and updates for readers. What makes them unique is that they can be shared, much like a video, through embedding. If you update your widget, it is updated on all the pages it is on. This can be an incredibly valuable tool for your advertising and marketing.

**Allow your community to vote on your content.** Let your community's voice be heard, and you will create an appreciation that they will respond to.

Once you've gotten a good handle on all of these different aspects of social media, put them together! Orchestrate a marketing push that is centered on your blog, but implements some of these other strategies, including social networks and video. Use it to build up a face-to-face event or the release of a new hotel package or seasonal special. Creating that 'buzz' is what drives the big sales.

On top of that, use these strategies to connect with your employees. Start an internal blog and let their voices be heard! Creating that loyalty from within is essential to any business.

Much like any business strategy, the key is research. Do your due diligence and observe what others are doing. Read case studies of those who have enjoyed social media success. Interview social media practitioners to get ideas and find the bridges and similarities between your methods and theirs. Use that information to grow. Research your competitors and find what's working for them, and what isn't.

Another important piece of research that can make a huge difference in your sales is how your potential guests are responding. Do they respond more to recommendation? If so, employ the use of widgets and other socially-based strategies. Or do they respond most to education? Then craft informational videos and podcasts about your hotel or destination. Tap into whatever is most effective and use it to the maximum.

Finally, if you admire certain bloggers or podcasters and want their opinion, offer them some incentive to take a look at your projects and campaigns. If you can give them some kind of gift for helping you out, you can access some very valuable advice that can really boost your conversion rates.

As you can see, there are loads of opportunities for your hotel to connect with the consumer. Every market is available online today, and if you put in a little research and effort, you can reap some very nice rewards. Work on it consistently, and I guarantee you will start seeing results.

### **About Lodging Interactive**

Lodging Interactive is a leading provider of Internet Marketing Services to the hospitality, spa and restaurant industries. The company provides a portfolio of effective Internet Marketing Services to hundreds of hotels, resorts, timeshares, spas and restaurants. Clients included branded hotels from nearly every major brand as well as prestigious, landmark independent hotels.

The Company offers effective online tools and services: [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, [eProposalSystem.com](http://eProposalSystem.com), an online RFP response system hotel Sales Managers, [RFPLink.com](http://RFPLink.com), a group RFP lead generation and reporting system, [HotelDirectBook.com](http://HotelDirectBook.com), a consumer hotel portal site and [DiningClick.com](http://DiningClick.com), Internet Marketing Services for the restaurant industry.

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 (HSMAI). For more information contact Richard Walsh, Vice President of Business Development at [rjwalsh@lodginginteractive.com](mailto:rjwalsh@lodginginteractive.com) or at 877-291-4411. The company's website is located at [www.LodgingInteractive.com](http://www.LodgingInteractive.com).

This article comes from Hotel News Resource

<http://www.hotelnewsresource.com>

The URL for this story is:

<http://www.hotelnewsresource.com/article33789.html>

© 1998 - 2008 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](http://www.hotelnewsresource.com/Info-news_account_info.html)