

## Hoteliers' Online Action Plan in Slowing Economy

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In today's economy, one has to be careful about how to spend their money wisely, and this is especially true in the hotel industry. Hoteliers invest their money in marketing to bring in more guests, but in a tough economy, business slows down. So how is it possible for us to thrive, despite slow business?

The answer is: keep marketing, and don't slow down. This does not mean simply market every way you know how, it means be careful in how you invest your money - what marketing methods work, and what don't. It is more important than ever that we pay attention to our return on investment (ROI). So, stick to proven marketing methods that have a high ROI, and your worries will remain small.

Eighty-three percent of travel planning is booked online. This means that the internet has emerged as the premier distributor of hospitality. Since this is the case, it only makes sense that we work through the internet for the best possible ROI. Instead of cutting your marketing spending, look at the most effective ways to attract guests through internet-related means: online advertising and direct response initiatives as opposed to offline and brand-building methods. Plus, with web analytics tools, it is easier than ever for a hotel to track how their online marketing initiatives are performing.

Word of Mouth advertising is the best possible advertising. It is important that you monitor and measure your online reputation as determined by the websites like Facebook, YouTube, Flickr and other social sites along with travel chatter sites like TripAdvisor, IgoUgo, Hotel Chatter and many more. Once you have a monitoring and measuring method or tool, you need to implement a procedure to utilize this information to improve internal operations, build your Public Relations and integrate into your property marketing. Where possible you should interact with consumers with postings, networking and blogging. Granted your marketing spend during a slow economy has to be productive and it is difficult to determine your ROI from social media. But people do utilize these sites as part of their planning process for both business and leisure travel. You need to capitalize on good reviews and respond to offset bad review

So, as a hotelier, the majority of your Internet marketing spend should focus on internet marketing strategies that center around ROI to reach potential new customers, and this includes local online marketing as well. These campaigns should revolve around your unique selling proposition (USP). Doing so will differentiate yourself from the market - which means more attention and more guests. While you are thinking big, however, make sure that the basics are taken care of first, which includes:

Optimization of your current website

Strategic Linking

Email and Search Marketing (eMarketer reports that 80% of all internet activity comes from search engines)

Web Analytics and Performance Tracking

So, here are a few steps to get you on the right track to marketing success this year:

- 1. Look at the budget numbers for this year's marketing plan.** Drop any investment in marketing strategies that are unproven or not bringing in a good return on their investment. Limit your experimental investments this year, that is, stick to what you know works and will bring in the guests. Make sure that your marketing is directed towards the most influential audiences, i.e. travel planners, businesspeople, and vacationers.
- 2. Market your hotel wisely.** Try to find marketing strategies that perform above the industry averages for your property. Make use of web analytics to track the bookings and activities of the guests coming to you online or by phone as a result of online information. Adjust your marketing based on the information from the analytics. A good analytics company will cost money, but the results can give you a serious edge.
- 3. Focus on the best use of your hotel's website.** This means making sure that your site is both attracting prospective guests and pushing the sale. Attracting guests means utilizing search engine optimization and email marketing, as well as proven advertising methods, such as banner ads. Then, make sure that your site is user-friendly and welcoming. You want your guest to be able to quickly and easily make that booking. Simply the look of the website is also crucial, so push to redesign the site to make sure it looks sharp and professional enough.
- 4. Define your unique selling proposition.** Your hotel needs to have something different about it to stand out in today's market. Why should people come and stay on your property as opposed to someone else's? Talk to your guests: what do they like most about staying there? What attracted them in the first place? Answering these questions and adjusting your marketing accordingly can give you a large boost in business. Then use that information to develop a plan to differentiate your hotel from the competition.
- 5. Set achievable goals.** Draft a strategy to optimize your marketing methods for the upcoming year and put it into practice. Having your goals in front of you will push you to make the smartest decisions based on where you want to be in the next year.

Marketing simply does not have to suffer just because the economy is. Situations like this call for smart spending, and that starts with your marketing. Every dollar you spend on marketing should be attracting someone to your hotel. When you focus on fundamentals, you can have the assurance that your time and money are being spent on something effective that will attract new guests and keep bringing back the old ones. You need to use these times as opportunities to grow in the face of a struggling economy.

### **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, [HotelDirectBoook.com](http://HotelDirectBoook.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).

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