

Habits of Highly Successful Hotel Sales People - Accelerated Sense of Urgency - By Carol Verret

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This is the third year that we have updated this subject and it has never been more urgent than this year! Despite the general downward trends in the overall economy there is one factor that will have a profound impact on the hotel industry in particular and the hospitality industry in general - the cuts in airline capacity.

PKF's Mark Woodworth produced research that indicated the following : "Based on our findings that a 1 percent decline in available airline seats results in a 0.39 percent decrease in hotel demand, if airline capacity is reduced by 10 percent as some have suggested, then lodging demand would fall off 3.9 percent. To put this in perspective, the decline in lodging demand experienced in 2001 was just 3.3 percent." This scares the heck out of anyone who remembers the aftermath of 9/11 on the hotel industry.

Meetings and attendance at meeting are also negatively impacted. Up until this fall, it's been relatively easy for people - especially those who live in large cities - to fly to another city cheaply and quickly, Bruce MacMillan, CEO of Meeting Professionals International (MPI), says. But schedule reductions taking effect this month will make some of those flights harder to schedule, possibly more time-consuming and more expensive. "I think the wild card to watch is the reductions in airline capacity," MacMillan says. "One of the reasons people don't attend a meeting or event is the amount of time away from home or time out of the office." (USA Today, 9/09/08)

With the above developments dependent on airline capacity cuts that are totally out of the control of the hotel sales department, it is imperative that this year's successful sales 'habits' are dependent on being able to strategize around the situation, develop creativity, urgency and maintain positive motivation!

Positive Motivation. Everything else flows from maintaining a positive attitude and being able to motivate the staff and for the staff to motivate themselves. When sales people get stressed, they tend to lose their perspective and the ability to get creative about strategies. The importance of being positive and motivated can't be understated - clients smell fear and desperation. If you need a deal too badly, it will show all over you, they can hear it in your voice. Surround yourself with positive people - not the other people in the hotel or the department whining about how bad it is. Buddy for lunch once a month with the most positive sales person you know. A friend and I do this once a month - she is the most positive person I know, she says the same about me -- we each feel we get a 'positivity charge' from each other. Listen to motivational pod casts or CDs in the car on the way to work. Here is one for you now. This is from a sales blog that comes into my Inbox every day - great info and great motivation from a number of sources. This post is about how to stay 'insanely' motivated - enjoy. http://blogs.bnet.com/salesmachine/?p=270&loomia_si=t0:a3:g2:r5:c0.266367&tag=loomia

Urgency. Think like a business owner - both from the hotel's and the prospect's perspective. Act like a commissioned sales person - what are the activities you can execute today most likely to return the revenue the fastest. Arrive at work an hour before anyone else. Use the time to organize your thoughts and day, research clients on the internet or take care of administrative tasks. Set time limits on the breaks you take - breaks are necessary but can get out of control. Set goals, if they aren't set for you, on how many new client contacts you are going to make in a day, week, month, etc. Then chunk out time, physically, on your calendar to make them and force yourself to stay until they're done. Reward yourself for getting them done - a Hershey Kiss for each one you make, a latte for making the goal - raw carrots aren't just quite as motivating!

Strategize. If you are in a market that has a lot going for it and not dependent on air transportation for arrivals, you're in luck! If you are in a market that depends on air transportation, find out how many air seats will be lost on a daily basis. You may have healthy groups. LNRs and RFPs on the books, it won't matter much if it becomes difficult to get to your destination. As well, if most of the arrivals for your largest accounts come from markets that are severely impacted by capacity cuts and fare hikes, your hotel may be negatively impacted. In both cases, develop some strategies. What population centers are within 'one tank of gas' from your hotel? What 'healthy' companies and organizations and regional offices of national conies are located there? How can the department as a team strategize to target and saturate these markets?

Creativity. Develop creative approach strategies - hint: 'my name is (X) and I'd like to tell you about my hotel' isn't a creative strategy. Research target companies on the internet, discover what they do and how you can appeal to them. Once you have located a contact decide the approach strategy of email and/or phone. What is going to be the message that offers them a benefit that gets their attention? What can you say that makes them want to enter into a dialogue with you? Remember it is all about the prospect - not about you or the hotel! It's about what you and the hotel can give them -- something they want or need.

The habits of those hotel sales people that will be successful in this economic environment are the same as those that will enable them to be successful in any economy. Any sales person who masters the first habit - positive motivation -- will be successful in everything they do. Clients and colleagues can smell it, hear it, feel it and want to be around them!

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. Visit www.hotelsalesblog.com.

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