

Recommendations for the Effective Use of Social Media Marketing

Commitment and Integration

Define your strategy and long term objectives; make sure there is a commitment to social media marketing; integrate all forms of marketing cohesively; list trip advisor reviews on your website, put links to your social media sites etc. (Davies, 2009)

Monitoring and Appropriate Response

Designate a staff member to regularly monitor, interact and update content; daily if possible. Social media sites should give instant information; a week is far too long to leave responses and interactions. Always thank the consumer and respond to negative reviews; do not get into a disagreement, resolve the problem and explain the steps you've taken. (Saugestad, 2009)

Encourage Word of Mouth Marketing

Discreetly encourage positive postings; tell your customers that you are participating in social media sites and would appreciate their help in spreading the good word. Become 'friends' with your staff and tell them to invite their 'friends' to become 'fans' of the hotel. (Deluzain Barry, 2009, TIG, 2009, Kennedy, 2009)

Use a Specialist

If you're not confident in social media marketing then hire a company like CoMMingle, who will create custom blogs, profiles on top social media sites as well as provide ongoing management on your behalf to ensure the consumer experience is always fresh and instant. (Parsippany, 2009)

Track, Analyse and Optimise

Online Reputation Management like Omniture are emerging as essential tools in managing your online reputation; companies need to provide 24/7 access to website analytics and campaign tracking tools. Focus your budget on internet marketing initiatives that bring the highest ROI and generate most bookings. (Starkov & Mechoso, 2010, Davis, 2009)

Provide Real Value and Engagement

Give your hotel a personality; humanize your business and create an emotional connection with your consumers. What you deem valuable could be worthless to your consumers; don't assume; research around the consumers you want to engage; listen to them talk about the best features of your hotel, providing you with insight on how to offer valuable content. (Evans 2009, Deluzain Barry, 2009)

Beneficial Content

Produce attractive, engaging, attention grabbing content that would interest the consumer. Update customers on a variety of projects; share information that they might not know; use special promotions and news to keep customers involved. Use status updates and events to keep them informed; once a day is plenty; don't become a nuisance as it may be detrimental to your image. What you publish will be around for a long time, so consider content carefully; make sure what you are saying is factually correct; if you make an error, be up front about your mistake and correct it quickly. (IBM, 2010, Salerno, 2009, Deluzain Barry, 2009)

Establish your Hotel as an Expert

Be a resource of information rather than a salesperson; post wedding planning tips, meeting insights, link to vendors who do great work and post picture of their cakes and bouquets to increase credibility. Find links that help consumers build their business or post an occasional link to a hospitality focused website or share news that extends beyond your business. (Deluzain Barry, 2009, TIG, 2009)

Find Out What Your Customers Care About

Consumers want news and information about the things they care about; banner ads and pop ups are not the best way to market on the web. Partner with a local charity to make contacts and generate buzz. (Deluzain Barry, 2009, Weber, 2009)

Be Interactive

Get online consumers thinking and talking about your brand by putting competitions or scavenger hunts on your status where they could win prizes. Obtain feedback from your consumers on new menu items; have a guest gallery where guests can upload their personal experiences of your hotel. (Saugestad, 2009)

Follow 80/20 Rule

80% should be share and communicate and 20% can be passive promotion. Be part of the conversation and avoid heavy handed, inappropriate and unwelcome marketing approaches. Be interactional not transactional. (McClean, 2007, Saugestad, 2009, Kozinets, 1999)