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- News
- Features
- Blog
- Forums
- Webcasts & Podcasts
- Online Columnists

Generating New Business

Increase, streamline your online presence

November 3, 2008
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Hotel and Motel Management



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Key elements for hotel web strategy

- Engage an online design professional to audit & optimize and customize website for content and structure
- A single, user-friendly design will maximize search engine visibility, increase repeat bookings and increase email campaigns
- Use targeted search engine marketing and advertising to increase visibility
- Use analytics tools to measure and optimize results and track user behavior and other core performance indicators

Is the online world one distribution channel or several? That may be a question of semantics, but it represents the near limitless and innovative business potential the Internet holds. Hotels have learned and still are learning that the Internet opens up myriad possibilities for increasing booking and brand awareness.

According to TravelClick, a provider of interactive distribution solutions and marketing services to independent and chain hotels, online booking accounted for nearly half the market share of all electronic channels in 2007. Tammy Peter, VP of channel management for Wyndham Hotel Group, said 70 percent of Wyndham's central reservation booking comes from online sources.

"With the continued decline in voice reservation volume, we expect to spend the majority of our development funds on e-commerce initiatives going forward," Peter said.

Large hotel companies have entire e-commerce teams with members constantly working on updating, researching and optimizing everything web-related.



Ettestad Travelclick

"In a perfect world, there should be one person dedicated to e-commerce at each property," said Isaac Gerstenzang, the corporate director of e-commerce for Destination Hotels. "The e-commerce person bridges quite a few fundamentals that are out there. We're bridging the gaps between sales and marketing and [information technology] and [public relations]."

Ignoring the web could leave your hotel behind like an 8-track tape. Increasing online presence and crafting the proper web strategy is multifaceted but mainly starts with the website.



Peter Wyndham

What's in a website?

Shane Ettestad, VP of Internet marketing services at TravelClick, said the actual website design is a crucial first step—make sure it has clean architecture, doesn't change layout between pages or have any redundant navigation items. After that, it helps to give customers what they are looking for.

"We see that consumers really have a thirst for photography, video and virtual tours more so than anything," Ettestad said.

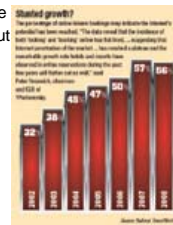
TWO CHANNELS MERGE

ATC, an e-commerce software company, offers a service that brings an old favorite—the telephone—into the online world. For insight into how this software as a service can increase and improve a hotel's online presence, visit our website: www.hotelinvest.com

Two Channels Merge

"Great photography is No. 1," Gerstenzang said. "That's what's going to lure people in. You want to make sure they feel an experience through the site." He recommends making an interactive map that highlights activities like hiking trails or theaters—anything to engage customers and tell them what they need to know.

"The longer they stay on, the longer they have to book," he said.



Stunted growth?

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