

Thoughts on Hotel Internet Marketing in 2009

Hotel Online Marketing Predictions 2009

What are the three key internet developments and online opportunities the hotel industry is likely to encounter & benefit from this year?

2009 will be an important year for Online Internet Marketing strategy. As marketing budgets tighten and are increasingly placed under the microscope, more emphasis than ever will be placed on tracking the return on spend. Online Marketing offers hotels the most trackable and cost effective means of marketing their rooms direct to the consumer. The three major areas that I see developing in 2009 are as follows:



1. Social Media Optimization and Online PR

The Search Engines are not the only channels used now to find information via internet. Channels such as YouTube account to 10% of total internet traffic. Social websites such as Facebook are increasingly popular, highly visited and used to find information and links. The search landscape in Google has also changed to include maps, blogs, news, images, videos etc. all provided by Web 2.0 and social media websites. With all these developments, it will be essential for the hotelier to implement a professional strategy to embrace such developments and maximize the benefits given by exposure to such channels.

2. International Approach to Paid Search

Many hotels are now successfully running Paid Search campaigns but are ignoring a huge potential market. Running campaigns internationally does not only mean checking a box to show ads across the globe. To attract visitors and tourists from other countries requires a specific strategy and game plan. Once you have outlined your likely feeder markets, research needs to be conducted to ascertain which keywords they will use to find your type of hotels. Also, Translated landing pages and keyword creative's need to be produced and of course, if possible the hotel booking engine should feature the appropriate languages to encourage conversion. Making the effort to reach travelers in their own language can seriously improve conversion of paid search campaigns and attract a whole new market to your hotel. Most importantly increase hotel occupancy using a direct, cost effective and measurable channel.

3. Search Engine Optimization & Geo Search

One of the most cost effective methods of driving traffic and reservations online is a robust and effective SEO strategy. There is no charge per click, once an initial investment has been made, the sky is the limit for the benefits achieved through SEO. It's wise to work with a company that knows the marketplace and will support, edit and amend keywords and strategy through the year for optimal impact and quality traffic. As with Paid Search, it's also important to consider a multilingual strategy for SEO not only considering language nuances but also the variety of Search Engines used to find information. Integral to a successful SEO strategy would be a consideration of the Geo Search, i.e. the increased usage of mapping tools to locate businesses. Hotels need to make sure that they are registered as a minimum with Google local and Google maps and all of the correct information is present within their listing. Hotels that have successfully optimized a map listing were able to jump to top position in Google for broad keywords like "Hotel in [Insert City]".



Leveraging Technology to Bear the Recession

What are the top three tips to hotels hoping to leverage Internet tech to beat the recession?

1. Current and Optimized Web

Make sure that Hotel Websites are current and optimized for conversion. This involves making sure that your Hotel website is based on a CMS system that allows internal staff to update the website content, news, offers and images with ease. The visitor should arrive at the website and find reassurance immediately that they have arrived at the right place. Information such as prices, photos, offers, room types and booking should be easy to navigate to and above the page fold. It's important to keep the website current and create offers that will attract users convert online. Also of high importance is the ability to offer visitors a "Best Price Guarantee". When users arrive at your website, they should know that they don't need to go anywhere else to shop for prices. Most users will prefer to book direct with hotels when assured that they are getting the best deal. Higher conversion generally leads to higher ROI and happier website owners!

2. SEO

Work with a professional company to optimize your website for increased performance within the Search Engines. This is a cost effective means of driving increased traffic to you website. A good SEO company

will work with you to make sure that a professional and effective revenue driving strategy is in place and you are getting good return for your initial outlay. Regular reporting and campaign analysis should be conducted to achieve optimal performance and benefit tracking both ranking and more importantly traffic gained from the Search Engines. Don't ignore the opportunity to create individual SEO strategies for countries that could potentially produce a good stream of bookings to your hotel. Working with a company that has experience performing SEO across countries and continents can be of great benefit when expanding your Search Engine reach.



3. Use the Data from Web Analytics

Whatever web analytics package you are using, make sure it is set-up correctly to record numerous conversion metrics. Regularly review and more importantly act on the data and information that you receive from the reports to increase conversion, quality traffic and customer experience. Doing this will increase the effectiveness of your website to maximize the potential for conversion that each visitor to the website has. Learn to understand what the reports mean for you and your hotel and what actions should be taken as a result of the information gleaned. Using such data can also allow you to evaluate the success of various internet marketing efforts that you are carrying out. Proactive analysis and action based on your web analytics can offer a real edge over your competitors.

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