

## Sales and Marketing

# 4 tips for better hotel sales and marketing

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Speakers at the 2020 HSMAI Marketing Strategy Conference in New York City shared tips for selling rooms at the right price through teamwork, making PR efforts strategic and more.



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NEW YORK—The world of hospitality sales and marketing is always evolving, and selling to customers requires a good PR message, collaboration among teams and creating loyalty experiences for high-tier members.

During three different sessions at the 2020 HSMAI Marketing Strategy Conference, speakers gave their advice on how to succeed in different disciplines in the sales-and-marketing space.

### **1. Digital marketers and revenue managers must work together**

Revenue managers and digital marketers have different roles within a hotel or company, but it's important for those teams to understand each other and work together to create marketing and sales strategies that work to sell rooms at the right prices, said Dan Wacksman, principal at Sassato, during the "Minding the gap: Closing the divide between marketing and revenue management" breakout session.

There's a perception gap and a knowledge gap between revenue-management teams and digital marketing teams that needs to be overcome, but how that's accomplished is different within each organization, he added.

### **2. Keep your messaging simple**

To gain the customer, digital marketing messages need to be simple so that guests can easily find what they want and book a room, Wacksman said.

"If you look at something and say WTF, you're probably chasing the customer away," he said.

It should be easy for a customer to find rates on a hotel's direct website, because if it's not, they might go to an online travel agency, he said. The OTAs do a good job of showing clean screens with rates, and hotels need to do the same on their sites to get the direct booking.

### **3. When should you create tailored experiences?**

Many customers join loyalty programs, but not all of them stay often enough to increase their member status.

Mark Molinari, VP of strategic initiatives and marketing programs for Las Vegas Sands, said his company is working out what types of experiences to provide based on loyalty member status level.

"We all want to provide personalization. What we know about the customer will hopefully provide a better experience and more tailored experience," he said. "In our business, we have 7,000 suites, and it's really hard to (tailor experiences) on scale. If I knew every single one of you, what pillow type you wanted, it's really hard to execute that operation. So we need to kind of determine at what level are we going to make the decision to (offer tailored experiences)."

### **4. PR should be a strategy**

Hotels need public relations to get the word out about their hotel, but PR has gone beyond a news release.

Allison Sitch, VP of public relations for the Americas at Marriott International, said she has seen three major shifts in PR that hoteliers should pay attention to. One is the shift from mass communication to interpersonal communication; the shift from looking at PR as editorial space when PR experts need to reach a consumer's "mental space" to make a connection; and appealing to a brand's No. 1 loyal fan rather than a lot of people.

Appealing to the true fans, or people who are passionate about a cause, brand or organization, makes them more likely to share it by word of mouth to others, and they might be able to convert people they know to the brand, she said.

"PR should be strategic," Sitch said. "It should be the way that you communicate your company's true values. It should be a way that you have beyond marketing copy, which genuinely (touches) them in an emotional way with what people truly care about, and have deep meaning for them."