

**Hotel & Motel Management**  
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**The Sales Clinic**  
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### **SMALL LODGING PROPERTIES MAY NEED DIRECT SALES EFFORT**

Current economic conditions and the fuel price situation may be producing a decline in hotel use at some roadside and suburban lodging locations. The industry is coming off one of the best situations there has ever been for increased occupancy as well as rates for the smaller properties. If the next couple of years do not continue to provide the business, what do the smaller lodging operators do to maintain sales?

Of course, the various Internet providers of business have been doing well for these types of properties, but isn't the business on a decline from those sources? With more properties being built, and in the pipeline, there are, and continue to be more and more rooms coming on line. This of course, means more competition on the way; those properties will also be seeking business from the Internet providers. So, maybe it is time to seek out hiring a sales person. Regardless of the size of a property, a sales person, doing an honest job, with proper direction, should be able to return at least ten times the investment made in the person's salary.

There is really no substitute for a direct sales effort. All types of marketing may bring the awareness of a property to the attention of the public, but it is the sales person who delivers the product for a price. A direct sales effort means having a person on the staff that goes out to contact sources of new business that will be profitable to the property. That person gets new business by making sales calls to prospect companies, and organizations that are in a position to put guests in rooms, and restaurants. These calls are made in person as well as by phone, and of course, via the Internet by E-mail. The direct sales effort is a very meaningful way to bring in additional business, and could very well be the most productive way for a property to become more profitable.

Who does the job? In a small property, where an operator may feel that hiring an additional person on the staff to do the job is not affordable, then, of course, it could very well be the property manager who does it, even if it is just a

**couple of hours a day. The manager or lodging operator, personally handling the direct sales effort may be the best approach, for a start, in setting up a sales operation, provided all the other daily functions of operating are turned over to someone else.**

**Another thing with which to be concerned would be not to hire someone to do sales on a full-time, or part-time basis, and end up having that person being a part-time desk clerk, or part-time secretary, or part-time anything. Make sure the sales person sticks to a direct sales effort.**

**Responsibility for the sales effort ultimately lies with the lodging operator; whether that person is called the general manager, managing director, or even the owner; that person is truly the general sales manager. For some basic tips on locating and developing leads for new business just send a request to: [howardf@vt.edu](mailto:howardf@vt.edu)**

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