

**Hotel & Motel Management
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The Sales Clinic
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METHODS AND RESOURCES FOR DEVELOPING NEW SALES LEADS

What prompted me to write this very basic sales column was two email inquiries I received just last week from two, new, hotel sales people, who each asked for help with a question, like: "What do I do to get business for my hotel". One was at a small hotel in Bulgaria and the other worked at a small hotel in Germany. I am sure the same question is being raised at many hotels in the U.S. by brand new sales people without any prior experience in hospitality sales. There is very little training going on, around the country, except for seminars, and workshops being held in conjunction with the various annual meetings of the major hospitality associations. However, we do not see very many new sales people attending these national conventions; budgeting is probably the big consideration. Of course, from time to time we are seeing Web seminars on hotel sales being offered, and at very reasonable pricing, so these are a big help for the new, inexperienced sales people.

It seems that both sales representatives from Europe were more interested in getting information on advertising and direct mail, thinking that was the best way to get business. My response was to forget about that because of the cost involved, and stick to some basic, no-cost methods of seeking leads for business. Of course, the best bet for getting new business is to prospect old files. This was covered in detail in my February 08 column. A great resource for seeking new business would be from the companies with which your own property is doing business. Get a listing from the property accounts payable department. All hotels do a lot of business with local firms providing supplies and products to the properties. Some of those companies would probably have people visiting your city location, and most would have some sort of catering opportunity when they have meetings; retirement events or holiday parties. Further, some wonderful lead opportunities are missed by so many hotel sales people, it is just unbelievable. In any one day you could find 20-50 possible leads in any daily newspaper. Look for announcements of meetings being

held at competitors' properties, then try to get them for next time. Seek out articles in the paper covering special events coming up; make contact with the operator of those events to get listings of expected attendees, and try to get them to stay at your property. The same applies to all sporting events; participants in the events, families as well as sponsors need places to stay. Check out engagement announcements to get leads for catering business, not only for the wedding, but rehearsal dinners, bachelor parties, and overnight stays for out of town visitors. Look through the business section to see if there are any companies moving to town, new building under construction, and announcements of any promotions, or honors given to officers of companies. All these are good lead opportunities for room business as well as catered events.

Most of what has been written above is very basic to hotel sales; however, sometimes we forget the basics and get too complicated in trying to figure out how to find resources for developing new sales leads.

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