

**Hotel & Motel Management  
The Sales Clinic  
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By: Howard Feiertag**

### **UNDERSTANDING NEEDS IS CRITICAL IN GETTING A GROUP BOOKING**

**All too often, sales staffers, in just about all industries, and businesses, jump the gun when trying to make the sale. Of course, in most cases, there is great knowledge on the part of the sales people about the product they are selling, and can probably really relate the value of the product to a prospect. However, where many miss the boat in making the sale is not understanding the real needs of the prospects.**

**There is absolutely no point for any sales person, in any business, to try to start off to make a sale by telling all about the product. In many cases a real prospect doesn't need to know all there is to know about the product, but would be interested in those aspects of the product that would be important to his or her needs.**

**In our business of hospitality sales, when it comes to group bookings, we find this so true with many sales personnel whether it be in the group rooms end of the business of catering. Right now, most prospects for group business at a lodging property will seek information that is important to them in making a buy decision; such as, size and location of the property, number and types of rooms, size of meeting facilities, information on food service and other features of the prospective site. Therefore, when inquiries are made via the sales office of a property, via the phone, email, Web site, or third party providers, some knowledge of the facility is already known; however, what is really missing is what value is there for the prospect to use that particular facility, maybe even over another site.**

**The key to being successful in this business of selling in our hospitality industry is to really understand the particular needs of a prospect before trying to explain what features and amenities are available. The first step is to find out the who, what, when, where and why of many things before even**

**making an attempt to confirm some group business. Once any part, or all of those questions are answered then it should be possible to relate whatever features of the facilities would be a value to the group or prospect. Then those features need to be related to the prospect in such a manner that really does prove the value.**

**You see, it is not enough just to mention that the property does have a fitness center, once you have knowledge that most members of the group are used to exercising every day. It is not enough to just say that you have one, since the prospect probably already knows that. What we need to do is express that feature as a value to the members of the group. This, of course, can be accomplished in many ways. The key for sales staffers would be to get together and discuss with each other how to express value to prospects of the different property features. We need to start training ourselves.**

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