

WHO IS THE CHIEF-IN-CHARGE OF SALES?

OK, the reports are in that business is picking up, occupancy will be back up a little bit by the end of this year, and rates may be very slowly picking up, but RevPAR is down quite a bit. Of course, we knew this would happen when hotels started to compete by cutting rates, all over the place the past two years. One of our biggest problems was the fact that product was up considerably with new rooms on the market. Other than the economy situation, we had an oversupply of rooms. However, now the report is that demand is picking up (maybe by 3%) and the supply of rooms will not be more than 1-2%. We are certainly in a better position to start making hay while the sun is shining.

We do not know how long these “good times” will last before we see another supply of overbuilding. So it only makes sense that we should be doing something about improving profitable sales, especially in the limited-service, economy and budget segment; types of properties that may not have the benefit of a full time sales staff. Most properties in these segments do not have the luxury of a person assigned specifically to bringing in new business because of budgeting for staff. What’s the alternative? Look in the mirror; the answer of course, is you...the general manager or owner/operator of the property.

Here are some basic tips that really do work. The first thing we need to do is to make sure your telephone is being answered promptly, and by someone who has an enthusiastic voice. Yes, right! We do have our reservations coming through our Website, and of course through those central reservations systems operated by our major brands and independent systems. However, the telephones are still an important method used by people to make reservations. In all probability no one really knows how business is lost in a day by the phones not being answered promptly and pleasantly. This can easily be fixed by management paying more attention to it.

Another telephone related tip: when people call about rates and even offer buying signals, how about the desk clerk, or front office manager, whoever it may be, start asking key questions like name, phone number, company, etc and make the important statement: “I’ll go ahead and hold that room for you”. Central reservations offices do this very well. It is at the property level where we fall down on the job.

People do business with those they know, respect and like. How well-known are you in the community? Do people like you? Are you respected? You need to be highly visible and respected. Being active in local organizations and projects is a key to doing more business.

The point is that if you are a general manager or owner/operator of a property, it is likely that you have to be THE person responsible for getting new business. You are chief-in-charge of sales.