

Sales and Marketing

Hotel sales and marketing trends to watch in 2019

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Experts speaking at the HSMAI sales and marketing roundtable shared the top trends in their discipline heading into the new year.



SALES AND MARKETING TRENDS

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SAVANNAH, Georgia—Sales and marketing is a constantly evolving discipline within the hotel industry, and some experts in the field recently shared their takes on what to expect heading into 2019.

Speaking during the recent Hospitality Sales & Marketing Association International executive roundtable, representatives from hotel companies across the U.S. detailed what is new and interesting in the world of sales and marketing.

Evolving analytics

Jen Yakimicki Guimond, VP of revenue for North Central Management, said it's incumbent on sales and marketing leaders to find new ways to measure and judge success in their field to drive success going forward as more and more information becomes available to analysis performance.

“How do we break the habit of doing business this way because we’ve always done it this way ... let’s erase what we knew and say what we are actually trying to get,” she said. “And let’s dive into those things a little further, and let’s take another look at what our (key performance indicators) are to make sure we’re spending time in the places that matter most.”

Leticia Proctor, SVP of sales, revenue management and digital strategies for PM Hotel Group, said she hopes the industry will become more adept at analytics as it embraces more technology.

She said she'd like "analytics to be more transparent."

"I wish there was something there that I could just look at the analytics and say, 'Yes, I'm going to put our dollars here,'" she said.

Rate confusion

Amanda Lynch, corporate director of marketing and revenue management for Dow Hotel Company, said the marketplace now includes various places—like online travel agencies or direct channels—with various prices, which can be confusing for consumers and meetings planners.

It's important to "educate the meeting planner and the customer on these different types of rates, and specifically try to concentrate on educating the meeting planners when offering our group rates," she said.

M&A impacts

An ongoing stretch of mergers and acquisitions has changed the landscape of the hotel industry, and Cory Chambers, VP and chief revenue officer of HVMG, said sales and marketing professionals aren't immune to those changes, impacting personnel, comp sets and owner perceptions.

"I think what that has done is create a lot of expectations for future performance of hotels that is challenging to keep up with at times," he said.

Efficiency in communicating

With a rise in systems that allow for more personal communication with guests through things like SMS messaging, Michael Cady, VP of marketing for Charlestowne Hotels, said that creates opportunities in sales and marketing.

"We're seeing that marketing is touching so many different points of hospitality, whether it's through text or CRM," he said. "But what we're not seeing is it being implemented and fulfilled at the operational level. So we're looking to get someone who understands marketing and technology, but can see it through all the way to execution and support the operational team."

Promoting profitability

With increasing costs, every part of a hotel is going to be pinched to operate as efficiently as possible, and Linda Price-Topp, VP of sales for Marcus Hotels & Resorts, said that's an area of focus in sales and marketing.

"There's an increased focus this year on profitability while holding on to service levels in the hotel and how that rolls into our sales efforts and sales behavior," she said.

Marketing digitally to post-millennials

Proctor said she's seen a recent "increased focus on digital marketing," specifically that targets millennials and Gen Z.

"Ownership's buying in and focusing on putting dollars in the budget to really make sure there's a focus on shifting the (capture rate with) millennial and Gen Z travelers," she said. "That was really an 'aha' moment."

Lynch said it's important to increase digital marketing efforts not just for rooms revenue.

"At our full-service properties, we have food-and-beverage directors on property, and I'd like to be able to give them more guidance and more training to really introduce them to digital marketing," she said.

Editor-in-chief Stephanie Ricca contributed to this report.