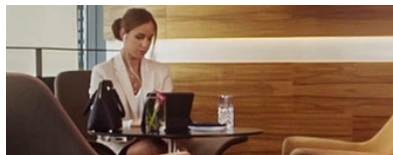


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OPINION ARTICLE

10 May 2017

How Did The Bartell Hotels' Call Center Capture 7% More Revenue From 11% Fewer Calls?

By **Doug Kennedy**

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Founded in 1975, Bartell Hotels is one of San Diego's oldest and largest independent hotel companies with eight hotels, including six that are branded (from 4 different national brands) and two independents. Bartell Hotels include: Holiday Inn Bayside, San Diego Airport Hilton, The Dana on Mission Bay, Pacific Terrace Hotel, Sheraton La Jolla Hotel, Humphrey's Half Moon Inn & Suites, Best Western Plus Island Palms Hotel & Marina, and Days Inn at Hotel Circle by Sea World.



Like all hotel companies, Bartell Hotels was looking for ways to increase direct boo

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Yet unlike so many other companies that have outsourced reservations to brand call centers, Bartell maintains its own centralized reservations call center to provide the personalized service and local area knowledge that today's callers are seeking.

In early 2015, Bartell Hotels contracted with KTN to provide its *Hotel Reservations QUEST* training and mystery shopping program for the reservations team at their call center and also implemented the best practices KTN recommended, such as new "by agent" sales metric reporting and new staff recognition and incentive contests.

"The results continue to speak for themselves," according to Sergio Davies, General Manager of the Humphrey's Half Moon Inn and Suites. "For example, as compared to the first 4 months of last year, in 2017 our call volume went down by 11.7%, while revenue sold is up by 7.1%" he said. The best part is that this was not accomplished by discounting, but rather by a balance of converting more calls into bookings and also upselling. "Results improved across the board. Our 'ADR Sold' went up by 3.7%" Davies added.

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of today's callers have already researched online. What they don't want to hear is a scripted list of features. Nor do they want to just hear agents read the same list of rates they have found when they searched.

Instead, Bartell's agents now routinely ask questions such as: "As I'm checking those dates, are there any questions I can answer for you about our location or amenities?" This provides an opportunity to sell the experience and not just quote a rate. For those callers who do have questions, their agents are more prepared than ever to answer them, as part of the training process involved regularly scheduled familiarization tours lead by their KTN trainer and complete with various homework assignments.

Beyond the training, Bartell Hotels also re-evaluated their staff recognition and incentive programs to ensure that they were rewarding agents for taking the actions that have the most impact on sales, and not just good shop call scores.

Of course it is also helps that the Bartell Hotels are all highly rated, and that they have a mostly long-term staff who is fully dedicated to hospitality excellence. All of this leads to more repeat bookers and that also helps conversion.

So many other companies seem to focus solely on electronic channels, mistakenly overlooking the opportunities to impact direct bookings their agents encounter every day. Alternatively, the strong focus that this company has on the voice channel is helping them generate even more revenue the past two years in a row, despite that call volume has dropped significantly in this hotel market.

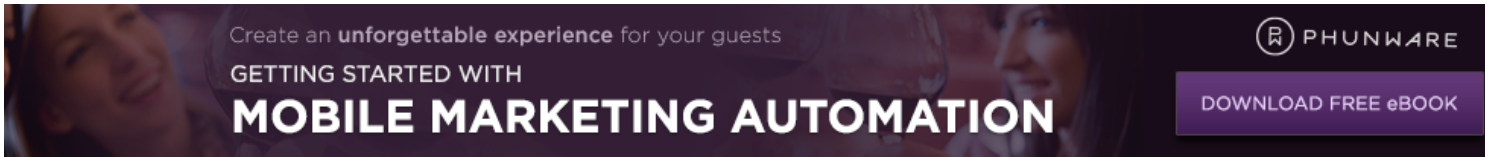
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