



JUNE 2010

Introducing the Newest Member of Your Hotel Marketing Team: The Social Media Manager

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Wanted: Person to be part of our marketing team and facilitate ongoing conversation with online customers, bloggers, friends and foes, and influencers. Be the online eyes and ears of our brand and blog, digg, tweet and bleep. Monitor online chatter and create new content to boost our reputation and site traffic. Define content, develop messaging, send 140-character messages, respond to posts, produce snappy web videos, blogs and other technologies. Must be storyteller at heart and know when to step-up the conversation and steer it constructively. Know your way around online and be proactive at trying new tools. Project the voice of our hotel with genuine sincerity and authenticity.

Presenting the “Social Media” or “Community Manager.” What exactly will he or she do and how will you incorporate this position’s responsibilities into the rest of your marketing functions?

I recall my ITT Sheraton days back in the 90’s with fondness. For 10 years, I handled advertising and public relations for Sheraton Hotels of New York. I reported to the director of marketing, attended meetings with sales managers, and oversaw the retained PR and marketing agencies. I’d like to think that we were efficient at integrating our marketing strategies.

Now, in this burgeoning digital world where we need to make “connections” more than “impressions,” social media channels are changing the way we do business and forever altering how we will attract, engage and retain a loyal community base. With the evolution of LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter, FlickrR, YouTube and more, we can interact with all these platforms with unprecedented access to guests. What’s more, social sites now rival search engines as methods for people to search and drive traffic, and they need to be monitored.

It’s all taken us by storm and we’re so anxious to get engaged. But social media connecting and monitoring is time consuming, requiring far more attention than any Director of Marketing has time for.

Companies need a dedicated marketer to engage and keep the conversation going. And in order to utilize the new tools and tactics to benefit you most, they need to be integrated wisely and consistent with the rest of your communications, sales and marketing, and revenue management efforts.

Enter the Social Media Manager. Under supervision from the Director of Marketing (whether this person is onsite or with an outside agency can be debated), this new team member will enthusiastically engage in dialogue for entrée to a whole new customer base of potential

influencers. Whether connecting with prospective customers via LinkedIn, reaching out to Fans on Facebook or Twitter with promotions, making images available on Flickr and running contests, or helping potential guests make their travel decisions with video on YouTube, they will become an integral part of your team.

Your Social Media Manager will not just push your message, but connect in a two-way dialogue or conversation. For example, if you're sending out a press release regarding a contest or package, your message can gain extra mileage by being pieced apart and used to engage with a variety of social groups.

Finding the *right* Social Media Manager to represent your brand is key. This person must embody and embrace the personality of your brand. He or she will be passionate about your product and understand the corporate culture -- and the excitement will be infectious enough to build an active online community. Other qualities include creativity, marketing mentality and writing ability, media- and techno-savvy, professionalism, and able to answer specific questions regarding hotel amenities, rates, packages and attractions.

It is also imperative that this position communicate frequently with all members of the sales, marketing and p.r. team so that when he or she connects with a sales manager's client or with the p.r. person's press contact, everyone is aware of the communication. It truly needs to be an integrated effort.

About the Author

Leora Halpern Lanz joined HVS in February 1999 and is responsible for coordinating the global marketing and external promotion of HVS' worldwide office network and comprehensive hospitality services. Additionally, she coordinates the internal communications for the firm as well as contributes to the production of the firm's weekly e-newsletter, website and intranet. Her efforts have earned her awards and accolades from the prestigious Hospitality Sales & Marketing Association International (HSMIAI) including a nomination as Sales & Marketing Executive of the Year for 2009, as well as awards from within HVS itself.

Leora directs HVS Sales & Marketing Services, which provides sales, marketing, revenue management, social media and public relations expertise for the hospitality industry. Specialties include: operational reviews, marketing plan development, sales and marketing assessments, review of hotel marketing strategies (sales organizations and operations), public relations, sales and marketing coordination with a property's flag, sales action planning, pre-opening marketing, sales direction and training, and publicity and promotions including web marketing.

About HVS Sales & Marketing Services

HVS Sales & Marketing Services, headquartered in New York, helps hotel owners and operators strengthen returns on hospitality investments in the areas of hotel sales consulting, hotel sales and marketing consulting, hotel resort sales consulting, revenue management and e-commerce. We can assist you by conducting sales and marketing assessments; creating sales and marketing plans for new, repositioned and stabilized hotels; conducting sales training programs, and even serving as your interim Director of Sales & Marketing during transition periods or staff changes. Our strong understanding of regional and international markets will enable you to capitalize on your competitive strength and improve ROI.

For further information regarding our expertise and specifics about our services, visit <http://www.hvs.com/Services/MarketingComm/>.