2016 Social Media Action Plan For Hoteliers

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INTRODUCTION

The Impact of Social Media on Online Reputations and Bookings in the Hospitality Industry

Today, information about hotels is available 24/7, and not just from the hotel or travel professionals. Past guests also share their experiences across the web with friends and networks on social media sites, OTAs and online review sites like TripAdvisor.

This is a huge shift from 20 years ago, when people largely found their inspiration from talking to travel agents and friends, or reading magazines about great places to visit and stay. While information was readily shared, it wasn't as widely available or as multi-faceted as it is today. Brands largely controlled the message. Today, travel inspiration often happens on sites like Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest, and Instagram, where people are readily sharing their photos, videos and experiences, both the good and the bad.

As such, social media presents a new challenge for hospitality. It is a channel that combines marketing and highly transparent customer service. Therefore, the way hoteliers engage with travelers on the web is critical and can be the difference between gaining or losing a new booking. Consider these facts:

- ⅓ of consumers use Facebook to speak with a customer service representative.
- 47% of consumers think Facebook is the quickest social media channel to solve a customer service issue.
- According to TripAdvisor, 68% of consumers say that if they were considering two comparable properties, the presence of a management response on one listing would sway them in its favor.

Successful messaging to today's traveler is no longer about selling. It's about building a long-term relationship with your guests on a one-to-one level. The way to do that is to offer value in ways that enrich the everyday lives of your guests. Hoteliers can't just provide excellent service to guests during their stays. Hoteliers need to reach their guests before they know they want to take a trip and maintain that relationship beyond the stay. They have to delight before, during, and after a trip through continuous conversations.

So what does this mean for hoteliers? In order to build relationships with and successfully market to past, current and prospective guests, it is absolutely essential for hotels to have an effective social media strategy and active presence across as many networks as possible.

This presents a problem for many hoteliers, as the social media landscape is rapidly evolving. Hoteliers are asking questions that didn't exist 10 years ago:

- What networks are prominent today?
- What types of content and strategy work best for each network?
- What types of guests are you likely to see on each network?
- And for hoteliers with limited time and resources, how can you build a strategy that fits your specific goals?

In this guide, hoteliers will get an overview of the social media landscape. They will also learn about the different types of social media interaction, how to build and operationalize the right plan for their specific hotel, how to set the right goals, and how to measure their success. We also have some tools in the final chapter that will help hoteliers build a plan, including a Social Media Calendar template, and a sample Social Media and Online Reviews Standard Operating Procedures document. This is your comprehensive guide to building a Successful Social Media Action Plan in 2016.

In this guide, you'll learn exactly how and when to respond to online reviews. You'll also learn how to get the most out of your guest satisfaction surveys. We'll teach you the ins and outs of TripAdvisor, including how to improve your property's ranking, and we'll give you the rundown on the various social networks. Finally, we'll outline some guidelines on how to set goals and measure your success.

SECTION 1

The State of Social Media in 2016

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The social media landscape is constantly evolving. Most hotels today have active profiles on social networks and are using the channels to engage with prospects and guests. But, it can be difficult for hoteliers to determine where to spend time and resources, especially in hotels where both are limited. Here's a rundown on today's top major social networks, to help you decide where to invest.

Facebook

As the world's largest social network, Facebook has 1.1 billion global active users and has become a major part of its users' daily lives. With dedicated brand pages, Facebook can be an effective way to obtain guest feedback and extend the reach of your brand in a personal and unobtrusive way. Brands that engage on Facebook also have access to rich demographic data about fans, including identity, activities, interests, and location, which is helpful for understanding your target market. When you understand your guests, you can deliver targeted communications, which increase the effectiveness of your marketing efforts For example personalized emails, which you can create using information that your guests share on Facebook, are shown to have a 25% higher open rate and a 51% higher click rate, according to a 2013 Experian study.

It is essential for every hotel to maintain an active presence on Facebook, even if you only post two to three times per week. Here are some guidelines for successfully nurturing your community of Facebook followers:

The 80-20 Rule

With the rise of the Millennial generation, your customers are becoming more and more averse to advertising. So, a best practice is to make 80% of your shared content non-promotional. Blasting your audience with marketing messages is a good way to chase them away. But, telling a story about your guest experience in a real, honest, and personable way is a great way to foster a genuine community.

Use visually rich photos

Facebook's Timeline and NewsFeed are designed to support visual content. Photos get 53% more likes than text posts on Facebook, according to Hubspot. The good news is you probably already have a lot of beautiful high-resolution images of your property. Don't be afraid to show them off! Use one of the professional photos for the cover image on your property's brand page. If you have staff members who are good with a smartphone camera, you can also add plenty of impromptu snapshots.

Fix the little details

Don't skimp on the details. Be sure your page displays the correct location and contact information, and that you've assigned it to the correct category (hotels). You should also use the relevant keywords in your About section for search engine optimization (SEO).

Post at the right time

Knowing when to share brand-related content on your Facebook page can be a messy guessing game for even the most experienced marketer. Each brand page's audience is unique and Facebook's continual tinkering of its News Feed algorithm makes the job of staying relevant all the more challenging. Even with these obstacles, it is still useful to possess a general understanding of what days of the week see the highest level of engagement.

Fortunately, LinchpinSEO has put together a handy infographic that highlights this information, segmenting the days that offer brands the most Facebook engagement. This information is based on data that was compiled earlier last year by Buddy Media, which analyzed more than 1,800 brand Facebook pages over a two-month span to come up with its findings.

Below are some general findings from the study. Interactions here are defined as a like, comment or share that a post receives.

- Posts published between 8 p.m. and 7 a.m. received 14% higher interaction than posts published between 8 a.m. and 7 p.m.
- Brands that post once a day see 19% higher interaction rates.
- Pages that post more than seven times per week see a 25% decrease in interaction rates.
- Interaction rate for weekend posts is 14.5% higher than for weekday posts, yet only 14% of posts are published on weekends.

How is this relevant for hoteliers and restaurateurs? Data from the hospitality industry confirms the fact that higher page interaction rates can be achieved by publishing towards the end of the week and especially on the weekend. If you manage a restaurant's Facebook page or have a food and beverage operation on-property, it would be wise to use this information to plan your posting schedule.

Monitor your page for questions and guest issues
Guests today often turn to social media when they have an issue, rather than contacting the front desk directly. Not responding is like letting your phone ring. Forty two percent of consumers expect an answer to a social media enquiry within 60 minutes. Don't risk a bad review by letting these guests slip through the cracks.

Twitter

Twitter is a great place to connect with travelers on the go with real-time ideas and up-to-the-minute information. As the world's largest microblogging site, what makes Twitter different from Facebook is its focus on simplicity. Ideas are neatly segmented into categories by hashtags and geo-located trending topics.

Sixty percent of Twitter users connect using a smartphone and travelers are no exception. But, in addition to searching for specials and events during their travel and connecting with the property long after they have returned home, guests are using Twitter as a real-time customer service resource. Therefore, it's critical that all businesses on Twitter be prepared for this. But, there are also everyday functions of Twitter to consider for maximum engagement. Here's our roundup of tips:

Use hashtag searches

In addition to the services mentioned above, Twitter allows you to search for and save hashtags from both the desktop and mobile applications. Search for hashtags for upcoming events near your hotel, like #ParisFashionWeek. Use hashtags trending in your geographical region for inspiration for tweets. You can also use hashtags for your city, not only to get your own Twitter activity noticed, but to keep yourself up-to-date on events happening near your hotel.

Stick to only a few hashtags

While hashtag use has become a pervasive phenomenon across all media channels, overusing them in your tweets will result in lower engagement. A report from Twitter states that tweets with up to two hashtags receive nearly 50% more engagement.

Use appropriate punctuation and formatting
The biggest misperception about tweeting is that audiences do not care about style or formatting. This is completely untrue, according to a report from social media scientist Dan Zarrella who found that tweets with correct punctuation are consistently retweeted more often than those with sloppy punctuation. Each tweet should begin with a capital letter, use proper grammar, and avoid text-message abbreviations.

Schedule Your Tweets

Low-cost applications like Hootsuite, TweetDeck and Buffer may be worth a try. They are convenient for tweeting on-the-go from a mobile device, allowing you to capture behind-the-scenes looks of your property's operation in real-time. They also offer auto-scheduling functionality, letting you schedule tweets at optimal engagement times. This feature is especially useful for maintaining an active social media presence over evenings and weekends, when social media activity remains significant.

Flash deals
Make your Twitter followers feel special by offering last-minute or limited time deals. Make sure your tweet includes a link leading directly to the landing page for the deal.

Visit the Discover page
Twitter's Discover page offers a helpful way to uncover compelling re-tweetable content that you may have missed by showing you what content your followers have shared, favorited and re-tweeted. The Discover section also allows you to browse categories, which is extremely helpful when looking to follow travel-related brands, thought leaders and small businesses.

Limit your tweet's length
To ensure that your content is most shareable, limit your tweet's length to 100 to 120 characters. Nothing is more annoying to an active tweeter than when a message is not easily re-tweetable because it is too long. By limiting tweets to this length, your followers can share the content easily and add a comment to your message, offering your content the best chance to achieve maximum reach.

Post at the right time
Once you consistently commit to the above practices, you will be prepared to grow your follower base. Fusework Studios and Buddy Media report that real-time engagement will have a maximum reach during the following days and times:

- Tweets sent on Saturdays and Sundays see a 17% higher engagement level than those sent on weekdays.
- Wednesdays and Thursdays are the days with the lowest rates of engagement.
- Tweets that are published between 8 a.m. and 7 p.m. in your time zone see a 30% increase in engagement throughout the week.

These best practices don't mean hoteliers have to be working during these time frames. With social media automation and scheduling tools like Hootsuite, you can set up tweets and other social media posts in advance. A best practice is to set aside a block of time each week to schedule posts for the entire following week. By following the above recommendations and taking advantage of a helpful social media dashboard, your brand will be headed toward higher Twitter engagement and audience reach.

Response time
Guests who tweet a service request to a hotel expect a speedy response. Remember, 42% of consumers who use social media for customer service expect a response within 60 minutes, according to Edison Research. While we realize this is not always possible, especially when your hotel has limited resources to devote to social media, it's a good idea to get as close as possible to this response goal. One idea is to have multiple people within your organization take shifts monitoring your Twitter notifications for service requests.

Google+

Although Google+ started slow, it now has more active users than Twitter, according to a 2014 GWI study. Google+ Local is a directory like Urban Spoon that is integrated with Google Maps and Google Search. A Local page allows your property to appear in Google's "local block," which is a collection of search results that are promoted to the top of the page for local queries, just below the first or second organic result. The advantage of having an active Google+ presence, even if you don't see much engagement directly on the social network, is that you may see growth in organic search traffic, because your property has increased visibility in Google Search.

It's also important to remember that Google is an ambitious, rapidly-growing company, and the Google Business Page is the pillar of Google's strategy in travel. Google+ Local now has a significant share of online traveler reviews. Also, with Google Maps taking more and more space on search results pages, well-managed and content-filled Business Pages will rise to the top of results. This is only Google's first step into the realm of travel, so hoteliers should be ready today. Here are some tips to get you started:

Make a Google+ Business Page
Use your Business Page to engage with your guests and share items like photos, hotel news, and deals.

Create content that is unique to Google+

While you could get away with posting the same content to Google+ as you do to Facebook, to really succeed on the network, you should take advantage of some of its unique features. Post valuable content to relevant Community pages. Incorporate keywords to take advantage of the SEO factor. You can also customize your messages with bold, italic and strike-through text. These styles can make your posts stand out while also making them impactful.

Add a +1 button to your website and blog

Encourage guests to add your hotel to their circles and share your content.

Remember your demographics

Many active users of Google+ are younger, largely male, and more likely to be Millennials than Boomers. Target your messaging accordingly.

YouTube

In addition to Google+, YouTube is an excellent way to give your hotel increased exposure through SEO, as it adds high search-ranking video content to your search strategy effort. This is a huge opportunity for hoteliers, because guest engagement with video content is very high: 97% of travelers who watch online video did so within the last month, according to Google's 2014 Traveler Study. Here are a few things to consider when building your hotel's page on YouTube:

Use your Google+ page to create your account

If you already have a Google+ Business Page set up, be sure you're logged in to the correct Google+ account before you navigate to YouTube.

Make content, not ads

You will notice very quickly that traditional types of advertising do not work on YouTube. Even company introductions or product demo videos don't perform well unless they are done in a creative and engaging way. When creating video content, spend some time thinking about why and how your followers will share your content. This shareability factor is just as important as your idea and the execution of it in video form.

Become the face of your hotel

YouTube is a community made of real people and they want to see, hear, and interact with other real people. The connection to your business becomes much more powerful if you or someone in your organization becomes the face of your brand. It changes the dynamic of the interaction from looking at videos from yet another company to building a relationship with a human. Relationship building becomes a long term strategy that can create loyal guests.

Leverage YouTube videos for SEO

YouTube is the second largest search engine after Google, and the two play really nicely together. In fact, it seems (although Google's algorithm is top-secret) that a YouTube video with proper use of keywords in the title, tags, and description has an easier time ranking high in search. Your YouTube listing will also appear with a thumbnail image in Google search, which is eye-catching for someone searching through several results.

Pinterest

In 2012, Google identified five stages of travel, starting with inspiration. According to a 2014 Aha!logy media consumption study, 38% of all active Pinterest users have bought something because they saw it on the site, while 64% of daily users try a new Pinterest-inspired activity once a month. This is an ideal place to find those active doers and early adopters who love to try and buy new things.

Now that Pinterest drives more traffic than Google+, YouTube, and LinkedIn combined, it's more important than ever for hoteliers who

have the resources to cultivate a community of followers there. The key to success? Beautiful photography. With large, high-resolution photos, a little bit of planning, and time spent browsing Pinterest, your hotel can take advantage of the perfect time to inspire Pinterest users and gain exposure on their travel boards. Here are some tips to get you started:

The 80-20 Rule

Remember the 80-20 rule from our Facebook chapter? It applies to your posts on Pinterest too. According to the Aha!logy study, 45% of active Pinterest users worry that ads won't fit with the platform's spirit of sharing authentic, organic content. Therefore, 80% of your posts should highlight the best of your geographical location, local events and attractions. If you post too much about your own property and amenities, you risk pushing away your prospective guests rather than attracting them to your brand.

Collaborate on group boards

Get together with your vendors, neighboring attractions, or local restaurants to create a group board. Since multiple people can collaborate around a specific interest or theme, you can create a place of inspiration for Pinterest users without coming off as too salesy.

Highlight Weddings and Food

The "Weddings" category on Pinterest is by far the most popular on the site. If your hotel is a wedding venue, this is a great avenue by which you can increase your weddings business. Use your best photos from weddings to capture the fancy of future brides in their early planning stages. Likewise, if your hotel has a relationship with local restaurants, hire a professional photographer to highlight some of the best local flavors.

Engage with your brand enthusiasts

An easy way to turn your brand enthusiasts into promoters is to engage with their pins. Search for your brand name and comment on or repin what you find. Your fans will be tickled that you thought highly of their content.

Instagram

Due to Instagram's highly visual and user-friendly nature, hotels can have great success marketing themselves on this platform. Instagram now has more daily active users on mobile than Twitter. And, any employee with a smartphone can create photos of the hotel, its events, local activities, and more with very little time investment and little-to-no-cost. Consumers appreciate this exclusive look into your hotel, and you could benefit from a very high ROI on your marketing spend. Here are a few tips for success:

Leverage user-generated content

Encourage your guests to tag their Instagram photos with a specific hashtag. For example, guests at The Four Seasons use #FSFotog. As a result, #FSFotog has grown into a collection of over 30,000 photos of guests enjoying their stay at Four Seasons properties. Another best practice is to get permission to feature these hashtagged photos on Facebook or a special page on your hotel's website.

Ask for employee submissions

As we mentioned previously, it's easy to get the whole team involved in content creation. You never know whether your best photos will come from professionals or from your valet staff.

Try the videos feature

Instagram makes it very easy to take and edit video, and not many hotels are doing it yet. Here's your chance to shine! Try documenting the setup for a stunning wedding or your chef's construction of a beautiful dessert. GoodEggs has some great examples of simple, charming videos.

SECTION 2

How to Set the Right Goals

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The Content Marketing Institute reported that the most common, and often most effective, social media objectives are to:

- Engage new customers / prospects
- Raise brand awareness
- Increase traffic to site
- Increase sales
- Improve brand perception

If we apply this list to hospitality, we can identify a few potential goals for hoteliers on social media:

- Improve guest communications
- Engage with past, current, and prospective guests
- Generate more website traffic
- Increase your brand's exposure
- Enable direct bookings

After you determine what the high-level goals are for your hotel, you can decide where to focus your efforts on social media. Here are potential social media networks and actions associated with each goal.

GOAL:

Improve guest communications

NETWORKS:

If your goal is to improve your guest communications, focus on Facebook and Twitter. Twitter in particular is conducive to cultivating a two-way customer service dialogue between your hotel and your guests. Guests already use these channels when they want to ask questions or make a complaint public. In fact, according to a 2012 L2 report, 77% of hotel Twitter accounts and 44% of hotel Facebook accounts receive customer service-related messages. To improve guest communications, you should talk to your guests via their preferred channels.

GOAL:

Engage with past, current and prospective guest

NETWORKS:

Guests don't use social media only for complaints or questions. Consumers are increasingly following brands they like on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram, especially those that somehow provide value with their social media posts. All three of these social networks allow for cultivating a one-to-one relationship between hotels and guests.

How can hoteliers cultivate this relationship? You can start by responding when your fans make comments on your page. If a past guest comments that he or she enjoyed staying with your hotel, reply to the relevant Twitter or Instagram handle. You can say something like, "We're so delighted you enjoyed your stay with us! We'd love to have you again sometime."

Try user-generated content campaigns. For example, re-tweet your guests' tweets about their fantastic stays, and consider reaching out to them privately. These socially active guests are potential influencers, who will continue to promote your hotel to their network, if you treat them well and gain their loyalty. You can also run Instagram campaigns with guest photos, tagging your property in the location. Be careful to give credit where due by incorporating the guest's Instagram handle in the description. You may also want to

consider asking for the guest's permission before you use the photo. Here's one way to get permission:

Remember, your social media followers are often your best customers. Take advantage of Instagram, Twitter, and Facebook to cultivate the relationship and turn your fans into promoters.

GOAL:

Generate more website traffic

NETWORKS:

If generating more website traffic to your site through social media is the paramount priority, optimizing your Google+ presence should be number one on your to-do list. Your Google+ presence will have the biggest long-term impact on improving your search engine optimization through social media. YouTube videos also rank high in organic search results, boosting your SEO.

GOAL:

Increase your brand's exposure and enable direct bookings

NETWORKS:

Encouraging guests to book with you directly rather than through an OTA can be as simple as first increasing brand exposure, and then cultivating one-to-one relationships with your fans. Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Instagram, Pinterest, and Google+ can impact your hotel's exposure in a way that is uniquely social and complementary to your company's website. Just as consistently compelling, Facebook posts can help get your brand's message into users' News Feeds, while proactive social listening on Twitter affords an excellent opportunity to crowdsource unique user-generated content about your hotel or restaurant.

Once that communication channel is open between you and your customers, you can use it to target them with messaging, inspire

them with photos, and share special offers. These activities will drive direct bookings to you. Also, guests who feel an affinity with your brand will be more likely to book with you over a competitor that doesn't spend time building a relationship with its followers.

While it's important to note that each of these social media channels is very different in terms of the types of campaigns you can run and the types of followers you can reach, they all have one thing in common: Your guests engage with brands on these channels because they feel the brand provides value. Facebook's recent decision to change its News Feed algorithm so that posts that feel too promotional don't show up in users' News Feeds is reflective of this. Today's hotel guests don't want to be sold to. They want to build relationships and have conversations.

SECTION 3

Five Types of Social Media Actions

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Five Types of Social Media Actions

Through our work with over 23,000 hospitality professionals worldwide, we've developed a framework that should prove helpful as you create your own strategic social media plan and standard operating procedures for 2016. We organize potential social media actions into five main categories.

Engagement

What: Develop your brand story on social media. Respond to questions and identify your brand enthusiasts.

Why: Engaged social followers are your best customers. With the right marketing initiatives, you can turn brand enthusiasts into influencers. Influencers create a word-of-mouth phenomenon by spreading the word about the best parts of your property to their social networks.

In a 2013 study, Forrester Consulting found that people who engaged with a brand on social media at least daily made, on average, twice as many purchases from that brand as someone who only engaged monthly.

RESULT: Increased satisfaction and loyalty. Incremental bookings. Encouraged word-of-mouth marketing.

Customer Service

What: Monitor all comments posted to your social media profiles. Respond ASAP to any negative feedback or complaints.

Why: Social media is becoming a very public, interactive support line. It is more important than ever to respond promptly and appropriately. ACCENT found that nearly half of consumers use social media to make issues public. More than half (51%) use social media to see if others have had similar issues. Close to half of the consumers (44%) who post about issues to Facebook in particular expect a response from the brand. Guests may complain on social media while they're still on property. If you resolve the issue before they check out, you may save yourself a bad review on TripAdvisor. Responding quickly to any negative feedback on social media also reassures potential customers that you care about your guests.

RESULT: Real-time service recovery. Reputation management.

GET INSPIRED: Through active social media monitoring and engagement, Grupo Sunset, a six-property group in Riviera Maya, was able to bring a unique moment of special delight to a guest. While monitoring its Facebook page, managers learned that a guest's daughter was very disappointed not to find the chocolate-dipped strawberries that were mentioned in the hotel's marketing materials. Seeing this comment, the GM immediately requested that the property chef send a special plate of strawberries to the young girl. Jim Wehrle, E-Business Director, explains, "I don't know how much this sort of advertising would cost, but the little girl's mother was so pleased that she bought a timeshare for our resort the next day."

84% 84% of users agree that an appropriate management response to a bad review "improves my impression of the hotel."

Public Feedback Analysis and Operationalization

What: Analyze all comments posted to your social media profiles and look for trends in your feedback. Identify any action items. Share your findings with your entire staff and engage with department leaders to make necessary changes.

Why: Gain valuable new insight and make smart operational changes based on what your guests are saying about you. Learn what guests truly love about your hotel and what they are consistently complaining about so you can improve your operations and drive revenue.

RESULT: Improved operational performance. Increased guest satisfaction and loyalty. Incremental bookings. Prioritized facility improvements, based on data specific to your guests and your property.

GET INSPIRED: "We found that we were getting a lot of commentary about our beds that indicated an improvement was needed. We made the decision to replace all of the hotel's beds as quickly as possible," says David Eisenbraun, General Manager of Pier 2620 Hotel in San Francisco. Now, comments regarding the hotel's beds are substantially positive.

Competitive Intelligence

What: "Spy" on your competitors' guest feedback. Leverage sentiment analysis to identify your competitors' operational strengths and weaknesses based on voice-of-the-customer feedback.

Why: Harness this social media feedback to discover what guests like and dislike about your competitors' properties. Use this information to highlight the ways you are better than your competitors in the eyes of their guests.

RESULT: Identify competitive advantages. Optimize your marketing and public relations.

USE TECHNOLOGY: Use an online reputation management solution to track feedback for your property and for those of your competitors. "Revinate is a really important tool for us to stay on top of our guest feedback, and also to see what's happening at other hotels in our market. Knowing what guests are saying about our competitors and why guests are choosing to stay there is critical in a competitive market like Bangkok," says Samir Wildemann, General Manager of the Okura Prestige Bangkok.

Marketing Intelligence

What: Use social media searches to discover what people are talking about in your geographical region. Look at how your competitors are marketing themselves and learn about trending topics and hashtags. Find past guests and prospective guests in the research/inspiration phase of travel planning, based on who is posting about your geographical region.

Why: Understanding your potential guests while pinpointing trending topics and interests can help you deliver more relevant marketing messages via email. You can also use this opportunity to establish a one-to-one relationship with past and prospective guests.

Targeted email campaigns produce more opens than undifferentiated messages

Targeted email campaigns produce much higher click-through rates than undifferentiated messages

76% of all email marketing revenue comes from more advanced practices than generic broadcast email

*Source: DMA National Client Email Report 2013

RESULT: Discover new marketing topics, trends, and best practices. Deliver more effective targeted marketing. Develop a continuous relationship with your guests.

GET INSPIRED: The Amora Hotel Jamison Sydney is an independently owned hotel with 415 rooms, a world-class spa, conference and meeting space, and the presidential suites necessary to service VIP guests. Front Office Manager Abhishek Sinha enjoys the unique social media features that come with Revinate's Online Reputation Management solution. He says, "One of the best parts of Online Reputation Management is the social search feature. I wasn't getting this with the other online GSS provider, and I've never heard of this functionality in my 15 years in hospitality. We can put in keywords for our area, and get all social media mentions pulled up, allowing us to target promotions based on what people are looking for."

Did you know?

Bain & Company reported that customers who interact with companies using social media spend between 20 and 40% more money at those companies than other customers.

These customers didn't spend more because they were bombarded with sales-oriented posts, but rather because they were engaged by the brand.

We recognize that this list may seem overwhelming at first. Don't panic. It's possible to build a social media plan for every team and budget, no matter how large or small. We'll talk about the steps to building and operationalizing your plan in the next chapter.

SECTION 4

Building and Operationalizing Your Plan

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Building and Operationalizing Your Plan

With this framework in mind, it's time to start thinking about the critical aspects of your own plan and the standard operating procedures that make sense for your property, team, and budget.

In this digital age, putting together a strong social media marketing plan that works for your brand is a top-of-mind priority for hospitality. Nevertheless, the task of creating a strategic social plan can be a daunting and overwhelming one, particularly for properties that have limited resources or are uncertain about which tactics to deploy when looking to reach their social media goals. In this section, we've provided a series of steps that will help you stay on track and build your social media marketing plan incrementally.

Please keep in mind that your plan will evolve over time as you begin to hit your goals and learn more about your audience. It shouldn't be overly complex. The more complicated your plan, the more likely that it won't be adopted across your organization. So, let's keep it simple by following these steps:

1. Determine available resources.
2. Prioritize actions to undertake.
3. Assign responsibilities.
4. Get started!

1 Determine Available Resources

The first step in developing the right social media action plan for your property is to determine what resources you have to devote to it. Keep in mind that social media absolutely does not have to be one person's responsibility. Do you have the budget to hire somebody full time? Will you divide and conquer, with several different team members participating in different aspects of social media management? Will it be 20% of one person's time? Does your team have access to a smartphone for Instagram and behind-the-scenes posts? These are all things to consider.

2 Prioritize Actions to Undertake

Decide which social media actions from Chapter 3 are best in line with the priorities for your property. Once you've prioritized your goals, you're ready to choose the actions you'll undertake. You should probably be doing everything on the list from Chapter 3 in some capacity, but don't feel like everything has to be top priority. Pick the social media actions that are most important and most realistic for your property, based on your goals and resources.

3 Assign Responsibilities

After you've determined which actions you'll undertake, the next step is to decide which team member(s) will be responsible for each action. The size of your staff will inform your decisions. For smaller teams, a single person may cover everything. Large teams may have a different person responsible for each action.

For example, the person in charge of Guest Satisfaction could monitor social media, while the Operations Manager could drive internal

improvements based on sentiment analysis. A member of the marketing or public relations team could handle social media engagement. Or, in some cases, perhaps you have a bellhop or a front desk clerk who is particularly handy with a smartphone camera. With some training on brand messaging and voice, almost any employee in your organization can be a social media content-creating asset. Your optimal setup will be unique to your team.

4 Set Processes and Goals

The next step is to operationalize your plan. This is critical: Your likelihood of success will be significantly higher if you set up the clear internal processes necessary to implement, manage, and measure the progress of your plan.

To begin, we suggest setting up a regular meeting with the whole social media team. These regular check-ins will be instrumental in sharing information, measuring success, and maintaining motivation and momentum.

In your initial meetings, team members should come up with specific goals and metrics that they will track over time. Remember: What gets measured gets done.

After you set your initial goals, your regular meetings will be invaluable in sharing results and updating the team about key learnings. Don't be afraid to adjust your goals and strategy as you learn more about your audience.

SECTION 5

How to Measure Your Success

SECTION 5

How to Measure Success

Part of the beauty of social media marketing is that you can measure nearly everything you do. Keep in mind, though, that you need to know what it is you hope to get out of your time spent on social networks before you dive in. Collecting data from which no meaningful insights can be derived can lead to time wasted in what's not-so-lovingly referred to as "analysis paralysis."

For some, goals are as simple as driving traffic and measuring conversions. For many, however, things are far more complex. Your ROI may come in the form of cost savings from handling customer service issues on Twitter instead of over the phone. Perhaps you can track increased foot traffic from a Facebook promotion, or a collection of user-generated content from an Instagram campaign. The key is striking a balance between two kinds of data: quantitative and qualitative.

1 Quantitative Data is generally numeric in nature. You can apply true scientific analysis to this kind of data. Examples of quantitative data in social media marketing might include the following:

Engagement

Engagement is a highly meaningful metric, perhaps one of the most important in measuring your own success and efforts in social media marketing. Engagement tells you how well you're doing in having conversations with your community and whether the content you create piques their interest. A host of different actions can be used to measure engagement. On Twitter, it could be the number of mentions, retweets, favorites, and responses. On Facebook, it could be likes and comments. For all of these, a percent increase over a time period can indicate whether your social strategy is working, or whether you need to make some adjustments and try something new.

Fans/Followers

Don't place too much weight on this metric, as it is only a number and may not be tied to something more meaningful. But, it is a sign of success if the number of your followers gets into the thousands. It's also a good metric to use when benchmarking your social media success against that of your competitors.

Click-through Rate

Click-through rate or CTR is valuable for hoteliers looking to drive traffic back to their brand.com sites. While familiar to most Internet marketers, it can be useful for social media marketing as well, because CTR is a metric that directly attributes a social media post to site traffic.

2 Qualitative Data is information that can't be assigned a number or hard value. It includes consumer sentiment, interests and trends, as well as information that is not text-based, such as that derived from photos or videos. Social media provides a rich source of qualitative data that can be mined using sentiment analysis tools. Examples of qualitative data include:

Conversation Drivers

With the right tools, we can look at nearly any platform (or all of them for that matter) and see what people are talking about. When it comes to your brand, you'll want to know the topics and context of conversations about you, your competition, and your niche. This incredibly useful knowledge can tell you, for example, who your customers see as your closest competition, what they're sharing in relation to your property or their concerns about it. This is one of the most important and insightful qualitative analyses you can perform.

Sentiment

Sentiment analysis attempts to measure the tone and tenor of a conversation around a stated topic or item. In social media, sentiment tells you if people love, can't stand, or are neutral about your brand or campaigns. Most current sentiment analysis tools are automated.

Influence

Influence is the ability to drive activity on social media, getting people to respond, engage, and share. There are several tools available that offer "influence scores." For example, Klout is a popular score that takes into account the engagement of your audience across all social media networks. Even if you post less frequently, your Klout score only measures how much people like, comment on, and share your content. It's a good way to benchmark the success of your content within the hospitality industry.

With any data you're collecting, whether quantitative or qualitative, the most important things to ask yourself are, "What can I do with this?" and, "What are my insights?" If you can't do anything with your data, and you're not gleaning actionable business takeaways from it, then you should question why you're measuring it in the first place. Don't be afraid to ask questions, dig deeper, and challenge the way things have been done in the past.

APPENDIX

Samples and Templates

APPENDIX

Samples and Templates

Since there's so much to learn from your colleagues, we wanted to share an example of one hotel's standard operating procedures around social media. Feel free to use this plan to create your own procedures for 2016.

Sample Social Media and Online Reviews Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs)

Introduction

In this new age of public reviews and social media, hotel guests now own a critical piece all the key hospitality marketing channels. The ever-growing list of social media platforms and online travel communities available to consumers has created a shift in how companies manage their images. Traditional marketing and public relations strategies, which disseminate carefully crafted messages, must now be complemented by the use of tools that put the hotel in the middle of conversations in the digital sphere. In other words, the communication of marketing messages, which once required hefty media buys, has now in part been naturally outsourced to guests as they turn more and more to social media to share their experiences.

This shift presents incredible opportunities for Hotel XYZ because word of mouth marketing is now more powerful and viral than ever. A hotel property that excels at quality and service will drive new business organically. And hotels that can create special experiences that get guests talking will be especially rewarded. A guest's moment of joy can be written about on online review sites, tweeted on Twitter and shared on Facebook or Google+ in just seconds for thousands of people to see. Accordingly, Hotel XYZ is strengthening its commitment to social media and online reputation management in order to foster relationships in the online community and increase visibility across these channels.

Below are social media and online reviews standard operating procedures (SOPs). Please note that, given the ever-changing nature of the social space, these operating procedures are flexible and will change from time to time.

Social Media

Hotel XYZ will be engaging in a number of social media initiatives. The primary contact for social media management at the property will be our Marketing Coordinator, INSERT NAME. He will be responsible for ensuring that Hotel XYZ's presence across all social media channels is maintained. He can be reached at INSERT EMAIL.

Look for the Hotel XYZ presence on the following social platforms:

Here is what the social media community will hear from us on these platforms:

Facebook: Individuals who "Like" the page will get a sense of our hotel's offerings and personality through photos shared by our property, community partners, past guests and brand enthusiasts. Example posts will highlight Hotel XYZ offerings, concierge services, etc.

Twitter: Individuals who "follow" the account will hear about hotel and neighborhood news/events in real-time. For example, tweets will offer travel tips and answer guest questions.

Instagram: Individuals who "follow" the account will get a sense of our hotel's personality and see collections of photos shared by guests and brand enthusiasts.

Google+: Individuals who engage with us on Google+ will enjoy a blend of photo-driven content that is similar to our Facebook page.

YouTube: Individuals who engage with our videos on YouTube will get an immersive experience of our property, personality, and local area through polished, professional video content.

Pinterest: Individuals who engage with us on Pinterest will see collections of photos cultivating our hotel's lifestyle brand and its fashion, design, culinary, and artistic partners.

Roles and Responsibilities

The Marketing and Communications team (consisting of Director of Sales and Marketing, Digital Marketing Manager, PR Manager, Marketing Coordinator) will be responsible for developing the social media strategic plan and coming up with posting strategies for each of the above channels.

These communication channels are real-time in nature and demand fresh, authentic content – hotel news, photographs, interesting events happening, videos, etc. Because much of this content is related to operational departments, Hotel XYZ has identified a number of "social media champions" who will serve as the primary contacts for collecting content for social media communications. These social media champions will be:

- Front Office Manager
- Chief Concierge
- Spa Services Manager
- Human Resources Manager
- Director of Food and Beverage
- Housekeeping Manager
- Conference Services Manager
- Guest Relations Manager

As a social media champion, your responsibility is to submit any content (e.g. menu updates, new offerings, photos, etc.) that fits in with the hotel's social media content strategy to the Marketing Coordinator via e-mail. To better understand what kind of content is relevant, take a look at our existing Facebook and Twitter profiles, as well as the content conversation calendar that the marketing team developed (See Appendix).

Personal Use of Social Media – A Reminder

Colleagues at Hotel XYZ are encouraged to get involved and follow the hotel's presence on all aforementioned sites. Please ask friends, clients and guests to do the same. You may share the links with your networks to help promote our presence. We will also be sending out a communication that addresses how to add these links to your e-mail signatures.

Personal participation in social media should not involve participation in conversations that place colleagues in a position to speak on behalf of the hotel. While all employees are encouraged to contribute content ideas to your department's social media champion as well as participate in social media in your personal time, please be reminded that company-specific questions should be sent to our Marketing and Communications team.

Service Delivery and Recovery with Social Media

Hotel XYZ will receive many fan and follower questions, concerns, mentions and comments across social media sites. The Marketing and Communications team will handle this feedback accordingly:

- Facebook fan comments received on hotel page will be routed to relevant department and responded to within four hours.
- Twitter mentions about the property will be responded to within two hours and feedback will be routed to relevant department.
- If guest is on site, front office should be alerted and advised how to surprise and delight or rectify situation. If comment is received prior to check-in, note should be placed in guest profile and should be acknowledged at check-in.
- Social media mentions that reference guest preferences will be sent to the front-office social media champion to be added to guest profile in PMS.
- All social media mentions that acknowledge staff members/departments will be shared with relevant champion via e-mail (ticketing option within Revinate).

Q1 2016 Social Media Goals

- Monitor Facebook insights on a weekly basis and increase post reach by 20%.
- Increase number of mentions on Twitter by 20% and improve Klout score by two points.
- Monitor Google+ analytics on monthly basis and increase traffic to website by 25%.
- Add to Pinterest boards twice per month and track traffic from website – goal to increase followers by 10%.
- Post to Instagram twice per week and increase followers by 10%.

Online Reviews

In order to proactively manage our reputation across review sites, we are using Revinate to create a well-defined workflow structure that ensures that our property-level managers understand their roles and responsibilities when it comes to managing online reviews. Here is how the process will work:

REVINATE ACCESS: All department heads as well as social media champions should have access to Revinate.

REVINATE USAGE: The primary Revinate user will be the Marketing Coordinator. However, every colleague with access to Revinate will review Revinate reports at least once a month.

Responsibilities and Duties

As primary user of Revinate, the Marketing Coordinator will:

1. Log in to Revinate each morning to monitor reviews for the hotel, 7 days a week.
2. Create tickets for reviews that require attention of department heads and additional clarifying details from department(s) for management responses (e.g. figure out what went wrong, what service recovery action was taken).
3. Assign tickets to appropriate Revinate users – users must respond within 24 hours.
4. Respond to reviews on behalf of the hotel if no additional details from departments are required.
5. Use response templates created by PR Manager to assist with responding process (responses will still be customized and pre-approved by PR Manager).
6. Close tickets once feedback has been shared and management response has been posted on review site.
7. Share sentiment, benchmark, and competitors reports on a weekly basis.

Social Media Calendar Template

Click Here to Download

	Avertine Inn Social Media Calendar						
	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	1/25	1/26	1/27	1/28	1/29	1/30	1/31
Facebook	According to our chefs, there's no wrong way to cook with butternut squash. Take the taste of winter to new heights with these recipes. [photo] [link: 1 Ingredient, 3 Ways from our Executive Chef: Butternut Squash]	[Change cover photo] There's something about the Golden Gate Bridge in winter. - tag VIP guests	Buzzworthy Flavor with Local Honey [photo album] - When at Avertine, you simply must try the local honey. Extracted directly from the bee hive by local beekeeper Janie Mauritius, San Mateo Local Honey has a total of twelve hives which are capable of producing up to 400 pounds of honey every six months.		Great shot! Avertine's rose garden at sunrise, by Dani Lynn [guest photo]	[Add guest photos to Fan Photo Fridays album]	Experience the extraordinary in #SF: Unlock the secrets of traditional Chinese medicine during a personalized healing session with The Experiences [link] [photo]
Twitter	Keep your body moving on the airplane with these quick and easy tips from personal trainer @kaylakay [link]	If you overindulged this weekend, try this kale salad from our chef for a #healthy and delicious lunch [link]	Foodies! Join your favorite celebrity chefs at @SFFoodWineFest this Feb [link]	Stunning shot! RT @NMLux Check out the gorgeous view of the #SF skyline from @AvertineInn #travelpics [photo]	Our servers aren't afraid to jump into the pool to hand you a poolside cocktail. [attach funny photo] #funny	#FeelGoodFriday: Give back in some way today. Photo credit to @funblog [photo]	Perfect wine pairings for your #ValentinesDay feast from our sommeliers [link]
Instagram			Great shot! Avertine's rose garden at sunrise, by @DaniLynn [guest photo]	Stunning shot! Check out the gorgeous view of the #SF skyline from @AvertineInn #travelpics Photo credit @NMLux [photo]	Our servers aren't afraid to jump into the pool to hand you a poolside cocktail. [funny photo] #funny	#FeelGoodFriday: Give back in some way today. Photo credit to @funblog [photo]	
Google+	According to our chefs, there's no wrong way to cook with butternut squash. Take the taste of winter to new heights with these recipes. [photo] [link: 1 Ingredient, 3 Ways from our Executive Chef: Butternut Squash]		Buzzworthy Flavor with Local Honey [photo album] - When at Avertine, you simply must try the local honey. Extracted directly from the bee hive by local beekeeper Janie Mauritius, San Mateo Local Honey has a total of twelve hives which are capable of producing up to 400 pounds of honey every six months.		Avertine Inn: Perfect wine pairings for your Valentine's Day feast from our sommeliers. [link]		Experience the extraordinary in SF: Unlock the secrets of traditional Chinese medicine during a personalized healing session with The Experiences [link] [photo]
Pinterest		Food Board: [photo] [link: 1 Ingredient, 3 Ways from our Executive Chef: Butternut Squash]	Local Treasures Board: When at Avertine, you simply must try the local honey. Extracted directly from the bee hive by local beekeeper Janie Mauritius, San Mateo Local Honey has a total of twelve hives which are capable of producing up to 400 pounds of honey every six months.		Happy Hour Board: Perfect wine pairings for your Valentine's Day feast from our sommeliers. [photo] [link]		Spa Board: Unlock the secrets of traditional Chinese medicine during a personalized healing session with The Experiences [link] [photo]

Strategic Checklist

PRIORITY	PUBLIC GUEST SATISFACTION ANALYSIS	RESPONSIBILITY	METRICS
	Analyze guest satisfaction feedback		
	Engage the entire team		
	Measure staff performance w/ guest satisfaction		
	COMPETITIVE INTELLIGENCE		
	Monitor competitor guest satisfaction		
	Monitor competitor social media engagement		
	SOCIAL MEDIA ENGAGEMENT		
	Monitor social mentions		
	Engage on Twitter and Facebook		
	Comment on forums, articles and blogs		
	Maintain content on 3rd party sites		
	Consider engagement opportunities on additional		
	SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS		
	Rank properties using social media metrics		
	Track review and social media goals for properties		
	Track brand/group-level performance		
	Monitor brand voice consistency across properties and social channels		

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About Revinate:
Revinate helps hotels improve the guest experience pre-, during and post-stay, with innovative mobile applications and services for engaging with guests and collecting and analyzing guest feedback. Revinate works with more than 23,000 of the world's best hotels and hospitality brands to increase revenue, build deep guest relationships, and drive loyalty.