

MULTICHANNEL

Starwood's SPG links super guests with dedicated ambassadors

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SPG Pro promotional image

By JOE MCCARTHY

Starwood Hotels and Resorts is elevating its personalization offer through Starwood Preferred Guest by giving ultra-loyal guests access to a brand ambassador who will get to know them and their travel particularities.

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Luxury Daily

SPG is the hotel enterprise's loyalty program, providing guests with an escalating array of rewards the more active they become. SPG is distinguished in the hotel space for its deft embrace of mobile.

"What makes SPG ambassador service distinctive from other concierge services is the personalized, one-to-one relationship our members develop with their ambassadors," said Brad Olson, vice president of **Starwood Preferred Guest**, New York.

"As soon as a member achieves 100 eligible nights in a calendar year, he or she is assigned to a dedicated SPG ambassador who serves as their single point of contact at Starwood," he said. "Our ambassadors get to know each member and their individual preferences, which allows them to proactively anticipate each member's needs and provide a seamless travel experience."

"And, oftentimes, a real camaraderie develops between the member and his or her SPG ambassador. Several members have even invited their SPG ambassadors to their weddings!"

The winners

Starwood Preferred Guest has three tiers: Preferred, Golden and Platinum. Each tier has different baseline benefits all geared toward improving the baseline experience of travel. For instance, upgraded rooms, enhanced travel accommodations, welcome gifts and free internet are some of the standard benefits.

All SPG activity can be conducted through a mobile application.

As guests travel, they accrue points that can be spent on an array of experiences or benefits.



St. Regis Deer Valley

Guests earn three Starpoints for every dollar they spend at a Starwood property. Points can also be earned when spending at travel partners, using Uber, registering with airline

partners, obtaining an SPG credit card and other ways.

The ambassador program is predicated on the amount of nights a guest spends at portfolio properties and is thus meant for only the most elite members.

When guests accrue 100 nights in a year, they are connected with a brand ambassador who takes concierge service to the next level.

The SPG ambassador handles everything from room preferences to mapping evenings out. Ambassadors are experts of the SPG program and have extensive travel knowledge.



St. Regis New York

The program is available year-round, 24-four hours a day. The ambassador can make recommendations and handle all the logistics of travel, giving SPG members both peace of mind and an elevated experience.

Staying current

Loyalty programs have to stay current otherwise the stickiness they depend on will grow stale and consumers will begin to defect to other brands.

The SPG program has had a strong mobile presence for years and tries to stay technologically innovative.

For instance, Starwood anticipated the potential surge in consumer interest for wearables with a Starwood Preferred Guest application for Google Glass.

Designed by the conglomerate's in-house team, the app leverages Google Glass's functionality while carrying over basic components of its conventional SPG app. Starwood was applauded by the growing number of wearable advocates who are pushing to make Google Glass and similar items more mainstream ([see story](#)).

However, strong fundamentals are what keep consumers coming back.

“Starwood Preferred Guest (SPG), our award-winning loyalty program, continues to be a

key driver of Starwood's success, delivering more than 50 percent of our overall occupancy on any given night," Mr. Olson said.

"Not only do our members enjoy some of the most luxurious destinations around the world, but our innovative partnerships with like-minded companies, including Delta for Crossover Rewards, gives them comprehensive rewards and recognition that make SPG the most compelling loyalty program in the business," he said.

"Our tech-savvy members appreciate our constant drive to implement industry firsts like SPG Keyless, which fundamentally changes the hotel arrival experience. To date more than 160,000 SPG Members have registered for SPG Keyless."

Final Take

Joe McCarthy, staff reporter on Luxury Daily, New York

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