

COLUMNS

How hotel chains can put more heads in beds with smart marketing

November 3, 2015



Will Margiloff is CEO of IgnitionOne

By A LUXURY DAILY COLUMNIST

By **Will Margiloff**

Subscribe to **Luxury Daily**
Plus: Just released
State of Luxury 2019 **Save \$246 ▶**

Acquisition costs for online customers continue to rise. Because of this, hospitality marketers need to be smart and efficient, and use the best tools to reach customers across marketing channels and devices, in person and on the phone.

Uncovering the right audience and persuading them to make a booking does not have to be challenging. Being able to clearly define audience characteristics for key insights can help you identify and reach audiences that have a higher likelihood of engagement with stronger results.

The right marketing strategy makes all the difference, from start to finish.

Identifying a potential customer

Collecting data from Web site visitors, which can be achieved using an information-gathering source such as a data management platform, is helpful identifying potential customers.

The demographics and online behavior of those visitors provide insight into where the lead is in the customer journey. This information helps provide context when looking at users who have viewed the site, how long they have stayed, and which pages they visited.

For example, a user may have only visited for a brief period of time, but her interactions with advertising and her search terms point to a more serious lead.

Look for trends in the information that you have gathered to identify opportunities with the most promise and uncover the desires of your audience.

With historical data you can better understand what someone who will eventually book looks like, and build different personas around those lead types. This boils down to finding the answers to questions such as "business or pleasure?"

If the data tells you that a visitor is a hot lead who is interested in business travel, you might promote an easy experience, free Wi-Fi and a daily grab-and-go breakfast in your messaging.

If a visitor is interested in travel for pleasure, you may tout spacious rooms, a pool and proximity to local attractions. These messages can be used in advertising, customized per user on your Web site or in tailored emails.

Appeal to customers through cross-channel messaging

So you have identified potential customers and tailored your messaging to suit their needs. The next step is to create a strategy for those messages.

In reality, an ad seen only once by a potential customer will be forgotten almost instantly. Worse, an ad placed after a customer has already booked might even annoy them.

Cross-channel advertising provides the opportunity to appeal to potential customers across marketing channels search, display, email and Web in ways that are relevant to their activity.

In short, the very placement of your messaging should tell a consumer "I understand you."

Use targeting strategies to seal the booking

You know that your advertisements need to reach the right audience, but have you considered your customer's location?

Targeting strategies allow for the kind of location-specific information that clinches the "book now" result.

If you discover that a lot of potential customers from one specific state or region are traveling to your location, you will want to put more of your budget toward advertising in that region.

Is your customer on the road? Make sure you use tactics such as click to call.

Knowing where your customers are coming from creates the opportunity to use geo-targeting to strengthen the relevance of your advertising.

You can also dissect geographic segments to highlight regional interests and images in your campaigns, such as sports teams and local activities.

Engaging with customers at the right time, with the right message in the right place can be orchestrated by taking seemingly unrelated data and layering customer data points to drive a timely message or experience.

Knowing where your customers are coming from creates the opportunity to use geo-targeting to strengthen the relevance of your advertising.

IT IS a combination of these strategies and leveraging a centralized customer data management platform that takes a customer from an initial Web site visit to clicking the "book now" button.

After the booking, timely and appropriate communication is still vital.

There is opportunity for upgrade offers, additional packages and follow-up communications after a customer's stay that may increase the likelihood of securing a repeat booking.

Overall, by ensuring that your messaging is appropriately targeted, placed across relevant channels and specific to the needs of your audience, you will create a positive, persuasive experience that is more likely to result in a successful booking.

Will Margiloff is CEO of [IgnitionOne](#), New York. Reach him at will.margiloff@ignitionone.com.