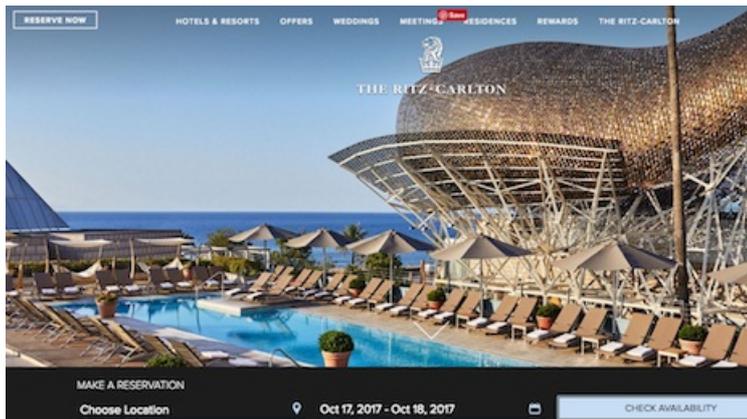


TRAVEL AND HOSPITALITY

## Brands should build digital platforms for growth, adaptation: Ritz-Carlton

October 18, 2017



*Ritz-Carlton's current Web site adapts to customers' needs. Image credit: Ritz-Carlton*

By BRIELLE JAEKEL

NEW YORK A Ritz-Carlton executive revealed that when the hotelier overhauled its Web site, the development team found that the task at hand took so long that the technology used could be outdated by time of launch.

During the session "Case Study Collective: The Re-Design and Re-Launch of RitzCarlton.com," at Luxury Interactive on Oct. 17 the executive explained that the project for Ritz-Carlton took roughly a year to accomplish, with the design being created at the start, making the design at launch a year behind. However, this just means that brands need to build their platforms as a basis for a continually evolving machine.

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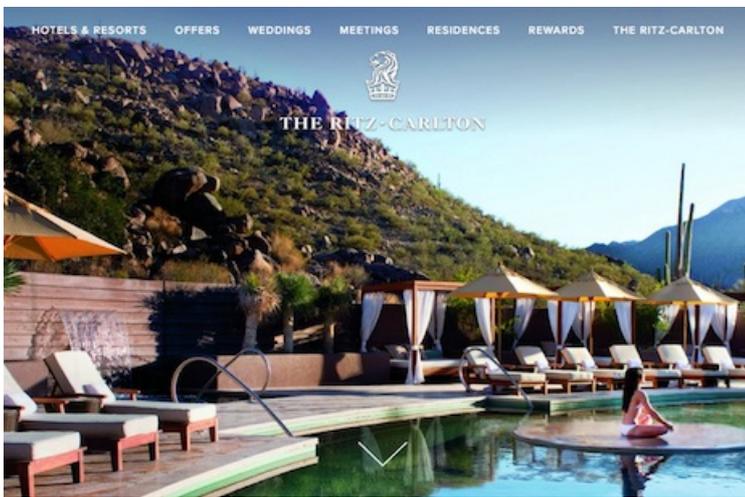
"You will be working on a vision for a long time," said Sarah Lukas, corporate director of [Ritz-Carlton Hotel Company](#). "Then it will launch and it will already be a year old.

"You need to prepare to be building up to a platform that you can modify after that," she said.

### Design and conquer

There are many undertakings that come with a project so big. While the process may seem small at first, adding various things such as going responsive and more will turn the project into a massive assignment.

Brands and retailers need to keep in mind issues that will arise throughout the process. For instance, it is highly unlikely brands will hit their goal within their set time frame.



*Ritz-Carlton's current Web site. Image credit: Ritz-Carlton*

Ritz-Carlton's Ms. Lukas explained that it is important for team members to learn how to steer into the skid. It is also important to note that simply pushing back the time frame will only make the project take much longer.

It will take time for search engines to catch up to the changes made on a Web site. Search engines have problems when sites change too many things at once, but over time it will catch up.

Consumers will also take time to become used to the new changes. It is important to keep their needs in mind.

Ritz-Carlton took a less-is-more approach to its redesign, which is important for many others to keep in mind. For instance, the hotel brand dropped about 20 percent of their Web site content since it had built up a lot of content that was unnecessary and virtually useless to customers.



*Ritz-Carlton's current Web site. Image credit: Ritz-Carlton*

While the process to relaunch is happening, the current Web site can often lag behind. Ms. Lukas noted that "no one looks good during a facelift."

### Launching

The Ritz-Carlton Hotel Company first helped consumers plan new vacations and remember old ones with its redesigned Web site in February of last year.

The RitzCarlton.com includes user-generated content, an exploration hub and a more dynamic design in the interest of a user-friendly and more personalized experience. Consumers long ago began turning to brand Web pages to book vacations, but Ritz-Carlton's redesign encourages spontaneous trips and lets consumers explore options without having to look to other sites ([see more](#)).

More recently, The Ritz-Carlton promoted three of its United States hotel locations with a new interactive campaign in partnership with the Wall Street Journal.

Through this partnership, potential guests were able to virtually explore the areas around the Ritz-Carlton hotels in New Orleans, San Francisco and Miami from the Wall Street Journal's sponsored content division. The campaign takes advantage of immersive digital tools to sell a physical experience ([see more](#)).

"It is a very immersive, image driven experience," Ms. Lukas said. "We have over 20,000 assets on the Web site which is great, but it is a very hard thing to do.

"We ended up stripping away 20 percent of the content," she said. "We found that we had built up a lot of things we

didn't need and the customers weren't interested in."

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