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The Fast-Forward Tech Stack for 2024

The Hotel Yearbook Technology 2024

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Navigating The Digital Frontier Activities To Futureproof Your Hotels Online Presence

Distribution & Revenue

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Synopsis

In a rapidly evolving digital world, the hospitality industry is leveraging data and analytics tools to create highly personalized guest experiences and drive bookings. The integration of digital marketing has become crucial in understanding and influencing the booking journey of potential guests. As the granularity of guest data improves, all hotel departments must work in unison to stay ahead of trends, innovate, and keep their online presence updated. The key lies in fostering collaboration across sales, marketing, and revenue management, enabling hotels to strategically position themselves online and consistently engage their target audience. It's essential to maintain a consistent narrative across all digital channels, thereby increasing visibility and influencing booking decisions. Preparing for the future requires identifying current needs and devising a strategy to amplify the hotel's total online presence.

It's an exciting time for all of us in the hospitality industry and our guests! Digital marketing has become an indispensable tool for hotels to analyze data, strategize, create a more personalized journey for our target audiences and drive bookings.

As we look toward the future and the data available to us becomes more granular toward understanding our guests' booking journey, it's integral for all hotel departments to work together toward keeping up with trends, utilize data and analytics tools, and continuously keep your total online presence up to date.

Hotel departments must take the time to embrace innovation and agility toward making digital marketing an integral part of the potential guest's and in-house guests' experience, leveraging data analytics for personalized targeting to meet them where they are in their booking journey. Personalized targeting is just one example of proactive measures hotels can take toward gaining exposure, influencing booking decisions and engaging with their guests.

Continuously staying proactive, analyzing the data, adapting to trends, and fostering collaboration across sales, marketing and revenue management, hotels can strategically position online presence. Potential guests need to see you multiple times before your hotel is a part of their consideration set. Your hotel needs both exposure to the right target audience as well as a consistent presence to get them to check rates, then book. Are you telling a consistent story across all your digital channels?

To prepare for the future and build your online foundation you need to identify where your needs are, so you can begin working out a strategy to increase your hotel's total online presence.

1. Do you have a balanced commercial strategy between sales, marketing and revenue management?
2. When did my hotel complete its last TOTAL online presence audit to identify the opportunities below?

MARKET TRENDS

Visit [Trends.Google.com](https://trends.google.com) (free) to search for "hotels in [Insert hotel city]" to view the search volume for your area.

UNIQUE SELLING PROPOSITIONS (USPS)

Define what makes your hotel unique against the competitive set as well as other hotels in your name brand. Remember, not all guests know your "brand standards" and most guests need to have information repeated to them. Unique Selling Propositions in the content of your hotel website, your on-page search engine optimization strategy, imagery, copy in your ads, social media and prominent throughout your entire online presence.

CONTENT

Content is relevant and up to date, ensure amenities are accurate across all channels, including OTAs and local listings like Google Business Profile. Ensure all fields and characters are maximized in your hotel Content Management System. Room descriptions should showcase the differences in room type offerings. Highlight uniqueness in the room name, including balcony, sofa bed or views.

IMAGERY

Imagery is a type of content and is the number one conversion metric and should be done every 3 to 5 years. Ensure your imagery meets or exceeds brand standards as well as respective OTA image standards to maximize your content score. Imagery should accurately represent your hotel, including any unique amenities. Consider images to represent pet-friendly, views, and in-room amenities as well as images that show the depth and size of the guest rooms and bathroom.

Bonus Tip: Find a way to incorporate video onto your website. Video improves two important SEO metrics, time spent on your page and the number of backlinks referring guests to your website. A virtual tour of the property curated for your audience's needs strategically placed on your site for social events, corporate meetings, leisure travelers etc.

DEMAND GENERATORS

Ensure hotel demand generators are represented in content and on-page and off-page search engine optimization opportunities.

ROOM TYPES

All your room types should be represented and sold on your hotel website and OTAs. Highlight content that showcases differences between room types. Room type amenities should be accurate on all channels, including OTAs and your hotel website.

HOTEL PACKAGES

Ensure local packages display any hotel partnerships and showcase proximity to popular demand generators. Ensure your website and sell strategy for packages are aligned. Determine if it makes sense to push packages to OTA sites if ADR increases can be achieved.

ON-PAGE SEARCH ENGINE OPTIMIZATION

Conduct thorough keyword research and target with on-page search engine optimization via title tags, headers, and meta descriptions. Your meta description should include unique selling propositions and highlight proximity to major demand generators.

Your unique on-page search engine optimization strategy represents your individual hotel identity separate from the brand.

EXPEDIA

Conduct a variety of searches to determine your organic ranking on Expedia.com when searching for your hotel's city. You can also view your sort order in Expedia Partner Central, but we find it to be inaccurate. Respond to all your reviews and note that walking of any Expedia guest or any forced refunds may cause your ranking to drop. Ensure hotel and room type amenities are up to date and try to achieve a 100% content score. This includes making sure each image accurately represents each room type and old images are removed. Also confirm the primary image is the right one for each room type. Check the points of interest to ensure they are relevant, and the closest ones are listed. Utilize the pre-arrival email functionality to convey the information you want the guest to know prior to arrival.

BOOKING.COM

Wash and repeat everything mentioned with Expedia. Auditing these 2 players will cover approximately 90% of your OTA presence. The only difference with Booking.com is you can suggest changes to the content on the home page and it is easier to see access levels and change contacts for different scenarios.

OTHER OTAS

Outside of Expedia and Booking.com, we recommend spot-checking other OTAs like Agoda, Ctrip, and for luxury hotels and resorts check tablet hotels, Prestigia, and Magellan Luxury Hotels. Additionally, if your hotel participates in Hotel Tonight or Hopper, those should be reviewed.

METASEARCH

Unlike your OTA partners, MetaSearch sites generally do not have their own rates and inventory, nor do they generally have their own extranet to update images or amenities. Example MetaSearch sites include Google Hotel Ads, TripAdvisor, Kayak & Trivago. While shopping your hotel on MetaSearch sites, it is a good way to ensure you are in rate parity. Additionally, you want to see your own website with the Official marker and preferably very visible as an option to transact.

UNAP (URL, NAME, ADDRESS, PHONE)

UNAP stands for URL, Name, Address, and Phone number. You want this to be consistent across all your online profiles, especially your name. If your hotel has ever gone through a name change or rebranded, your UNAP is likely a bit messy. While brand feeds may fix some errors in transition, they certainly do not cover them all. It is very confusing for guests (and Google!) to come across these variations and wonder which is accurate. Do searches for your old name to look for out-of-date sites and ensure EXACT consistency (even down to the dash or slash) on Google Business Profile, Bing, Yext, Expedia, Booking.com, Agoda, TripAdvisor, Yelp.

TRIPADVISOR

Your basic TripAdvisor listing is free and should be claimed. Check your hotel's ranking for various searches, including Best Value, Traveler Ranked, Price and Distance to City Center.

Ensure you are in the proper category, ie hotel or bed and breakfast. Some larger markets are divided into submarkets so ensure you are in the want you want to be listed. Update your amenities, images, and map PIN. Respond to all reviews, both positive and negative.

GOOGLE BUSINESS PROFILE

IF YOU DO NOTHING ELSE, GET ACCESS TO YOUR FREE GOOGLE BUSINESS PROFILE LISTING.

If you do not have access, contact your brand as they likely have created one for your hotel. It is easiest to gain access via a Gmail account and some corporate emails are hard to connect. Audit your listing to ensure The description and amenities accurately reflect your hotel. In the backend, you can review and edit "owner" images. If you search for your hotel on Google and click on the images in the Knowledge panel, you might find Google has pulled old images from old sites. In this case, you should 1) see if you can gain access to that site and remove them or 2) flag them. Also, request and respond to all positive and negative Google reviews.

BING

Bing has a business profile similar to Google Business Profile. You can even gain access to your Bing listing (sometimes) if you have the right access to Google Business Profile. Attempt to complete your profile to the fullest, including tagging images appropriately. Review your hotel descriptions and amenities for accuracy. You also have the option to display an offer, just don't forget about it!

GPS

If you ever have guests tell you they have trouble finding you or the Door Dash driver got incorrect directions, you might have an issue with your hotel's GPS location on one or more sites. First, check the map on your brand site to ensure accuracy. If that is right, check turn-by-turn directions on Google from various locations, ie North, South, East, and West. Submit turn by turn direction changes to Google.

REPUTATION MANAGEMENT

We have touched upon responding to reviews on Expedia, Booking.com, TripAdvisor, and Google Business Profile. But, while the data shows that 97% of potential guests read review responses, it is also important to learn from your guest reviews. Use your brand tools to aggregate if you are getting multiple complaints about your property or a specific team member. While you cannot incentivize guests to leave reviews, you should incentivize your team to solicit reviews.

PUBLIC RELATIONS

While there are varying degrees of public relations depending on your goals, a press release is the most basic. Common platforms like Cision help get your press release found by Google and hopefully picked up by additional outlets. At the hotel and market level, the hotel team should be asking local partners like chambers and convention visitors bureau to share these press releases.

OFF-PAGE SEARCH ENGINE OPTIMIZATION AND COMPETITOR BACKLINKS

Even more important than on-page search engine optimization is your backlink profile against your competitors. There is no magic number when it comes to getting your hotel website listed on other relevant websites, you should strive to achieve more than your competitive set. Tools like Moz, SEMrush and Ahrefs allow you to dissect where your competitor is being promoted that you are not. Look for partners with universities, hospitals, museums, and other demand generators to see if getting listed will not only increase your rankings on Google, but also drive traffic and exposure to your hotel.

SOCIAL MEDIA

Extensive social media is not right for every hotel. To do it properly you need both human and financial resources. Start with a Facebook page and ensure it is set up on parent/child relationship with its brand. Do a search on Facebook to see if there is more than 1 page that might need remedy. Once you have access, audit the profile information, including images/albums and header and thumbnail images. Set up a “Book now” button to redirect to your proper website. Check for any reviews, respond as needed, and check for any negative comments that can be removed from the page. Leverage paid social media to get in front of new guests that have a propensity to visit your market.

Once you have mastered Facebook posting, you may consider an Instagram account. While channels like TikTok and Snapchat may help with brand equity, you may have issues monetizing them.

BRAND TOOLS

Each brand offers different opportunities to increase your online presence. This could be website enhancements, loyalty promotions, email marketing, on-page search engine optimization, GDS promotions, package builds, exclusive agency partnerships, approved photographers, and more. Contact your brand and take advantage of these before venturing to create your own strategy.

PAID MEDIA

There are many channels where a hotel can put their marketing dollars. Once there is a firm understanding of timing, gaps in the above, and what market and type of travelers you want to go to after, then you can determine a budget to help fill those gaps.

Most brands partner with Koddi to allow hotels to run paid advertising via a single platform.

Depending on the hotel's goals and targets, additional advertising above and beyond Koddi could entail social media advertising, Google Ads search engine marketing, display, and programmatic advertising, and more.

COLLATERAL

Your sales collateral should reflect the same story as your online story. Ensure your unique selling propositions are present, with the correct amenities and the best hotel-specific imagery you have. Upload your collateral represented on your hotel website where applicable. Additionally, your collateral should be ADA compliant and meet brand standards.

CHANNEL MIX

It is likely that your channel mix has shifted over the past few years. This is different from segmentation as channel mix looks at the profitability of each channel and where the guests transact, not the rate code in which this happens. Most hotels are good at some things, and not so good at others. The same goes for your hotel's online presence. You are likely to get good exposure from some channels and websites and be represented poorly on others.

Let the analytics and findings dictate where you need to close the gap. Only then can you determine where and when to spend your marketing dollars.

CONCLUSION

I think the future success of your hotel's online exposure is not only the off-property digital journey but their on-property digital journey as well. Use digital tech tools to engage the guest, personalize their experience and keep them interested in staying on property while increasing per guest stay revenue. Utilize digital tech tools to showcase ancillary revenue opportunities through the use of AI chat concierge services for local recommendations, property service bookings like Spa, dining, activities and alert guests to special offers all while they are on property to anticipate their needs and elevate their experience.

As the tools available to us optimize rapidly, we should always be learning every day! The foundational activities listed above will help you prepare for the future toward integrating new technology into digital marketing best practices. When sales, marketing and revenue management are consistently using the data to strategize together the momentum of a hotel's exposure can thrive. Cheers to new frontiers in the hotel digital marketing space!



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Cogwheel Marketing — cogwheelmarketing.com

Helping hotel owners drive incremental revenue to their website through digital marketing.