

A dark, atmospheric photograph of the Dallas skyline at dusk or dawn. The Reunion Tower, with its iconic spherical observation deck, is a prominent feature on the right side. To its left, several other skyscrapers are visible, their windows reflecting the ambient light. The overall color palette is dominated by deep blues and greys, with a touch of orange from the tower's lights.

DIRECT BOOKING SUMMIT

13th - 14th May 2025

DIRECT BOOKING SUMMIT: DALLAS

KEY LEARNINGS

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Key Reading

With almost 30 presentations over two days, DBS Dallas was full of useful insights and information for hoteliers. But in case time is tight we've put together some suggestions for where to get started.

For Marketing teams:

- [How Onera hit 80% direct with social-first strategy](#)
- [How Staypineapple built an in-house influencer engine](#)
- [How smart marketing and tech drove up to 80% direct bookings](#)
- [Smarter hotel marketing starts here](#)
- [Winning on TikTok, the social channel hoteliers need to master](#)

For Revenue teams:

- [Personalized pricing: What hotels can learn from casinos](#)
- [5 mistakes to avoid when using OTAs](#)
- [Working with wholesale: The inside secrets to getting the best for your hotel](#)
- [How Marcus Hotels Reimagined the Commercial Team to Drive Growth](#)
- [Upselling: The silent profit killer](#)

For eCommerce teams:

- [Optimizing for AI search in 2025](#)
- [How to win on Google](#)
- [How top travel brands are using neuroscience & storytelling to drive conversions](#)
- [Using your hotel data to win more valuable bookings](#)
- [The future of website personalization](#)



What hotel guests and 125 million reservations tell us about the future of direct bookings

Anthony Lazzara, Market Development Manager, SiteMinder

Anthony Lazzara from SiteMinder presented valuable insights drawn from analyzing 125 million hotel reservations globally, providing data on direct booking trends and guest behavior.

- Direct bookings didn't lose ground in any market in the past 12 months, finishing in the top three booking channels in 90% of markets. The top two channels? Booking.com and Expedia.
- Direct bookings deliver 60% higher revenue than OTA bookings (\$519 vs \$320 per reservation) and have the second-longest length of stay.
- US travel is still dominated by domestic bookings (75%), though an 8% increase in international travel intention in 2025 may change this ratio. More hotel guests book direct in the US than anywhere else in the world.
- Social media platforms and online forums (like Reddit and Tripadvisor) are regaining popularity as the kick-off point for planning stays, growing to 11% each.
- Almost twice as many people in Mexico start looking for hotels on social media and online forums, compared with the global average (21% vs 11%).
- Just 1% of people started their planning with AI tools - but 46% of travelers are open to using AI (55% of Gen Z) as part of the process.
- 52% of travelers have abandoned online bookings due to a bad experience, with security concerns being the most common reason. It matters most for Gen Z - 70% have failed to complete a booking due to a bad checkout experience.
- Events are a massive driver for travel and a huge ADR opportunity: increases of 6x are possible for big occasions. 58% of people book their hotel immediately or within one week of purchasing an event ticket.

Top Takeaways for Hoteliers

1. Optimize presence on metasearch platforms with strategic positioning, compelling imagery, and descriptions to capitalize on direct booking opportunities.
2. Ensure your website is optimized for AI readability and an outstanding checkout experience, with mobile-friendly design, HTTPS certification, and in-depth descriptions.
3. Engage actively on social media platforms and online communities to drive traffic.
4. Incorporate event-based data into revenue management strategies; start taking reservations for major events 12 months or more in advance if your Booking Engine allows it.
5. Continue to develop loyalty programs - 24% of travelers cite them as their primary reason for returning to a property, up from 15% in 2023.



From Boomers to Gen Z: Personalizing service and marketing

Dom Donatoni, Senior Enterprise Sales Consultant, Revinate
Evan Crawford, VP of Marketing, Pyramid Global Hospitality

Dom and Evan discussed how hotels can use generational personas to tailor communications and drive direct bookings.

- A typical booking journey involves 19 touchpoints across different channels before a decision is made.
- Communication preferences vary significantly by generation, requiring different messaging strategies.
- Voice channel bookings typically deliver higher value (+22% on average) compared to other channels. But Evan suggested that hoteliers shouldn't necessarily aim to drive more guests to the voice channel – rather, they should aim to replicate the personalization and responsiveness of voice calls in their other channels.
- Dom shared data from a case study at Portola Hotel and Spa where they employed generation-specific emails to reach out to Gen X and Baby Boomer guests. While Baby Boomers had an impressive 79% open rate, Gen X saw more than 3x as much revenue per email sent.
- Baby Boomers consistently showed the highest average spend per room across all generations.
- Gen Alpha (born between 2013 and 2025) significantly influence family travel decisions despite not making the bookings themselves – in fact, Travel Pulse reports that 85% of those in Gen Alpha influence family vacation plans.
- Evan shared the view that while generational targeting is good for determining a general approach to resource allocation, generations aren't monoliths. Hoteliers should go deeper and use interests to determine the content they're serving to guests, whatever age or demographic.
- The Portola Hotel and Spa simply asked guests what they liked, to help them take segmentation beyond simple demographics.
- As a hotelier, Evan believes AI will augment rather than replace human teams.

Top Takeaways for Hoteliers

1. Data is key – don't be afraid to ask people for information directly using questions like "what generation do you belong to?" or "how do you prefer to be communicated with?".
2. Use the data you collect to create more sophisticated segmentation and deeper individual personalization. Think of every person as a unique individual, and cater to their specific needs as much as possible.
3. Social media is the primary channel for younger generations – hoteliers should be using it for communication and customer service, not just for marketing.



Personalized pricing: What hotels can learn from casinos

John Lingos-Webb, VP of Global Partnerships, Duetto

Stephanie Wheeler, VP of Revenue Management, Boyd Gaming

Edmund Wong, Director of Revenue Optimization, Choctaw Casinos & Resorts

In this panel discussion John, Stephanie, and Edmund explored how casinos use segmentation and data to create personalized pricing strategies.

- The panel noted that casinos have used sophisticated personalized pricing for more than a decade.
- Measuring customer value is key to effective personalized pricing. Casinos combine multiple factors including gaming spend, retail, spa, and F&B data to determine guest worth. Stephanie and Edmund see this as the 'secret sauce' for each property.
- Boyd Gaming segments customers into 10 different value tiers based on average nightly profitability; Choctaw uses different variables - including distance from the hotel - to create 17 segments. Both set different pricing for those segments, and potentially for individual guests.
- Stephanie and Edmund both emphasized the need to dive deeply into data, and suggested that further tiers within segments may even be necessary as guests are not worth the same on every stay.
- Personalization increases loyalty. "If we don't have loyalty in the return guest, we don't have the casino," explained Edmund, highlighting how regional properties focus on regular visits rather than annual stays.
- Personalized casino pricing also enables hyper-personalized marketing campaigns—from sending emails when guests typically check their inbox, to using individual artwork in direct mail promotions.
- Boyd Gaming uses Chili Publish to create personalized direct mail pieces, reducing production time by seven days while customizing content to each guest's preferences.

Top Takeaways for Hoteliers

1. Start with your data foundation. A clean and available dataset is critical to effective segmentation.
2. Use existing customer data to identify micro-markets and create social media lookalike audiences - even limited profiles based on location or demographics are enough if you don't have casino-level information.
3. Understand what drives repeat visits for your specific property to create compelling direct offers.
4. Challenge traditional loyalty tier structures by examining the actual value different customers bring within the same tier level.
5. Beware of segmentation mistakes—Stephanie shared how overvaluing frequent local guests created yield management challenges that hurt profitability.



Winning on TikTok, the social channel hoteliers need to master

Sarah Dandashy, Founder & CEO, Ask A Concierge

Sarah Dandashy, a hospitality expert and content creator with over 250,000 social media followers, shared practical insights on how to TikTok to drive direct bookings.

- Hotels shouldn't sleep on TikTok - unlike other platforms, it's becoming a complete travel journey tool where users search for inspiration and ultimately make bookings.
- 40% of Gen Z uses TikTok over Google for search, and approximately 83% of travelers find travel inspiration on social media before booking.
- TikTok rewards authenticity over polished content, making it perfect for showing the real guest experience.
- The algorithm favors engaging content regardless of follower count, creating opportunities for properties of all sizes.
- Hotel staff can become powerful content creators, like Lenny the Doorman from Omni Berkshire who built nearly 100,000 followers through dance videos.
- The most successful hotel content includes room reveals, guest POV walkthroughs, behind-the-scenes moments and food highlights.
- Posting 3-4 times weekly yields best results, but consistency trumps quantity. Plans need to be realistic.
- Effective strategy requires active community engagement beyond just posting content.
- Track TikTok's impact by creating platform-specific discount codes for direct bookings.
- Content strategies should be platform-specific, recognizing different audience expectations across social platforms.
- Looking ahead, TikTok is developing more direct booking capabilities within the platform.

Top Takeaways for Hoteliers

1. Don't treat social media as an afterthought - assign clear ownership and carve out time and budget.
2. Start with one team member posting short videos weekly and repeat formats that work (room tours, amenities highlights, breakfast reveals).
3. Give guests clear reasons to book direct and share these prominently in your social content.
4. Understand who your guests really are by analyzing reviews, surveys, and asking them directly about their booking decisions.
5. Use user-generated content for authentic, cost-effective marketing by resharing guest photos and videos.
6. Start posting and experiment to find what resonates with your audience.



How top travel brands are using neuroscience and storytelling to drive conversions

Jason Craparo, Founder, Hovr

Jason Craparo, CEO of Hovr, explained why video is such an effective online medium and how hotels can better incorporate it into their websites.

- We're in an "attention crisis" with the average person having a shorter attention span than a goldfish.
- 87% of all web traffic is now video, with the average US adult consuming 6.45 hours of digital video daily.
- The brain processes images 60,000 times faster than text. Video is even more engaging - studies have shown that moving images activate more regions of the brain.
- Video creates emotional connections because the visual memory and emotion are processed in the same part of the brain.
- Excitement is the key emotion to generate for hotel bookings, coming from anticipating novel and unique experiences.
- Hotels often fail to show the "moments that matter" to guests – the experiences they're actually paying for rather than room features. Too much great content is placed out of context outside hotel websites.
- Fear of making a mistake is a key contributor to the hotel industry's 82% shopping cart abandonment rate. Video content can effectively answer the questions that cause this fear and indecision.
- Story-format videos following a logical progression (city → neighborhood → hotel exterior → lobby → rooms → amenities) create the strongest engagement.

Top Takeaways for Hoteliers

1. Use video content strategically to answer questions guests have when they're stuck in the decision-making process. Involve your whole team to help you learn what guests most want to know.
2. Provide secondary calls-to-action alongside booking buttons to help guests who aren't ready to book but want to explore more.
3. Analyze your own website by identifying where potential guests might get stuck or have questions, then provide content in context at those points.
4. Consider using a combination of professional videos and AI-enhanced images to create more dynamic content with minimal investment.
5. Don't wait - simple iPhone videos can make a big impact if you have no budget for professional content.



Smarter hotel marketing starts here

Jason Pirock, Head of Marketing, Springboard Hospitality

Springboard Hospitality increased direct bookings by 5% year-over-year in 2024 and 8% in 2025 YTD. These impressive results came from strengthening core fundamentals rather than just increasing spend. Jason revealed his top tips with the audience.

- Three Bs framework – Brand (positioning), Backend (operations), and Better Together (commercial approach) provides structure for direct booking success.
- Brand alignment is critical - “Brand creates the story. They’re the ones that help define the differentiation, that justify the price that tell us who we should do business with.”
- A visual market positioning chart helps to align all stakeholders (ownership, property team, corporate) on where your property truly sits compared to competition.
- Defining brand pillars through considerations like history, location, vibe, design helps translate them into tangible guest touchpoints. For example, Royal Sun in Palm Springs created property-curated playlists for their “Hideaway in the Sun” pillar, and local industry nights for “Connected Collective”.
- Operational efficiency in marketing requires finding the right partners aligned with your direction, hiring talent that fits your needs, and consolidating systems for easier management.
- Scope of work should be clearly defined so marketing teams aren’t used as a “dumping ground” for tasks. Focus on impact over effort to move the needle on direct bookings.
- Commercial approach requires KPI alignment across departments with everyone speaking the same language about measurement and success. According to Jason, “ROAS is not a measure of success” - a controversial statement for some hotel management teams.
- Marketing metrics should be aligned with other departments by focusing on consumption (actualized bookings) rather than just production.

Top Takeaways for Hoteliers

1. Define your unique market position with competitive analysis to align stakeholders. Pro tip: “Request a reverse comp set from STR to see which properties consider you their competition.”
2. Build operational efficiency with aligned partners and consolidated systems. Make sure you’re firing on all cylinders internally before worrying about what you might need to spend on external channels.
3. Match investment to revenue. Don’t be afraid to have hard conversations if your goals are not aligned with the budget you’ve been given.
4. Adopt a commercial approach where revenue is a collective goal. Focus on how the property is doing, not just individual departments.



Working with wholesale: The inside secrets to getting the best for your hotel

Anamaria Carrillo, Wholesale expert

Anamaria Carrillo, an expert in wholesale distribution, shared her insider thoughts on the key strategies that hotels can use to manage their distribution more effectively.

- The traditional B2B and B2C distribution boundaries have blurred, with many B2C players now selling on B2B channels. This can cause confusion and rate parity issues.
- Wholesalers provide value in a few different ways
 - Access to incremental 40,000 clients and 186 source markets
 - Anticipation for travel – data shows that B2B travel tends to drive more anticipation and excitement
 - Can allow you to steal the B2B market share of your competitor set through distribution agreements
- B2C players (OTAs) are significantly expanding their B2B business (last year, Expedia reported 19% growth vs 3% in their B2C business). They are using your rates and inventory to gain market share that they haven't negotiated for, which can heavily impact your distribution and direct bookings.
- Partner offers from OTAs are creating additional parity challenges.
- Many hotels leave their "distribution faucet completely open" instead of setting rules and limitations on their distribution. These rules should also apply on their inventory and rates.
- Strategies to ensure rate integrity and avoid rate leakage include restricting source markets, setting up real-time alerts, avoiding cross-channel distribution and using rate monitoring software.

Top Takeaways for Hoteliers

1. Ask the B2C players to distribute only to B2C, and B2B players to distribute only to B2B to avoid leakage.
2. Negotiate single source contracts with OTAs to keep them from pulling your rates elsewhere. They won't want to agree to this—but if you push, they will.
3. When working with wholesalers, use distribution "buckets" to control where rates can be sold (B2B only, B2B2C with restrictions, or chartered/packaged distribution).
4. Negotiate rate parity clauses with penalties for violations, including reduced inventory. Once that's in the contract, they'll make sure you have the cleanest distribution possible.
5. Block domestic source markets from wholesalers: you already have strong direct performance there.
6. Agree in your contract that wholesalers can't sell to your existing customers.
7. Consider implementing minimum length of stay requirements (2+ nights) when negotiating with wholesalers, as these room lengths are more likely to target customers from markets you may not already be reaching.
8. Extra discounts are being used to undercut your rates – not to target incremental customers.

Guests prefer to book direct, when given a reason



Roomza: AI is not the threat. Guest behavior is.

Curtis Crimmins, Founder & CEO, Roomza

Alicia Szerszyn, Sales and Marketing Manager, Paradise Resort Gold Coast

Curtis and Alicia shared strategies for building direct booking foundations and differentiating from OTAs.

- 80% of guests who book on OTAs visit the hotel website first, so there's a massive direct booking opportunity. Curtis noted that OTAs "may have all the traffic, but they have none of the trust, and that is our opportunity".
- Paradise Resort Gold Coast uses a comprehensive approach including loyalty programs, personalized communications, and special offers to achieve around 70% direct business.
- Curtis noted that Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) can be a powerful tool to drive direct bookings. Roomza offer direct-specific incentives like Dyson hair dryers, cashback and free parking.
- Immediate, tangible benefits are more effective than points for driving direct bookings – Paradise Resort Gold Coast offers a free "kid's club" session to people who book direct, which is a huge draw.
- The margin impact of lost ancillary revenue is a worthwhile investment as it drives more direct bookings and ultimately better returns - but you need to do the sums to make sure.
- According to Alicia, hotels should use surveys, reviews, and actually just ask guests to figure out why they are (or aren't) booking direct.
- Only 33% of leisure travelers express hotel or brand loyalty, with points programs appealing to a limited segment.
- Offering flexibility when guests book direct is a great way to stand out vs. OTAs.
- When discussing the impact of AI, Curtis and Alicia noted that AI will predict common human behaviors but won't invent new ideas - so if humans choose not to book direct, an AI agent likely won't choose to either.

Top Takeaways for Hoteliers

1. Take time to understand your value proposition, and evaluate whether it's right for your hotel and guests.
2. Clear and differentiated reasons to book direct will stop some of the 80% going back to the OTA.
3. Offer immediate, tangible rewards to direct bookers rather than points-based future benefits.
4. Analyze the revenue impact of direct booking benefits against the incremental value of the direct bookings, to be sure your offer makes sense.
5. Train your whole team to understand the benefit of direct bookings, and to be able to communicate that to customers.
6. Get amazing content and improve your marketing by reaching out to guests about using their photos/social media posts – most of the time, they'll say yes!



Optimizing for AI search in 2025

Chimmy Kalu, Staff Product Designer, Triptease

Chimmy Kalu, UX designer at Triptease, presented strategies for optimizing hotel websites for AI search.

- Gartner predicts that brands may lose up to 50% of their direct traffic due to AI search by 2028.
- 24% of young adults stop at AI summaries without clicking through to websites.
- Over 25% of frequent travelers have used AI for trip planning in the last six months.
- Voice search and experiential travel queries are changing how people discover accommodation.
- AI hotel recommendation results typically favor OTAs alongside direct hotel links - OTAs won the online war, and they may win the AI war if hotels don't act now.
- Hotels need to optimize beyond traditional SEO for "GEO" (generative engine optimization).
- Page structure is critical - using proper heading hierarchy, lists for pricing/amenities, and descriptive link text.
- Schema markup helps AI tools understand structured data about your hotel, rooms, amenities, and location.
- Clear, specific content outperforms generic marketing language - "bathroom with forest view" is more effective than creative but vague descriptions.
- Trust signals like reviews and regularly updated content improve AI visibility and ranking.
- Voice search is dominating local queries for AI search (e.g., "hotels near me").
- AI search prioritizes specific amenities and price information in a simplified format.
- AI and LLM tools require semantic structure to properly understand your website.
- GEO principles align with good user experience - what's easily navigable for AI is also better for humans.
- Adding specific pages targeting common AI queries can improve discoverability.

Top Takeaways for Hoteliers

1. Test your hotel's discoverability by asking AI tools questions where you'd expect to feature in the answers.
2. Audit your website structure to ensure it uses proper heading hierarchy, lists, and descriptive links.
3. Create FAQ pages using natural language that directly answers common guest questions.
4. Add specific metadata and schema markup to help AI understand your property's unique features.
5. Focus on niche, long-tail content that addresses specific guest needs rather than generic descriptions.
6. Regularly update content or at minimum refresh timestamps to signal relevance to AI systems.
7. Create dedicated pages targeting specific AI queries relevant to your property.
8. Optimize for both traditional search and AI search with structured, clear content focused on guest intent.



The hospitality AI opportunity

Christopher K. Anderson, Professor, Cornell SC Johnson College of Business

Chris - an expert on the hospitality industry - shared insights on AI: where it started from, where it is today, and where the technology is headed. He provided key examples of how hospitality businesses have tried – and sometimes struggled – to implement AI, and gave some specific examples of how hotels could start using AI in an effective way.

- AI has now reached human-level competency in six benchmark cognitive task areas, with predictive reasoning being the final milestone achieved in 2023.
- Companies like Figure AI are using today's AI to create robots with impressive real-time reasoning and physical dexterity, which may be available to hotels soon.
- Generative AI differs from older forms of Predictive AI in that it's pre-trained on a wide array of public information, creating unbounded outputs.
- The unbounded nature of GenAI can cause problems. Legal precedents now hold companies responsible for AI-generated output – Chris showed an example of Air Canada being required to honor incorrect pricing information shared by its web chatbot.
- Pricing is an area where there have been some legal questions around the use of AI. The FTC and the DOJ are exploring how AI-powered algorithms might lead to collusion (even if individuals involved aren't actively trying to collude).
- Many early AI adopters are using "try, test, learn" approaches - Marriott's Homes & Villas launched and then paused semantic search to refine it based on user interactions.
- OTAs will not sit on the sidelines. Expedia has moved from limited AI features in its app - a low-risk test channel - to website integration. It is now also experimenting with "trip matching" from Instagram content.
- Today's AI will not turn into artificial general intelligence (AGI) that makes independent decisions. And it's not omniscient – it can only enhance what humans can already do.
- Agentic AI, operating based on objectives rather than step-by-step instructions, represents the next evolution of AI's capabilities. Chris showed how Operator from OpenAI works, and explored some potential use cases

Top Takeaways for Hoteliers

1. Approach AI with a "try, test, learn" methodology, starting with small experiments that can be refined.
2. Plan for a 'human in the loop' when using AI, especially for consumer-facing applications.
3. Consider AI's potential to automate repetitive tasks but be cautious about its limitations and possible errors.
4. AI agents could help you save a lot of time completing tasks on clunky systems like Expedia Partner Central – freeing up your time for more value-added tasks..

ing You In
Middle of
Fight



5 mistakes to avoid when using OTAs

Jake Mooney, Founder & CEO, Modern Hospitality Solutions

Jake, a former Booking.com insider, shared tips for managing OTA relationships and avoiding common mistakes.

- Jake advised hotels to always focus on increasing organic rankings before paying for OTA promotions. If you're below 15th in OTA listings, you are competing for 25% of the traffic. Being 'below the fold' on the results page decreases the likelihood of booking by 50%.
- OTAs use visibility boosters, member discounts, and commission increases that can stack on top of each other. It's hard for hotels to understand, and easy to have a huge negative impact on your bottom line.
- Booking.com's commission structure includes base commission, plus optional programs like Preferred Partner (3-5% extra) and Preferred Plus (3-7% extra). This can result in total commission of more than 30%.
- Many properties forget to unenroll from these programs during high season when they don't need the visibility boost, or feel nervous that if they unenroll they won't be able to rejoin during their low season (Jake's advice is that you almost always can).
- Conversion rate is a key metric in OTA ranking algorithms. Excessive promotions may actually hurt your organic ranking if booking conversion rate doesn't keep pace with visits to your hotel page.
- When there's a fight between Booking and Expedia, the property tends to get punished since they can't punish each other - e.g. Booking Sponsored Benefits (BSB) creates rate parity issues that can trigger Expedia to reduce a property's visibility.
- Expedia's automatic rate match (ARM) is often suggested as a solution to parity issues but can result in rooms being discounted three times, digging deeper and deeper into your profit margin.
- OTAs use "bookings per minute" as their key metric, which doesn't align with a hotel's focus on profitability. Hoteliers must remember this mismatch of goals when working with OTA account managers.

Top Takeaways for Hoteliers

1. Understand exactly which promotions stack on top of each other and the maximum possible discount a guest can receive.
2. Monitor commission creep by regularly reviewing all the programs you're enrolled in and their combined cost. Be wary of programs where you're asked to increase your commissions as these can be a slippery slope.
3. If you enrol in payments by booking, ensure you're staying right on top on your parity to avoid issues – and do not enrol in Expedia's automated rate match.
4. Unenroll from programs and promotions that cost money in periods where you don't need to drive demand.
5. Watch your conversion rate closely to make sure promotions don't negatively impact organic rankings.

Contracting with OTAs:
the bigger the chain the easier it is!

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5 confessions from 20 years with big chains

Philippe Garnier, Owner, WPW Performance Consulting

Philippe, an industry expert with over 20 years experience in hotel distribution, shared five key confessions from his career working with major hotel chains.

- Hotels should ask whether they have to work with OTAs, and to what level. Either way they must strive to operationally delight every guest so they book direct in future.
- OTA negotiations are often easier for large chains, but can require challenging internal conversations and adaptations. With many stakeholders absolute alignment is needed before approaching OTAs.
- Rate parity issues stem from three main sources:
 - hotels doing promotions on OTAs to drive short-term results
 - wholesalers with insufficient markups
 - technical delays in rate updates across distribution channels.
- Hotels often pursue too many direct connections with minimal returns, which stretches account management resources thin and can lead to technical difficulties.
- Managing owner expectations during downturns is critical - the hospitality industry is cyclical and preparing both management and owners for inevitable ups and downs helps to prevent panic decisions.
- Team management in distribution requires clear objectives and empowerment rather than micromanagement.

Top Takeaways for Hoteliers

1. Focus on internal alignment ahead of entering into negotiations with OTAs.
2. Understand the three main causes of rate parity issues – this will allow you to address them effectively at their source.
3. More is not always better. Be selective with distribution partnerships, concentrating on those that deliver meaningful results.
4. Educate owners about industry cycles and warn of potential downturns to avoid short-term panic decisions when those downturns occur.
5. As a leader, empower your team with clear objectives and support rather than trying to control every aspect of distribution yourself.

Who are your most valuable guests?

TRIPTEASE

DIRECT
BOOKING
SUMMIT

DIRE
BOOK
SUMMIT

Using hotel data to win more valuable bookings

Jonathan Hickford, Principal Product Manager, Triptease

Andrew Williamson, Group Product Manager, Triptease

Jon and Andrew, product experts at Triptease, discussed strategies for identifying and attracting high-value guests using hotel data.

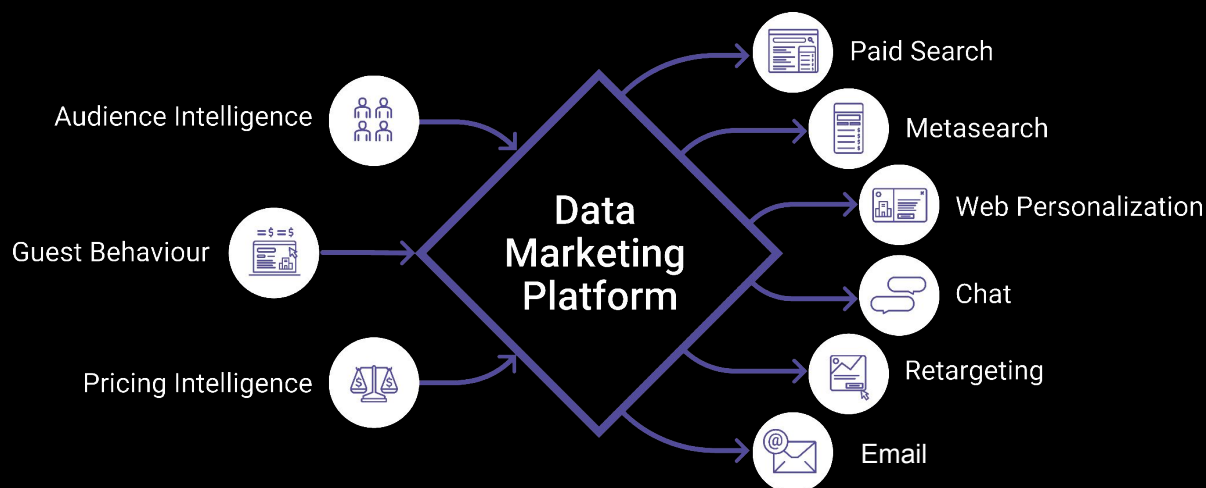
- The definition of a valuable guest is different for every hotel. It could be people with specific interests, stay profiles, or those who are looking to book on dates when the hotel most needs to fill rooms.
- For independent hotels, up to 90% of guests on any given night may be first-time visitors. It's not enough to rely on your CRM to generate bookings, even if those guests are prove to be valuable.
- It's hard to segment new guests effectively when you've had no interaction with them, but guest booking journeys do provide valuable data signals about interests and preferences, even for first-time visitors.
- Collecting and activating this segmentation data across multiple channels and properties is complicated and difficult without the right tools.
- Segmentation matters because different guest segments show dramatically different behaviors. Event-focused guests convert 40% better than average, solo travelers book almost one extra night per stay on average compared to couples, and golf enthusiasts spend over 2x the average booking value.
- Even if you can find the data you need, running campaigns separately across multiple disconnected channels is hard to scale - just 5 customer types and channels for 5 hotels means 125 separate campaigns!
- The most valuable guests may cost more to acquire, making marketing performance appear worse. But it could be worth it if they generate more revenue.

Top Takeaways for Hoteliers

1. Look beyond CRM data to identify valuable segments among potential first-time guests.
2. Target different guest segments with personalized messaging across all marketing channels.
3. Measure campaign performance across channels to understand which segments and approaches deliver the best results.
4. Triptease's new Campaign Manager allows hoteliers to identify valuable segments and personalize campaigns across channels in a single platform.
5. Triptease Audiences is an all-new way to target a network of hotel-specific prospects based on their interests.
6. Date Boost campaigns allow hotels to target specific need dates, with early testing showing 20% of bookings coming from boosted dates due to a 50% increase in top ad slot impression share.

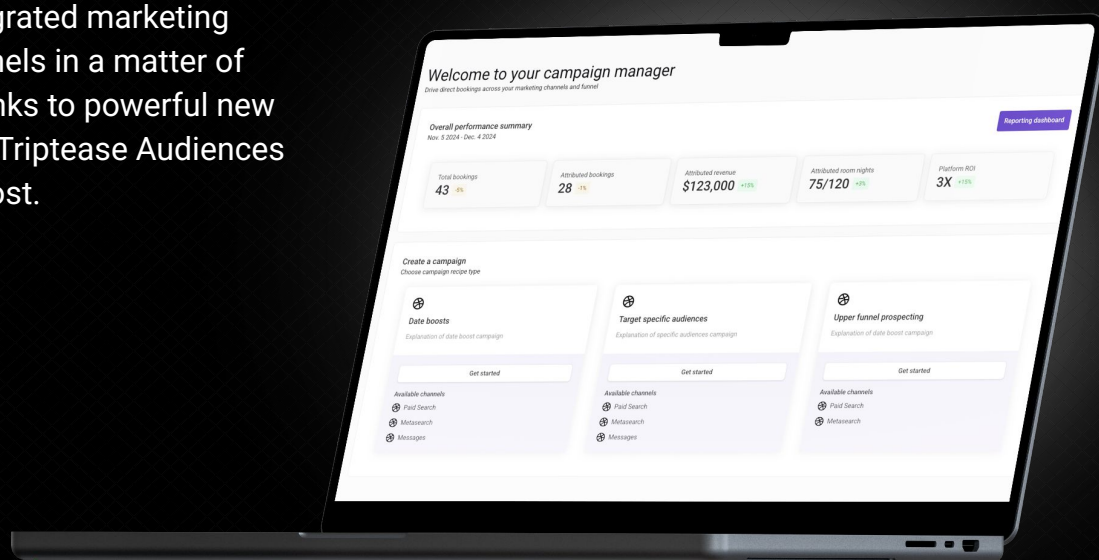
Win more valuable guests

With the Triptease Data Marketing Platform



Introducing the Triptease Campaign Manager

Choose your most valuable guests, build personalized campaigns and activate integrated marketing across channels in a matter of minutes, thanks to powerful new features like Triptease Audiences and Date Boost.



The Triptease Campaign Manager is coming soon.
Get in touch to find out more: triptease.com



Your tech stack is killing your direct bookings

Jason Emanis, Head of Marketing: Enterprise, Access Hospitality

Gabriella Monte, VP of Hotel and Retail Operations, The Drey Hotel

Allegra Medina, VP of Direct Marketing, SHR

This panel - featuring The Drey Hotel, Dallas, which achieves an impressive 87-89% direct bookings - discussed why hotels struggle with tech and what to do about it.

- Booking engines frustrate both guests and hoteliers — an h2c study found 62% of hoteliers see theirs as a major barrier to direct bookings. Why? Most are treated as transaction tools, not brand extensions.
- Hotels cram booking engines with features guests rarely use, while overlooking the basics. "It's a feature factory... but we don't use most of them."
- Mobile has overtaken desktop for European bookings, making mobile optimization no longer optional. The Drey Hotel's direct business thrives on a mobile-first approach that feels personal even on small screens.
- Tech vendors shouldn't just sell systems — they should co-create with hotels. Gabriella advised that vendors should "Sit with our teams, not just leadership. Don't just integrate systems, integrate thinking." The best feel like true partners: invested, responsive, and aligned.
- Disconnected marketing journeys cost you bookings - email offers vanish on websites and booking engines, while guests find better images on Booking.com than hotel sites. Create a seamless path from communication to booking.
- Fragmented tech limits the personalization that can amplify direct bookings.
- AI can streamline booking flows but shouldn't replace the human touch. The sweet spot for AI is removing friction from routine processes while preserving emotional connection.

Top Takeaways for Hoteliers

1. Treat your booking engine as an extension of your brand, not just a transaction tool.
2. Focus on mobile booking experiences first. Simplify the process, ensure your brand shines through, and make loyalty benefits immediately visible.
3. Choose tech partners who co-create with your team. "It's like dating when you're trying to find the right partner." Look for vendors who sit down with everyone from front desk to marketing - not just leadership.
4. Ensure native integration between your CRS and CRM to enable real-time personalization. When a guest receives an offer, they should see it immediately in the booking engine without extra steps.
5. Make revenue a collective goal, not departmental. Include everyone from sales to front desk in weekly revenue calls. "When teams feel ownership over the guest lifestyle, direct bookings follow."



AI agents and breaking down data silos

Charlie Osmond, Co-founder, Triptease

Everyone's talking about implementing AI, but it can be hard to know where to start. In this tactical session, Charlie showed practical applications of AI tools and agents that hotels can implement today to create a powerful impact.

- AI for content enhancement
 - AI tools like Kling.ai can transform hotel photos into dynamic videos in minutes at minimal cost.
 - AI-generated talking videos from still images of staff can create personalized guest communications.
- AI for web experience
 - AI agents like ChatGPT Operator can now navigate hotel booking engines with reasonable success. Manus.ai, another agentic tool, often struggles to navigate hotel direct websites and defaults to Booking.com when it fails. It's important to evaluate how your booking engine is performing with these kinds of tools so you can future-proof your business.
- AI for content and data capture
 - It's essential to set up a value exchange when trying to capture guest emails and preferences. AI can help create valuable content like destination guides with minimum effort.
- Automation and AI agents
 - AI agents can be used to automate workflows between systems that lack formal integrations, solving a longstanding hotel tech problem.
 - Practical applications include monitoring arrivals for potential corporate clients, automatically identifying need dates from revenue management systems, and capturing OTA Booker emails.
- Tools like Axiom.ai, Gumloop, and Make.com make creating AI workflows accessible – even to non-technical users.
- A short time investment (one day or one week) in learning these tools can dramatically improve your productivity.

Top Takeaways for Hoteliers

1. Start with simple AI applications like enhancing content and creating videos from existing imagery.
2. Test your booking engine with AI agents to ensure it will be compatible – and to track how things develop as the technology progresses.
3. Use AI to create valuable content that incentivizes guests to share their email addresses and preferences.
4. Consider AI agents for automating tasks that require data from multiple disconnected systems.
5. Invest time in learning these tools as they can transform and streamline repetitive tasks and processes, leaving you free to focus on more value-adding activities.



Strategies for hotel profitability and growth

Charlie Osmond, Co-founder, Triptease

Monty Bennett, Chairman and CEO, Ashford

Monty, a hotel industry veteran with decades of experience in running and owning hotels, joined Charlie for a fireside chat about hotel ownership perspectives and industry trends.

- The hospitality industry is facing capital constraints, with many banks refusing to increase their exposure to the sector following COVID impacts and with current economic uncertainty.
- Hotel construction is significantly down and inflation is predicted to outpace ADR growth, creating continued pressure on profit margins for hotel owners. "It's a tough cycle...we haven't had boom time since 2019."
- Monty noted that the pace of technology innovation means it's becoming increasingly difficult to predict exactly how guest behavior will evolve, and therefore how hotel businesses should plan for the future. He used the example of hotel check-in kiosks, which failed to achieve widespread adoption despite solving a common "problem" of lines at check-in.
- Monty highlighted self-driving cars as a potentially disruptive technology that could dramatically change travel patterns, as travelers could just be driven home through the night rather than booking a hotel room.
- However, while AI has received significant attention, it hasn't yet been customized for hotel-specific applications like yield management and channel optimization. But those tools are likely on their way.
- Monty suggested that hotels would not be among the first to benefit from AI-powered robotic technology because vendors can deliver more value—and charge a higher price—in industries like manufacturing.
- The teams that work most effectively with hotel owners tend to be those who propose solutions, rather than just identifying problems. Success comes from tenacity and finding ways to achieve objectives together.
- Property investment decisions should be viewed through a long-term lens. Understanding both cyclical patterns and potential technological disruptions is essential for success.

Top Takeaways for Hoteliers

1. Consider how technological investments will impact both staff and guest experiences, and plan your adoption of these technologies accordingly.
2. When communicating with ownership, bring solutions along with problems and be prepared with specific examples of how you're achieving objectives despite obstacles.
3. Try to identify qualitative objectives that are most important to your owners. ROI might not be everything!
4. Analyze the potential impact of emerging technologies like autonomous vehicles on your property's location value and long-term business model – but don't assume the worst.



How smart marketing and tech drove up to 80% direct bookings

Mo Baaghil, VP Digital Strategy + eCommerce, Modus by PM Hotel Group

Rosie Green, Senior Customer Success Manager, Triptease

Moh Baaghil shared how Dr. Wilkinson's Resort grew from 60% OTA booking share to 82% direct. Their multi-year plan involved many different initiatives which combined to drive direct bookings. Moh shared 5 of the most important.

- The hotel booking journey resembles a pinball machine rather than a linear funnel. Moh used a **"FIRST"** (Funnel-aware, Intent capture, Relevance, Smart spending, Testing) strategy to provide a framework for the different initiatives that would ensure presence at key touchpoints.
- Mobile optimization was the top priority. With 65% of traffic from mobile but poor conversion, fixing checkout preceded any paid media. Mobile conversion increased 18% year-over-year, revenue share jumped to 43% of total, and digital wallet (Apple/Google Pay) adoption hit 41% with Selfbook integration.
- Media spend follows strict efficiency targets. "Maintain 6-8% cost of revenue for every \$1 million. I shouldn't spend more than \$80,000 in paid media [for a 12-to-one ROAS]."
- Adara's travel intent data is used to target segmented top-of-funnel prospects via display and social ads, while Google Performance Max is used to engage later in the booking journey: "We always want to be feeding our funnel with qualified cold traffic. We always want new users to enter."
- First-party data fuels long-term success — Moh used Attentive to collect 12,000 emails and 7,000 phone numbers via double opt-in, generating \$478K (18% of website revenue) via subsequent SMS campaigns.
- Hotels often underinvest in creative — Moh refreshes assets quarterly with seasonal updates, tailoring them to each funnel stage, and tests constantly to see what works best.
- Close the loop with dynamic retargeting ads and cart abandonment campaigns to rescue more revenue.

Top Takeaways for Hoteliers

1. You might not have to change your Booking Engine to improve the mobile booking experience.
2. Use competitor signals in Performance Max campaigns by adding comp set URLs and keywords to audience settings. "You're telling the algorithm everyone who visits their websites is also your target."
3. Adjust ad budgets based on brand awareness. New hotels need 60% in prospecting, established properties can shift to 30%. "Too high an ROAS means you're underspending." OTA promotional spend should be limited to biggest need dates—not 'always on'.
4. Funnel stage-specific creative is essential to getting the best ad performance.
5. Testing is critical, from ads to your website. Finding the right creative can materially change your results.



How to win on Google

Sanjay Vakil, former Group Product Manager, Google and Co-founder, Direct Booker

Sanjay revealed insider insights about Google's search ad algorithms and how hotels can improve their performance.

- Google's DNA prioritizes users first, partners second, and Google's business third.
- Its main priority is to keep users on Google. It will de-prioritize partners and its own products to achieve that.
- Google doesn't specialize internal systems by vertical, even for segments as big as travel.
- 70% of prospective guests want to book directly with a hotel, so you'd expect Google to prioritize the direct website in search results. But that's often not the case.
- Google believes someone searching for a specific hotel is still researching, not ready to book, and wants to compare prices and properties. So the result most likely to satisfy them is a list.
- A test showed customers visiting a hotel's site on TripAdvisor only ended up booking there 25% of the time.
- Google's goal isn't to prioritize OTAs. But as its research shows that guests want to see a list of options (with the hotel named in their query at the top), OTA results are often seen as most likely to satisfy the user.
- Google's goal is to encourage return users—and OTA users tend to return to Google more. So OTAs may actually pay less than hotels for the same clicks on a hotel's brand name.
- Out of a pipeline of millions of potential search queries in Google, OTA ads make it to the final auction 10x more frequently than hotel ads because Google shows they convert more.
- Google research has shown that people become more sad and angry when pricing shown in ads is inaccurate.
- AI overviews are currently appearing primarily for exploratory queries rather than high commercial-intent searches, suggesting direct impact on hotel bookings is still limited.

Top Takeaways for Hoteliers

1. Focus your search ads on direct booking benefits rather than hotel features, and ensure your landing page reinforces those same benefits with matching content.
2. Get the basics right: make sure you have accurate prices, positive reviews, correct deep linking, etc. .
3. Optimize your Google Business Profile thoroughly (accurate phone number, location, opening hours) to maximize free traffic from the knowledge panel.
4. Major OTAs won't stop bidding on your property, so trying to remove wholesale rates from small outfits may be the most realistic way to reduce competition.
5. Ensure price accuracy between your ads and landing pages, as inaccuracy reduces trust and, as a result, CVR.
6. Consider working with a DMO (or local hotels) so you can buy ads together and present results in a list.
7. Monitor AI overview developments but don't panic.



How Marcus Hotels Reimagined the Commercial Team to Drive Growth

Matthew Peschke, Senior Director of Corporate Marketing, Marcus Hotels & Resorts

Matt shared how Marcus Hotels has changed its commercial structure to improve cross-functional collaboration and team alignment, leading to a 46% increase in year-on-year web conversion rates with no increase in marketing spend.

- Marcus Hotels and Resorts chose to unify its commercial structure under a Chief Commercial Officer, bringing together sales, revenue management, marketing, and – unusually – food and beverage departments.
- Traditionally, different departments have different goals, metrics, and bonus structures, which can create natural tensions between them. For example, revenue management often focuses on short-term performance, sales on quarterly/yearly goals, and marketing on longer-term brand equity. This makes it more challenging for these departments to collaborate.
- Matt's team shifted meeting structures from siloed "revenue meetings" to inclusive "commercial strategy meetings," ensuring all stakeholders had a voice in planning and decision-making.
- They implemented quarterly calls between corporate and hotel teams to review past performance, current initiatives, and upcoming strategies, creating alignment across all levels of the organization.
- Combining some KRAs (Key Results Areas) and bonus metrics helped align teams without creating unnecessary dependencies that could slow achievements.
- Marcus reduced from seven external agencies down to just three strategic partners, which has helped them to streamline data collection and eliminate reporting silos.
- Matt's team are investigating how to use ROMI (Return on Marketing Investment) rather than Return on Ad Spend as a more representative, blended view of marketing performance.

Top Takeaways for Hoteliers

1. Examine your meeting attendee lists to ensure cross-functional representation, encouraging all participants to bring valuable insights to discussions.
2. Implement shared dashboards and reporting tools so all departments are referencing the same data and performance metrics when making decisions.
3. Consider aligning some bonus metrics and KPIs between departments to encourage collaboration.
4. Start meetings by celebrating cross-departmental wins to set a positive tone and to cement the value of collaborative efforts.
5. Invest in cross-department training to build empathy and understanding of how to best work together.
6. Consolidate your external partners if you can to eliminate data silos.



From guesswork to growth: incorporating AI into your CRM

Luis Fernando Gutierrez Belmont, Corporate Director of Digital Marketing, Marival Resort
Allegra Medina, VP of Direct Booking Strategies, SHR

Fernando and Allegra discussed how AI-powered CRM systems can drive significant direct booking growth.

- Fernando faced common industry challenges with OTA dependence, limited guest data, and fragmented systems that didn't communicate with each other.
- His team worked to connect all customer touchpoints (CRM, booking engine, PMS, website tracking) into an in-house data warehouse that provided comprehensive visibility into guest behavior.
- Though challenging to create, the warehouse frees Marival from vendor lock-in and ensures they truly own their data.
- Their custom-built AI algorithm analyzes navigation behavior in real time to determine intent and assigns dynamic lead scores. Alerts are automatically sent to the call center when scores are above 8 out of 10, allowing the sales team to follow up with high-intent guests.
- The system flags return visits to the website after quote requests, enabling targeted, personalized outreach with the exact room, dates, and pricing the guest had previously considered.
- Long-term guest behavior tracking triggers personalized SMS or email communications before typical yearly travel dates with pre-filled exclusive offers.
- The results were impressive: direct and call center revenue jumped from 29% to 53% market share, and overall revenue increased from \$88 million to \$121 million (37% growth).
- Fernando emphasized that AI enhances rather than replaces human staff, pointing out how the technology provides insights that enable more meaningful human interactions.

Top Takeaways for Hoteliers

1. Think about how you can connect your CRM, PMS, and website tracking tools to create a unified view of guest behavior and enable real-time action.
2. Develop automated anniversary or seasonal triggers based on past booking patterns to reach out to guests before they typically travel.
3. Focus on using technology to empower your sales team with actionable data rather than replacing human touchpoints, as the human element remains crucial to conversion.
4. When considering new technology think about whether they already incorporate AI, and whether they can easily integrate with your existing systems (or will do the work to enable that for you).



How Onera hit 80% direct with social-first strategy

Ben Wolff, Co-founder, Onera

Ben Wolff, hotel owner, developer, operator, and marketer, consistently drives 80% direct bookings for his upscale treehouse and landscape hotels in Texas through an organic social media strategy.

- We're in a social media revolution where 4.7 billion people spend 2.5 hours daily online, yet many hotels treat social as branding rather than a booking channel.
- Social media is becoming a primary booking channel. "Instagram and TikTok will be top booking platforms by 2030, and for some properties, they already are. More than 80% of travelers use social for inspiration and discovery, and almost 100% of millennials share travel experiences on social."
- Ben emphasized the shift to social will only increase as Gen Z gains buying power and Gen Alpha comes of age.
- Companies that embrace social-first strategies are winning. Ben compared this shift to previous digital revolutions where early adopters thrived while others fell behind.
- Onera pivoted from OTA-dependency after a travel influencer generated \$30,000 in direct bookings from just two posts, prompting them to first try a social media agency, then build an in-house content team.
- Their vertical-format videos use on-screen text, audience callouts (e.g. "Couple's Beach Resort"), and share-focused CTAs rather than booking prompts.
- Results include 37 million views, 13 videos with 1M+ views each, and 5-10,000 monthly booking site clicks, enabling rate increases when content goes viral.
- Their revenue management directly responds to social performance. "When we have a video going viral, we needed our pricing to reflect that inherent demand." Their system alerts them to viral content, triggering standard operating procedures (SOPs) for immediate rate increases.
- Ben emphasized that social media success requires substantial investment in high-quality production (10k+ monthly) but delivers ROI through higher ADRs and direct booking growth.
- Attribution was a problem, with Google attributing only 2% of booking to the huge investment in social.

Top Takeaways for Hoteliers

1. Invest in vertical video with videographers specialized in social media formats rather than traditional marketing.
2. Use on-screen text with audience callouts to help algorithms serve content to relevant viewers.
3. Focus CTAs on engagement rather than direct sales to maximize reach and virality.
4. Adjust rates during viral periods with automated alerts for high-engagement.
5. Track attribution beyond Google Analytics with post-booking surveys about discovery.

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Decoding the Data: AI-Powered Strategies to Drive Direct Bookings

Josh Graham, Head of Market Development NORAM, Cloudbeds

Josh presented data-driven insights on industry trends and how smart use of AI can drive direct bookings.

- Occupancy patterns are normalizing in 2025, and moderate growth is expected. However, there are significant regional variations related to geopolitical conflicts and currency valuations.
- Booking windows show a "reverse hockey stick" pattern with acceleration 30 days out, requiring continued pricing discipline and active rate management.
- While ADR was a bright spot post-COVID, global ADR decreased 1% in 2024 vs 2023, and when accounting for global inflation of +5.4%, the decline was significantly greater.
- OTA's captured 61% of bookings for independent properties in 2024 vs. 35% of bookings for branded hotels.
- Josh identified four key trends affecting hotels today:
 - AI is enhancing the hotel workforce: Agentic, Causal, and Multimodal AI can be use to improve operations and lesson the workload of employees.
 - AI & influencers are changing travel planning: Travelers want instant recommendations, tailored to their needs—whether that's done by AI personalization, or through authentic influencer content
 - The talent crunch is deepening: The hospitality industry in the US has an annual turnover rate of 73%. Plus, branded hotels are recruiting staff from independent properties.
 - Unified commercial strategy is becoming more of a focus: hotels are moving beyond aligned reporting structures to unified metrics. More and more, technology is allowing revenue and marketing teams to work from shared data.

Top Takeaways for Hoteliers

1. Invest in AI tools to automate reporting and analytics, so teams can focus on strategy—not data consolidation.
2. Consider enhanced reservation handling systems like AI-powered voice concierges that can complete bookings rather than just answering questions.
3. Evaluate your revenue management system's ability to recalibrate forecasting models regularly, as historical data is less reliable in today's volatile market.
4. Align departments toward shared goals by using metrics like TRevPAR (total revenue per available room) and GOPPAR (Gross Operating Profit per Available Room), which give a clearer picture of total profitability.
5. When selecting technology, consider the impact on employee experience and learning curve as a factor in reducing turnover and improving job satisfaction.



Upselling: The silent profit killer

Aafke Schlemm, Sales Director - North America, UpsellGuru

Aafke presented strategies for improving upselling programs, focusing on ownership, implementation, and impact.

- LinkedIn polling revealed the confusion around who should own upselling. Front office and revenue management each voted for the other, suggesting that often no one is being held accountable.
- Lack of ownership doesn't mean lack of interest: one front desk representative generated six-figure upsell revenue after being trained and incentivized to do it.
- Very few of the hoteliers in the room had been offered a paid room upgrade ahead of a stay in the last 5 years - clearly demonstrating the profit opportunity.
- Using too many disconnected tools for pre-arrival, during-stay, and post-stay upselling might leave money on the table and create a poor guest experience. For example, what if the front desk knew at check-in when someone abandoned an upgrade during their original booking?
- OTA guests represent a major upselling opportunity. They made up 40% of 2024 upgrades through UpsellGuru, but 60% of the revenue. The best part? Upsells don't require additional OTA commission.
- Many hotels delay implementing upselling solutions until after other tech stack upgrades, but they're missing out on significant revenue opportunities in the meantime.
- Commission-based upselling solutions typically offer a 6:1 ROI on average, while subscription models can deliver up to 114x ROI for the same property.
- Commission models limit the effectiveness of upselling by ruling out attractive lower margin options like breakfast (or other F&B).

Top Takeaways for Hoteliers

1. Assign clear ownership of upselling to a specific department or cross-functional team with dedicated time, measurable targets, and accountability mechanisms.
2. Specifically target OTA guests for upselling. They represent higher revenue potential and a way to mitigate higher OTA acquisition costs.
3. Prioritize implementing an upselling solution earlier in your tech roadmap as it can generate immediate revenue to fund other technology investments.
4. Audit your current upselling payment model—switching to a subscription model could mean better ROI.
5. Train your team on upselling as a skill, as even average performers can generate revenue when they know the proper techniques.



Survival strategies for every hotelier

Anthony Melchiorri, Host and Co-Executive Producer, Hotel Impossible
David Demilli & Steve Carran, Hosts, The Modern Hotelier

David and Steve asked renowned hospitality expert and TV personality Anthony about his thoughts on operational excellence, revenue generation, and the importance of human connection in hotels.

- After 40 years in the industry, Anthony emphasized that employee engagement is the biggest challenge facing hotels today, with staff often disengaged from guests and lacking proper training.
- Anthony stressed that hotels lose repeat direct business by not properly engaging guests at the front desk, particularly those who book through OTAs.
- He also highlighted that OTAs can play an important role in the booking journey – but hotels should make sure they stay in their place. “Direct booking is the only way to go, but we have to treat the third parties with respect. Let them bring the customer the first time, but don't let that customer ever go through them again.”
- He called out how a preoccupation with saving money can actually decrease a hotel's profitability. Excessive focus on cost-cutting often leads to training reduction, lowered staffing, and ultimately decreased guest satisfaction. “This is not an expense cutting business, it's a revenue-driving business”.
- Anthony highlighted how important housekeeping is to a hotel business, even though its role is often overlooked. “If there's hair in the shower, mold in the shower, the room smells....nothing else matters.”
- He shared a powerful anecdote about a housekeeper who pawned her wedding ring for \$40 to host a holiday party for her team after the owner refused to fund it, illustrating the disconnect between ownership and their frontline staff who are often working paycheck to paycheck.

Top Takeaways for Hoteliers

1. Implement the 10-5 rule of guest engagement (acknowledge at 10 feet, engage at 5 feet) as a measurable standard for your team to improve guest connections.
2. Focus on revenue generation rather than cost-cutting, as cost-cutting can lead to lower guest satisfaction.
3. Prioritize housekeeping training, standards, and inspections.
4. Ensure frontline staff understand the importance of capturing contact information from OTA guests and encourage them to book direct for future stays.
5. Maintain a connection between ownership/management and frontline staff to understand their challenges and recognize that staff working to support themselves have very different perspectives than profit-focused owners.



2 Tried and tested techniques you can apply today

3 All-new Triptease Messages

The future of website personalization

Alasdair Snow, Co-founder and Chief Product Officer, Triptease

Chimmy Kalu, Staff Product Designer, Triptease

Alasdair Snow and Chimmy Kalu unveiled website personalization strategies and Triptease's new Messages product.

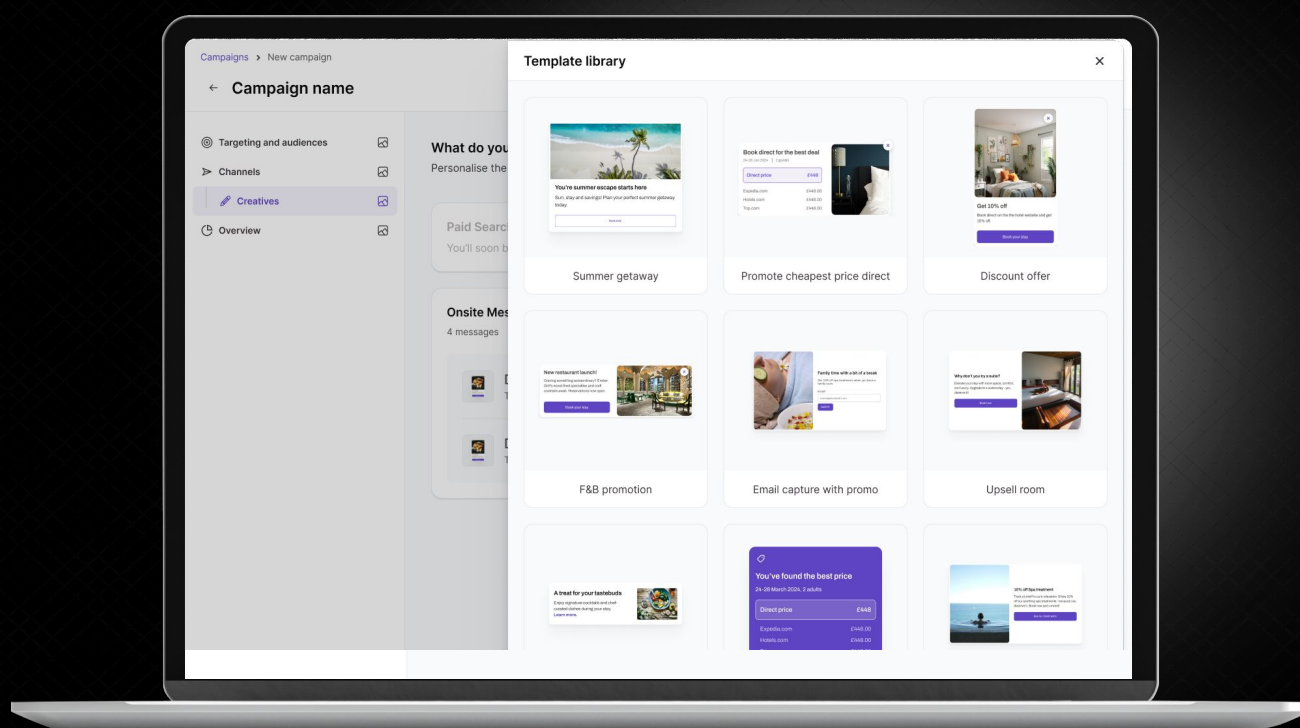
- Personalization fulfills basic human needs for recognition and relevance. "It's technology catching up to ancient expectations". 80% of shoppers prefer personalized experiences.
- Hotel websites provide the greatest personalization opportunity as they offer both the largest canvas for customization and best platform for first-party data capture.
- Context-based messaging significantly outperforms generic offers. One hotel's "Get your 4th night free" message, shown only to guests searching for 2-3 nights, generated \$131,000 in revenue.
- Event-specific urgency messages like those for Formula One Grand Prix dates create targeted scarcity without discounting.
- Messages support the whole booking journey. One hotel shared information about local road closures due to Taylor Swift concerts, with no booking call to action, to create a better experience and build trust.
- Value exchanges boost first-party data acquisition. Offering availability alerts for unavailable dates transforms booking dead-ends into email collection opportunities.
- While effective individually, multiple disconnected messages create fragmented experiences. "If you set up a lot of these things, they can end up with a disjointed experience for the guest," noted Alasdair.
- Triptease's all-new Messages product helps to solve this by enabling coordinated, campaign-based on-site messaging.
- Messages offers new creative control, new multimedia options to drive emotional engagement, new mobile-first formats, and a library of templates so hoteliers can take action faster.
- Integration with Triptease Audiences allows hotels to move from targeting by what and where, to what, where and who, thanks to unique behavioral data.

Top Takeaways for Hoteliers

1. Match messages to search parameters. Context-based offers outperform generic discounts.
2. Deploy exit-intent messages. A simple "Wait!" popup generated \$1.5 million for one hotel.
3. Web personalization isn't just about driving conversions. Think about how it could improve the booking journey.
4. New Triptease Messages lets hotels move from point solutions, to connected site-wide campaigns.
5. Triptease Audiences allows specific guest targeting, co-ordinated across multiple marketing channels.

The future of website personalization

Introducing all-new Triptease Messages



Triptease Messages has been redesigned from the ground up to deliver personalized guest journeys on your website.

Target messages based on the preferences of individual visitors, as well as when and where they're looking, and join them together in new integrated campaigns that can span multiple marketing channels.

Complete creative freedom and advanced multimedia capabilities let hotels design even more beautiful, engaging messages that inform, guide and convert direct bookers.

All-new Triptease Messages is coming soon.

Get in touch to find out more: triptease.com



How Staypineapple built an in-house influencer engine

Casey Barks, VP of Marketing, Staypineapple

Casey Barks shared how the boutique hotel group transformed influencer marketing into a scalable revenue-generating system that converts inquiries into paying guests while building a valuable content library.

- Social media significantly influences travel decisions. Two-thirds of Gen Z use social media for travel inspiration, while 39% of all travelers say influencers sway their destination choices.
- Staypineapple automated their influencer funnel using keyword triggers in DMs to direct 80-100 monthly requests to a standardized submission form.
- Their three-tier evaluation framework simplifies decisions. Influencers are categorized based on metrics like activity and engagement levels. "This keeps it streamlined and approved by leadership."
- Influencers aren't all looking for a free ride, as long as everything is clear up-front: "Out of two and a half years, we've only had to bill one influencer."
- Every agreement includes perpetual rights to 5-10 photos, expanding their asset library from 2,000 to 7,000 images in two years.
- UGC (User-Generated Content) dramatically outperforms traditional imagery. Identical email offers using influencer content saw a jump in click-through rates, and a corresponding increase in attributable bookings.
- Viral posts drive measurable business impact. One post achieved 51,000 likes and 2.6M impressions, resulting in direct growth in engagement and revenue.
- Influencers don't need to be superstars to make a difference. Those in lower tiers generate substantial revenue and meaningful ROI.

Top Takeaways for Hoteliers

1. Standardize your submission process. Direct all inquiries through an automated form to reduce team bandwidth and increase lead capture.
2. Create a tiered compensation framework. Establish clear metrics-based tiers approved by leadership.
3. Set expectations and introduce incentives. Pairing collection of credit card details with digital contracts provides clarity and reduces risk.
4. Secure perpetual content rights. UGC outperforms traditional imagery in campaigns by 2-3x in click-through rates.
5. Connect **website-social pixels**. Retarget influencer traffic to maximize ROI from viral posts and visitor spikes.



Using brand, strategy and technology to build a better booking journey

Paul Salmon, Rockhouse Hotel & Skylark Negril Beach House Resort

Hotelier Paul shared how his properties achieved an extraordinary 98% direct booking rate over a 30-year journey.

- Rockhouse began with direct booking ambitions in 1994 but initially relied on tour operators for distribution. In 2005, 60% of their traffic was driven by wholesalers or travel agents.
- A turning point came when they surveyed guests and discovered most bookings through intermediaries weren't driven by those channels—guests were finding the hotel through word of mouth and PR but booking through the easiest available channel.
- They built a robust email database through rigorous collection at check-in, restaurant bookings, website sign-ups, competitions, and creating a Negril vacation guide that required email submission for access.
- Their email marketing focused on more than just deals, incorporating their community philosophy, environmental initiatives, and staff highlights to create an experience that reminded past guests of their stay.
- The property strategically used weddings to drive business during off-season (April-November), requiring 3-4 night minimum stays and bringing in guests who might not otherwise visit.
- They gradually eliminated all intermediaries as direct bookings grew to their current 98% level (with the remaining 2% coming from travel agents booking directly).
- Rock House created unique experiences like a psilocybin sound bath (leveraging the legal status of “magic mushrooms” in Jamaica), garden tours, and candle-making, that generate word-of-mouth and PR opportunities.
- They invested heavily in community initiatives, establishing a charitable foundation that has invested over \$10 million in local education.

Top Takeaways for Hoteliers

1. Focus on email collection across all touchpoints (check-in, restaurants, website, etc) to build a robust first-party marketing database.
2. Create unique, property-specific experiences that generate word-of-mouth referrals and PR opportunities
3. Develop content-rich email communications that reconnect past guests emotionally with your property.
4. Consider strategic use of weddings or events during low season with minimum stay requirements to introduce new potential guests to your property.
5. Gradually reduce intermediary relationships as direct channels strengthen, focusing on quality guest experiences that drive referrals and repeat visits.

DIRECT BOOKING SUMMIT

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