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How Are Hotels Embracing Social Media in 2010

Examples of How to Begin Engaging

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We've Only Just Begun¹

According to Pew Research, credibility of news has continuously fallen over the past 10 years. There's been a shift in the public's trust from news institutions to social media – "circles of trust" which allow your friends into your life. Results show that if you are trustworthy and authentic in social media, you can build and keep a following.

In this burgeoning digital world where we need to make "connections" more than "impressions" – and more, if not most, of our guests are communicating with friends, family and colleagues online – social media channels are changing the way we do business and forever altering how we attract and retain a loyal base. Now, with the evolution of platforms such as LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter, Flickr and YouTube, we have the opportunity for unprecedented access to guests.

In these difficult economic times when many hotels are not able to service debt and face foreclosure, the most successful hotels will create brand advocates by using social marketing tools and channels to grab the attention of new visitors and keep in touch with their loyal client base.² Social media is a must-have in any communications initiative to boost business and the bottom line.

Those who ignore social media stand to become irrelevant. The influence of social media is so significant that, according to the *US Interactive Marketing Spend, 2009 to 2014 (Forrester)*,³ interactive marketing spend will near \$55 billion and represent 21% of all marketing spending by 2014. Social media will comprise 3% to 6% of the interactive marketing spend. And not surprisingly, interactive marketing will cannibalize traditional media!

Here is just some of what can social media can do for you:

- Reinforce your message and help it go viral
- Embrace and project your brand's personality
- Allow for real-time, two-way communication
- Allow you to communicate at point-of-need
- Build business and generate ROI

Hesitant to try? Many organizations have still not jumped in to leverage the power of social media, engage and integrate it with the rest of their

marketing initiatives. To start, every company or property needs social media guidelines in order to know what platforms to use and what the key messaging will be. To guide you in this process, we hope the following compilation will give you ideas on how to break through the clutter and join the dialogue for entrée to a whole new base of potential influencers.

How Hotels Are Embracing Social Media

From effectively using Twitter to leveraging Facebook, YouTube and blogging, following are examples of how hotels have been engaging in various social media. Also included is input from several hotel executives about their experiences thus far.

International Brands

Starwood Hotels & Resorts Starwood was one of the first hotel companies to introduce a social networking website. In June 2006, travelers from around the world vied for a chance to win a vacation in its “Sherabration Sweepstakes” by sharing a personal travel story (*June 30, 2006*⁴).

Then, to publicize its \$6 billion makeover, Starwood's biggest brand – Sheraton – gave away 2,100 free nights at 86 new or newly renovated hotels (*October 2009*⁵). In addition, the company launched a sweeping new social media platform: “Sheraton Shared Moments.”

Via multiple online communities including Twitter, Facebook, Flickr, blogging platforms and email, users share travel experiences with friends and family and the public for a chance to win a dream holiday at a luxurious Sheraton property (*December 18, 2009*⁶).

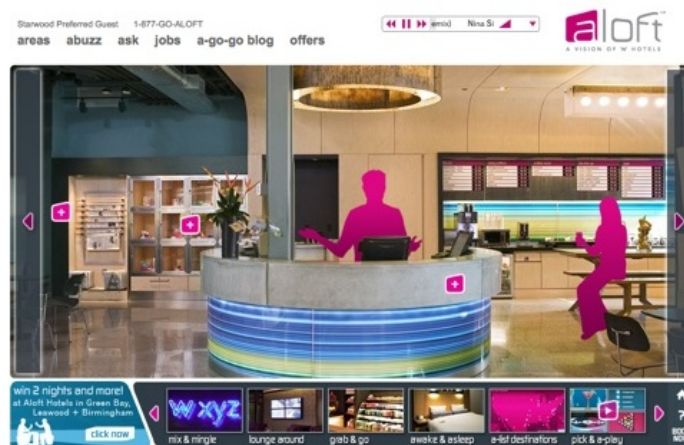


aloft (by Starwood)^{7,8} Aloft is the world’s first hotel brand to place a 3-D computer-generated property inside a virtual world. Second Life (www.secondlife.com) is aloft’s online simulated world with more than one million users.

“Second Life has been a tremendous learning experience for the aloft brand. Our time spent on the island helped us to create what will surely be the ultimate destination sensation,” says Brian McGuinness, aloft Vice President.

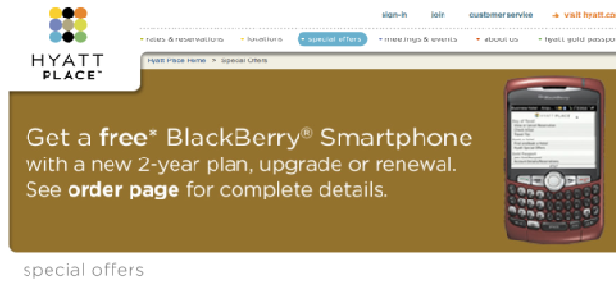


Since its debut in the virtual world in September 2006, aloft has actively solicited input from Second Life residents on such design features as public spaces, guest rooms and exteriors – everything from color palette to space planning. In fact, several design changes – adding radios in guest room showers, providing additional seating in the lobby and incorporating artwork created by local artists in public areas – are a direct result of consumer feedback and will be reflected in “real-life” aloft hotels.



Hyatt Hotels & Resorts Hyatt launched a special online community site just for Gold Passport members (www.yattit.com⁹). It offers expert insight and tips from local Hyatt concierges in more than 40 destinations worldwide along with advice from confirmed frequent travelers.

Meanwhile, Hyatt’s Facebook page is branded with a ‘HyattCareers’ URL making it easy to find. The page boasts more than 9,000 fans. (Case Study – Use of Facebook and Social Media in Recruiting: Hyatt Hotels and Resorts¹⁰)

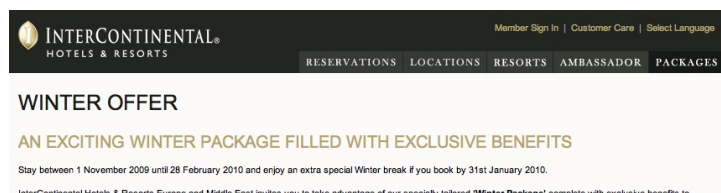


Marriott Hotels & Resorts¹¹ Marriott Resorts Hawaii launched a campaign on Twitter, Facebook and YouTube to celebrate 50 years of Hawaiian statehood and to give away free trips to the island.



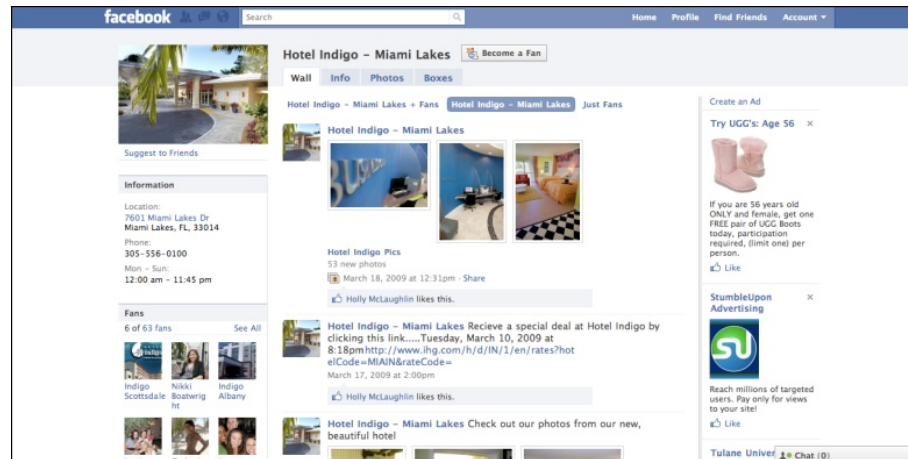
InterContinental Hotels & Resorts (IHG)¹² IHG partnered with Communispace to build and facilitate three private online communities of some 300 members each, all members of IHG’s loyalty program. At the core of the approach to social marketing is the idea that IHG puts its customer at the center of everything.

The company recently extended its social marketing footprint by launching a public community open to Priority Club Rewards members. IHG also utilizes third-party social networks such as Facebook, LinkedIn and Twitter.



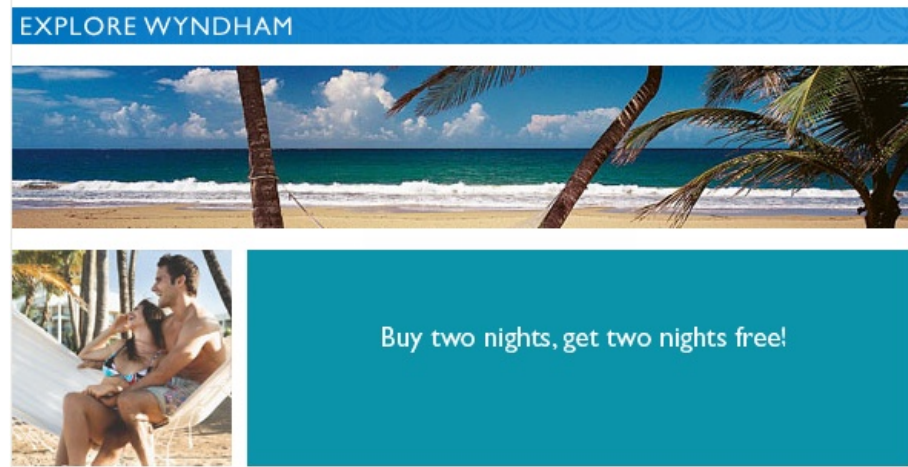
Hotel Indigo (by IHG) Each Indigo location has its own fan page on Facebook, e.g., the Hotel Indigo Chicago Downtown Gold Coast offers discounts of up to 20% off for friends and fans on Facebook.

In addition, the company recently tweeted approximately one million Priority Club points redeemable for hotel nights, retail gift cards, electronics and more during its December 2009 “Tweet Away” promotion.

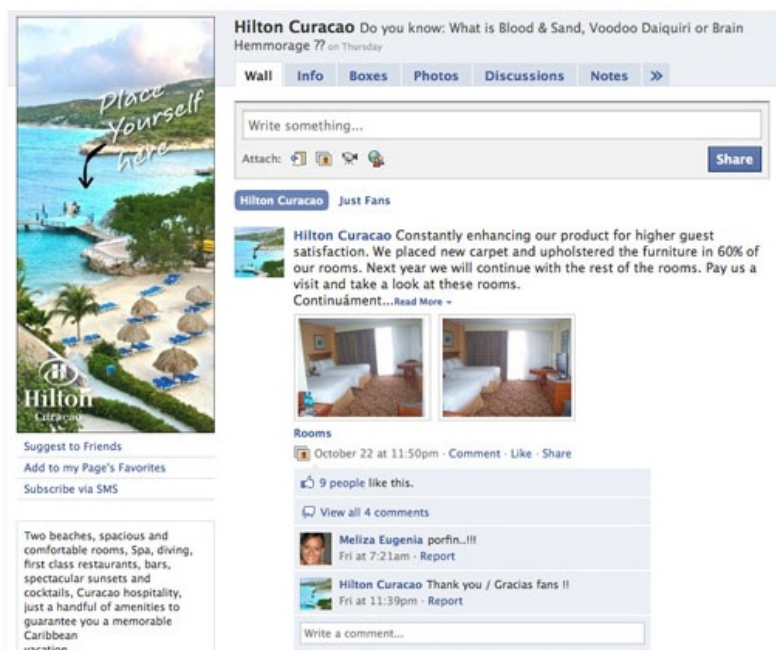


Wyndham Hotels and Resorts^{13,14} Wyndham has adopted a more targeted approach with “Women on Their Way.” This micro-site is a soft sell forum for the brand to advertise female-friendly trip packages and gain valuable insight about guests’ actual trip planning processes and vacation desires.

Promotions on Facebook and other social networking profiles allow users to share promotions with their friends.



Hilton Hotels¹⁵ Fans of any Hilton Caribbean hotel can download a \$50 resort credit redeemable at check-in. Hotels included are the Hilton Barbados, Caribe Hilton, Hilton Curacao, Hilton Kingston Jamaica and British Colonial Hilton Nassau.



Omni Hotels¹⁶ Omni's social media supports and enhances the other channels. Brand executives say the company prides itself in being nimble and responsive, opting not to neglect other tools to focus on social media.

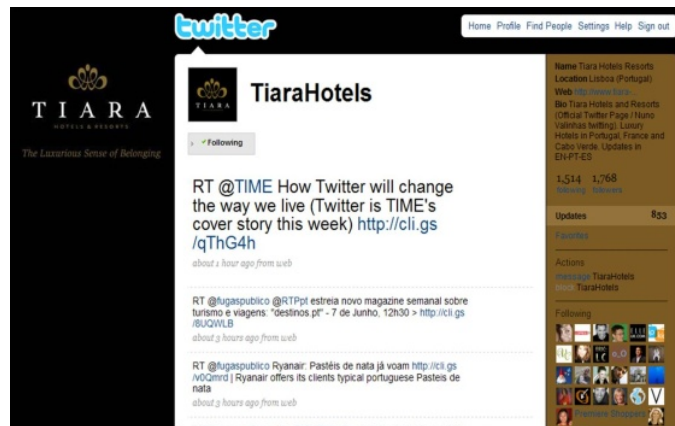
"The great thing about social media is that it provides a level of responsiveness that is not really available through any other channel. That responsiveness is huge," says Kerry Kennedy, Omni's Corporate Director of E-Commerce.

Omni found several sales and ROI opportunities on Twitter to enhance customer service, satisfaction, brand awareness and establish rapport with potential customers. Its success in social space, especially Twitter, comes from managing at the corporate level and then disseminating out to the properties. Working together, most issues are resolved within minutes.

Omni has also launched its own social environment site called 'The Local Scoop,' softly linked to the Omni homepage so as not to force users down the booking path and undermine authenticity.



Tiara Hotels¹⁷ This Portuguese hotel group is very active on Twitter. The group expertly manages the concept of "RT" – repeating a Tweet found on another Twitter account when it may be useful to their own followers.



MacDonald Hotels This UK hotel brand is also active on Twitter. Its dedicated page is simple and appeals to its audience with special offers to reinforce value. Here is where we can learn that Twitter also needs to be conversational, encouraging feedback from customers.



Individual Hotels

High Peaks Resort (Lake Placid, NY) The Adirondack High Peaks is not just the name of the collection of 46 mountain peaks in Adirondack Park, it's also the namesake of the High Peaks Resort, which boasts a very creative social media plan. For example, in Spring 2009 it was all about the number "46" as the Resort's friends, fans and followers on Facebook and Twitter took advantage of a 46-minute per day, 46-day promotion based on the elevations of the High Peaks.

For example, a rate based on the 4,867-foot elevation of Whiteface Mountain was \$48.67.

A rate based on the 4,361-foot elevation of Seward Mountain was \$43.61; Porter Mountain's rate was \$40.59. The Elevation Rate appeared on the High Peaks website between 8 a.m. and 8 p.m. and the Resort alerted friends, fans and followers when that day's rate was available. While these rates are certainly low for this caliber of hotel, it filled rooms during a typically slow season and also garnered substantial publicity.

The image shows a Twitter profile for HighPeaksResort. At the top, there is a yellow banner with the Twitter logo and a 'Join today!' button. Below the banner, the profile name 'HighPeaksResort' is displayed next to a profile picture of people in winter gear. To the right of the name, the profile bio and statistics are listed.

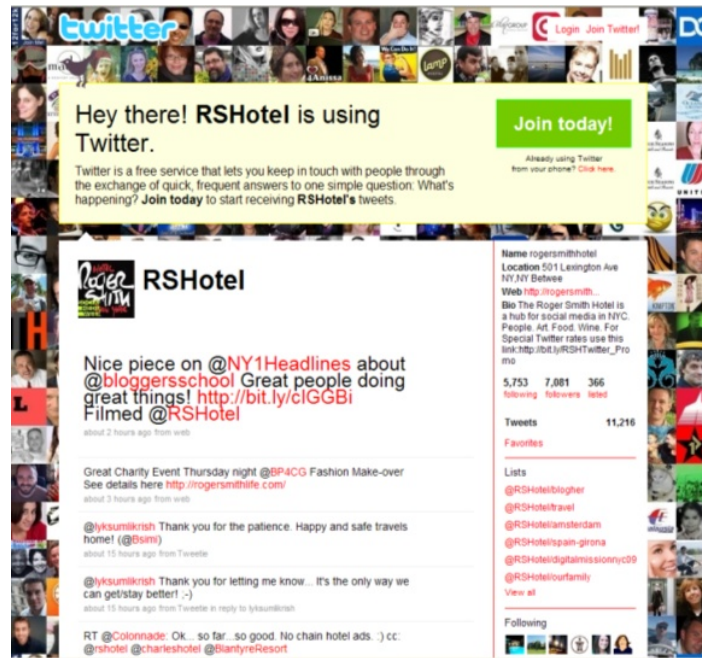
Name	High Peaks Resort	
Location	Lake Placid, NY	
Web	http://www.highpe...	
Bio	The High Peaks Resort is a storied Adirondack resort in Lake Placid NY.	
following	1,626	1,764
followers		48
listed		

Westin Mission Hills Resort & Spa (Rancho Mirage, CA) The Westin Mission Hills Resort & Spa recently started using Facebook and Twitter. According to Gary Orfield, Sales Manager, gaining the most followers and fans is not their top priority, rather their goal is to speak in the brand voice, build loyalty, listen and connect with guests.

“With a passionate and personal voice, we engage in meaningful, real-time dialogue with our fans in 140 characters or less,” says Orfield. “Our social media campaign is more about listening than posting as many tweets as possible or rushing to sign up followers.”

Orfield thinks many hotels are missing the true power of Twitter and Facebook because 90% of posts are simply about discounts and specials. They're failing to give followers a sense of the personality of the company.

Roger Smith Hotel (New York, NY)¹⁸ The Roger Smith, an independent Manhattan property, has successfully taken social media to the next level to increase brand awareness and provide great customer service. By using a range of content channels to offer a true taste of the hotel's culture, it has proven that small, independent businesses have the power to compete with bigger corporations.



The Link between Email Marketing and Social Media

Email marketing isn't threatened by social media. Rather, it *drives* social web activity and can work in tandem to increase your overall reach. In fact, studies show that social media doesn't decrease email usage – email is a driver of social web activity and the currency of all social media accounts.

Listen to your audience to develop your email campaign accordingly. What are they saying about your hotel... your competition... your city? Social media comments now appear in online searches, and Google has even added a real-time search feature that streams tweets and articles.

HVS Global Hospitality Report HVS sends out a Global Hospitality Report every Friday to give readers the opportunity to send in feedback. Comments are posted live so that it's not just a one-way push.

Ten Trends Influencing Hospitality in India: How the Game is Changing

By Achin Khanna and Manav Thadani

This article addresses the ten "game changers" that have influenced the Indian hospitality sector in the past decade and will continue to do so in the years ahead. [VIEW FULL STORY.](#)

Introducing the Newest Member of Your Hotel Marketing Team: The Social Media Manager

By Leora Lanz and Barbara Fischhof

Now, in this burgeoning digital world where we need to make "connections" more than "impressions," a hotel needs a social media manager to attract, engage and retain new and loyal community bases. [VIEW FULL STORY.](#)

HVScompass & JN+A Design New Richmond Hilton

HVScompass and JN+A, international hospitality Interior Design, Architecture, and Project Management firms, announced the opening of the new Hilton Richmond Hotel and Spa in Richmond, Virginia. [VIEW FULL STORY.](#)



Steve Rushmore presents Hotel Appraisal Seminars: New Techniques for Today's Uncertain Times



**Jump In...
Your Customers Are
Already Here**

Even if you're not involved in social media, your customers are and they're talking about you. One Facebook account about Marriott was created by customers completely independently and already has 10,600 fans!

Social media makes your brand real. Although consumers still trust the brand more than hotel reviews, the brand is becoming less relevant as they look to one another for ideas and support. Whether connecting with prospective customers via LinkedIn, reaching out to fans on Facebook or Twitter, making images available on Flickr, or helping potential guests make their travel decisions with video on YouTube, hotels are making social media an integral part of their outreach.

Some general tips for using social media:

- Be authentic and create compelling content to bring your brand to life
- Live your brand and show your personality
- Be engaging and generate feedback
- Know your audience
- Repackage what you have, e.g., link across platforms and take your content from other areas such as press releases and websites
- Combine social media with offline in-person events to solidify relationships

From successful real-time experience, the Roger Smith Hotel offers additional tips:

- **Interact with people** - Community conversations are an integral part of any outreach campaign.
- **Tell stories** – To ensure open communication, keep it more about the stories than just blasting promotions (that’s why the hotel maintains a website, *Roger Smith Life*, which revolves around sharing stories and engagement).
- **Show real faces** – One successful campaign shows the many faces of the Roger Smith community.
- **Optimize different channels** - *Roger Smith Life* is a hub for photos, articles, video materials, Twitter news and events with a photo gallery and Flickr stream, YouTube channel, plus articles about art exhibits, restaurant deals and social media.
- **Aim at user-generated content** - Reviews, comments, tweets and podcasts greatly influence customer decisions. One Roger Smith Twitter follower put together a podcast music mix honoring the hotel and gave a shout-out to the chef that continues to inspire anyone who wants to feel the hotel's vibe.
- **Be curious and experiment** – This is how the Roger Smith built its presence. Said one guest, "If you could equip your customers to be excited, passionate carriers of your story, why wouldn't you try a few things and see what works?"

Tackling Twitter

“Meet the Hotel Tweet”¹⁹

To begin your involvement in social media, experts suggest focusing on one or two areas initially, then learning and launching the bigger

initiatives. As you begin to dabble, develop a strategy and try starting on a personal level.

The easiest point of entry is Twitter. This medium has a staggering 18 million users and is a necessary tool in any social media communications arsenal. Twitter can make quite an impact by boosting your company's reputation, driving sales, getting the media's attention, and even averting a crisis.

So far, many hoteliers on Twitter are posting links to press releases and special room packages or discount codes. However, if you take time to explore the site and interact with others, you will find infinitely more applications. They run the gamut from industry news and career opportunities, to retweets from community travel industry partners and giving away something for free (not necessarily guest rooms).

The Westin Bonaventure (Los Angeles, CA) In April 2009, the Westin Bonaventure made waves on Twitter when it announced a promotion to give away free room nights to 25 lucky followers of @thebonaventure. The hotel, which has offered several variations of the contest since, creates buzz for the property each time. Melanie Boyer, the Daly Gray Public Relations account executive who manages the Twitter account, says mainstream media coverage of the contests has generated nearly 20 million consumer impressions.

twitter Login Join Twitter

Hey there! **thebonaventure** is using Twitter. Join today!

Already using Twitter from your phone? [Click here.](#)

Twitter is a free service that lets you keep in touch with people through the exchange of quick, frequent answers to one simple question: What's happening? **Join today** to start receiving **thebonaventure's** tweets.

thebonaventure

Looking forward to Washington DC Sales Mission with LA Inc. Great self contained and City wide convention location! www.thebonaventure.com

4:24 AM Feb 4th from web

Let me cal you Sweet Heart!!! www.thebonaventure.com

1:06 PM Feb 3rd from web

Valentine's Weekend at the Bonaventure!! Oh LA LA www.thebonaventure.com

12:54 PM Feb 3rd from web

@KattinSpedding You can do it!

7:33 PM Jan 31st from web in reply to KattinSpedding

The Bonaventure, a friend of Entertainment. Feature Films, Television and Advertising! Meet, Dine and Relax www.thebonaventure.com

7:23 AM Jan 31st from web

Name Westin Bonaventure
Location Los Angeles
Web <http://www.thebonaventure.com>
Bio Brought to you by the Bonaventure Variety Tweet Team. Tweeting to you from West and East Coast, with and without punctuation.

1,203 following 1,907 followers 102 tweets

1,599 Favorites

Following

[View all](#)

RSS feed of thebonaventure's tweets

“It’s a very powerful customer service and communication vehicle where our brands and customers can come together to have open and honest conversations,” said David Godsman, vice president of global Web strategy for Starwood Hotels. “It’s less about pushing our hotels and promotions and more about connecting our core brand with our guests’ daily lives.”

Just as many hoteliers have launched blogs that focus not on the hotel but on tangentially relevant topics such as things to do nearby the hotel, or tips for business travelers, the same principle applies with Twitter. If you give consumers relevant information, they will trust you as their hotel friend and a source of information.

Fairmont Hotels & Resorts Mike Taylor, media relations manager for Fairmont Hotels & Resorts and the man behind @fairmonthotels, concurs and advises managers of Twitter accounts to be experts for information about their locales. “You become [travelers’] go-to for anything,” Taylor says. “They will come to you and speak to you because they view you as a valued and trusted source for that destination.”

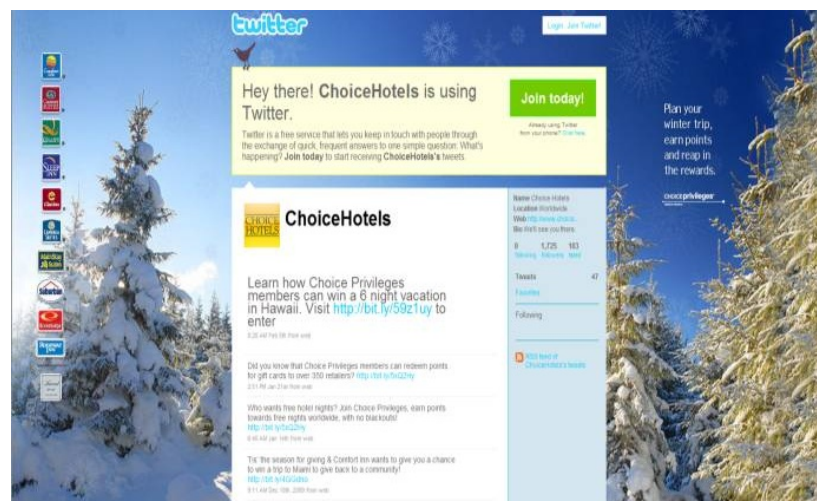


Again, while using Twitter to promote deals and announce news is fine, many hoteliers stop there. “Twitter’s real value lies in its ability to

connect with consumers on a personal level,” says Susan Black, a New York-based travel industry social media consultant.

She cautions to focus on building brand loyalty, pick up one-off business when you can, and never lose sight of the fact that Twitter is a conversation, not a bullhorn. “It’s not one-way... it’s a dialogue,” Black adds. “Be there to answer the queries. It’s well known on Twitter that people follow other people when they know there is a person or personality behind it.”

Choice Hotels Several of the larger brands have “Twitter Teams” to make tweets regular, conversational and personal. Choice’s team, for example, is very active and makes sure not to go too long between tweets.



Omni Hotels Omni’s Twitter Team is also energetic and quick to respond. When one wedding planner from San Diego tweeted, “I am thinking about the Omni San Diego and a competitor in San Diego for a wedding,” Omni’s team immediately jumped on it: “Here is what we can do for you.” In conversation, they went through all the pros and what they offered in terms of culinary services, local attractions, etc., and in the end, Omni won the business because they responded on Twitter and the other hotel did not.

While independent hotels have less manpower, they too can learn to “Tweet like a pro” and attract Twitter followers (without hurting profits or the brand)²⁰:

- **Follow the top hotels and experts in your niche** – See how they build followers and consider using some of their tactics.
- **Leverage your reputation** – Most top Twitter users are celebrities elsewhere. Bringing their brand to Twitter helped them quickly grow a fan base in the network. If people recognize your company, simply taking part will cause others to spread your message and grow your influence.
- **Leverage your existing web presence** – If you have an existing online profile, use it to promote your Twitter account. Add a Twitter badge to your website and link to your Twitter page to actively encourage people to connect with you there.
- **Tweet regularly and retweet weekly** – Predictable, regular updates increase the chance that people will find you.
- **Look at the big picture** – Again, talk about things other than just you and your hotel. This could range from business travel tips to art shows in your city.
- **Provide value** – Have rich content and a compelling reason for people to follow you. Avoid too much overselling or promotions (experts warn that 80% of tweets should *not* directly market the hotel).

The Iron Horse Hotel (Milwaukee, WI) In a January 2009 HotelChatter.com story about “Hotels That Twitter and Twitter Well,” The Iron Horse Hotel is cited as “a pro at using Twitter” because they update frequently with useful information for guests, e.g. discounted rates and package options, and also interact with other Twitter users.



Facebook

Just six years old, it's one of the most widely used networking sites with more than 400 million users and tremendous reach. Leveraging Facebook will go a long way to cultivating relationships with stakeholders, and get your campaign's message across to the right audience to influence and win confidence.

Loews Hotel (Miami Beach, FL) A Super Bowl sweepstakes contest on this hotel's Facebook page gave away a four-night stay and two tickets to the big game.



Kimpton's Sky Hotel (Aspen, CO) This hotel, running last-minute hotel deals for Facebook fans, racked up 200 friends within days of its initial post. During ski season, real-time Facebook posts report snowfall amounts.



When it comes to integrating Facebook into their campaigns, many larger brands and independents are running deals and specials targeted exclusively for fans. Ideally, sharing information about the history of the area and upcoming events is also recommended.

San Francisco Convention & Visitors Bureau In addition to promotions, the San Francisco CVB's Facebook page includes upcoming events and attractions in the area.

Grand Hotel (Mackinac Island, MI) Although a regular promoter of deals and packages, this hotel also features a column of area events down the left side of its Facebook page.



Events
20 upcoming events See All

- Mother's Day Weekend
Mackinac Island, Michigan
Friday, May 7 at 12:00pm
- Memorial Day Weekend
Mackinac Island, Michigan
Saturday, May 29 at 12:00pm
- Lilac Festival
Mackinac Island, Michigan
Friday, June 11 at 12:00pm
- Michigan Golf Live
Mackinac Island, Michigan
Sunday, June 20 at 12:00pm
- Arts Weekend
Mackinac Island, Michigan
Friday, June 25 at 12:00pm
- Old Fashioned Madinac Fourth...
Mackinac Island, Michigan
Friday, July 2 at 12:00pm
- Grand Hotel's 123rd Birthday
Mackinac Island, Michigan
Monday, July 5 at 12:00pm
- Wine Appreciation Weekend
Mackinac Island, Michigan
Friday, July 9 at 12:00pm
- Family Added Value Days
Mackinac Island, Michigan
Sunday, July 18 at 12:00pm
- Games and Gardens Week
Mackinac Island, Michigan
Sunday, August 29 at 12:00pm

Create a Page for My Business
Report Page
Share

Grand Hotel Grand Hotel Pres. Dan Musser III will testify at 1 pm today at the MI Senate Finance Committee Hearing in support of 2 bills that would help fund the Pure Michigan marketing campaign. #lp
6 hours ago
24 people like this.
View all 7 comments

Carole King I've enjoyed seeing the Michigan commercials with a quick scene of the Grand here in Virginia. Makes it look especially inviting.
5 hours ago · Report

Jacquie Larner Said a little prayer so the committee will listen to Dan. We need all the tourism business we can get. Vacation here in the U.S.A. instead of abroad, and Michigan in one of the most picturesque places around.
3 hours ago · Report

Grand Hotel Alex Graham will be playing with his quartet at the First Presbyterian Church of Royal Oak, MI on Friday, February 12 with sets at 7:30 and 9 PM. Tickets are \$20. Definitely a can't miss if you are in the area.
The Francis Luttrell Fine Art Series 2008 - 2009
www.fpro.org
7 hours ago · Share

Michael Seadog I AM THE LUCKY GUY IN THE MIDDLE!!!
SOMEWHERE IN TIME WEEKEND
8 hours ago · Report

Michael Seadog OCT. 2007
8 hours ago · Report

Deb K Gholson *sigh* That has to be such a GREAT time. Thanks so much for sharing!
6 hours ago · Report

Tammy Kilbourn What a great picture- and movie! a much simpler time....
2 hours ago · Report

User-Generated Content (UGC) Sites

These include TripAdvisor and WikiTravel, which attract user-generated comments from a vast audience. Some hotels are actually finding that when they engage, the number of negative comments decreases.

HK Hotels²¹ (New York, NY) HK Hotels is a small, privately held hotel company with four properties: The Hotel Giraffe, Library Hotel, Casablanca Hotel and Hotel Elysee, all in New York City. The company focuses its efforts on TripAdvisor, Facebook, Yelp, Twitter and Google Maps.

According to Adele Gutman, Vice President of Sales & Marketing, in 2003 the company decided to pay close attention to TripAdvisor. "We always place great importance on speaking to our guests in the clubrooms over breakfast or wine and cheese, but TripAdvisor gave us a valuable new way to hear the voice of travelers who were too polite to let us know what they were truly thinking," she said.

The management teams of all four HK Hotels met everyday to read the most recent reviews posted and decide what they needed to do to satisfy guests and raise their hotel profiles in the all-important TripAdvisor

rankings. Goals were to get in the top 10% first, then the top 20 hotels, the top 10, and next to own all four top spots in NYC.

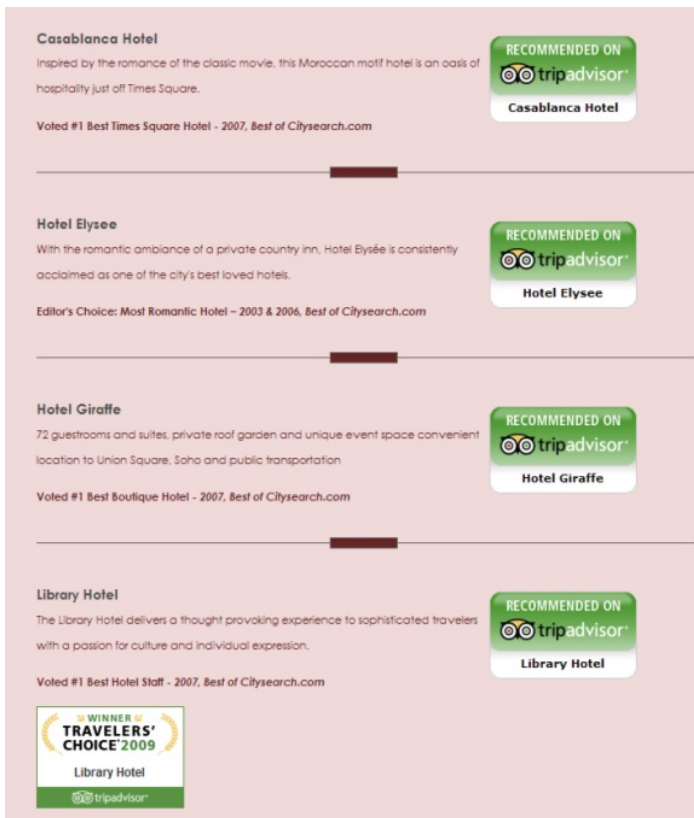
HK Hotels' team closely monitored every review, made improvements to service, operations, and facilities when feedback indicated it was necessary, and made things mandatory across all hotels when reviews indicated that something was working well at a particular property.

Says Henry Kallan, owner of HK Hotels, "When you are running a small business in a tough economy, you need to make choices on where to spend limited resources. Advertising is great, but in times like these, I would much rather invest in things that enhance the guest experience — like more items on the breakfast buffet, an upgraded wine and cheese service, nicer bed linens — than taking a gamble on expensive marketing programs or fancy brochures."



Clearly, this formula is attracting travelers and TripAdvisor feedback reflects just that. In fact, feedback has impacted operations at HK Hotels from greater empowerment of the front desk staff and daily training of all employees, to small touches like serving oatmeal for breakfast.

Affinia Hotels made a bold move a few years ago when it put a link to Trip Advisor right on its website homepage as if to point out, "Here is what readers have to say about us." HK Hotels followed suit, with links to TripAdvisor for each of its hotels.



Marketing Your Hotel on LinkedIn

LinkedIn, one of the leading online professional networks, is growing rapidly with one new user every second and 43 million professionals from 200-plus industries. It's an excellent way for your sales team to build lead generation, find business contacts, drive sales leads, stay in touch with clients, and ultimately generate revenue.

Your staff can add their own accounts and connections for more opportunity to network. Use LinkedIn for lead generation, to post relevant content, answer questions based on your expertise, and create your own groups.

HVS highly recommends LinkedIn as a tool for prospecting for new business. Don't oversell or over-promote – rather, engage the audience, demonstrate your expertise, and drive them to relevant content on your website.

Media Sharing Sites

Media sharing sites offer users the ability to upload and share different types of media.

YouTube/Video Search Engines

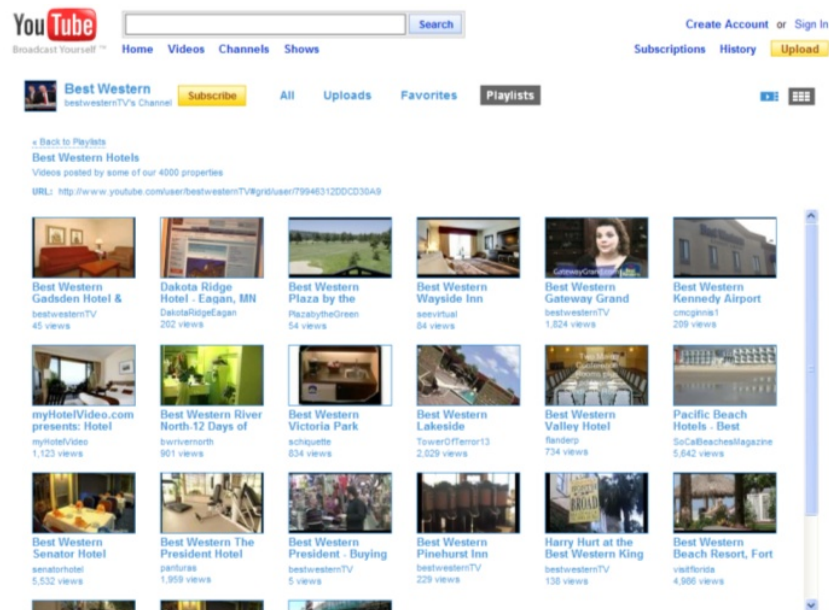
Once dismissed as a haven for amateurs, thanks to its viral power and ability to reach and engage diverse constituent bases, this video-sharing

site is being harnessed more regularly to advance campaigns and PR efforts. With non-copyrighted video, its impact has been huge and it is even being used as a search engine similar to Google.

When smartly integrated into your communications plan, YouTube can help build a strong community around your brand.

Marriott Resort & Stellaris Casino (San Juan, PR) An employee of the San Juan Marriott Resort & Stellaris Casino introduced a 'YouTube Concierge' for guests to share their vacation experiences with the world. The Concierge spends time meeting guests throughout the resort and asks them to record a quick 30-second video to send to friends and family as a virtual postcard from the beach. The video clip is then professionally licensed and uploaded to the San Juan Marriott Live YouTube Channel.

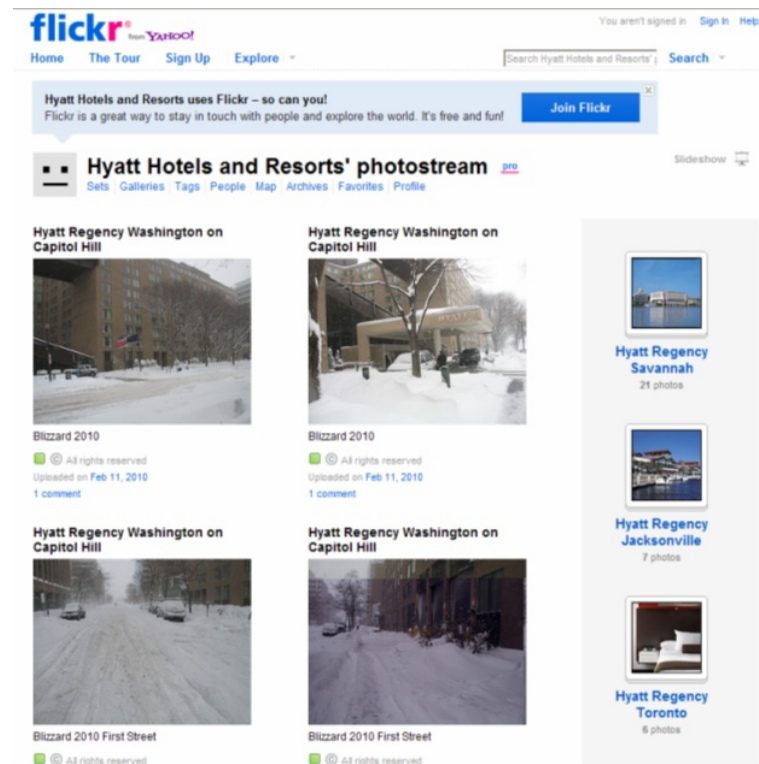
Best Western International 'Best Western TV' is the name for Best Western's YouTube channel, used to showcase the brand's hotels and hold fan contests.



Flickr/Photo Sharing Sites

Flickr, the image sharing community, is the most popular online site for photography. Users can easily post images to Flickr and visitors are able to view them individually or in a slideshow, comment, and add them as favorites on their own site. Hotels can use Flickr as their photo library.

Hyatt Hotels For example, [Hyatt Hotels](#) combines all its properties under one Flickr account:



Additional Flickr examples include [Happy Hotelier](#), [Royal Ramblas Hotel](#), [St. Martenslane's](#) and [Domes of Elounda](#).

Social Blogging

Benefits of Blogging²²

A blog gives you the opportunity to connect with guests, and develop and reinforce your hotel's brand voice. Blog entries should be written in a style that reflects your hotel's distinctive personality, be it a family-run country bed and breakfast, a trendy urban boutique hotel, or a sophisticated luxury property.

Most readers who sign up to receive blog posts are actually giving you permission to contact them. If the content is interesting, they will be happy to receive your posts, giving you entrée to promote your hotel with special offers. You can also allow readers to leave comments on your blog to open a two-way communication.

Marriott Hotels & Resorts A blog ultimately allows your brand voice to become human and instills trust in your readers. Bill Marriott's blog, "On the Move" at www.blogs.marriott.com is an excellent example. This

blog also has an engaging 'listen' icon with an audio of Bill Marriott reading his posts.

Marriott has made more than \$5 million in bookings from people who clicked through to the reservation page from its On the Move blog.

The screenshot shows the Marriott 'on the move' blog interface. At the top left is a profile picture of Bill Marriott with his name 'Bill Marriott' written below it. To the right of the profile picture is the blog title 'Marriott on the move'. Below the profile picture is a navigation menu with 'Home' and 'Categories' (Diversity, Brands, Government, Operations, Employment, Education, Personal, Technology). The main content area features a 'Featured Post' titled 'A Gift from TownePlace Suites 'Just Because...'' with a 'Listen' icon. The post text begins with 'All of you who read my blog know how much I love to share great service stories that I hear from guests. It always makes me happy to hear about great customer experiences because it means we're doing our job well and providing our guests with the best possible service.' A red graphic with the text 'just because...' and a smiley face is visible. The post ends with 'When my daughter and her husband were...' and a 'Continue reading' link.

Another popular corporate blog, <http://thelobby.com/> showcases Starwood properties.

Tracking Your Success

As we generate ever-increasing amounts of information, to tackle the overload there *are* ways to track and monitor among the various social media – and most of them are free. Third-party tools and technology such as Google Alerts at <http://www.google.com/alerts> or [eBuzz Connect](#) can be very useful. For example, eBuzz not only aggregates online reviews; it tells you how you are doing and which reviews to address via a series of algorithms.



Twitter offers myriad tracking apps such as Trendistic, Tweeteffect and Twinfluence. Checking for feedback can become your 2010 real-time research and development model!

In addition, unlike traditional media, social media gives you the opportunity to engage and hear what's being said. It's all there, in real-time, for you to gain insight, knowledge and competitive intelligence and shape future marketing and PR campaigns. Count the conversation and watch people interact, get immediate feedback – complaints or compliments – and respond, gauge the key words most often associated with your brand, and how your messages are being adopted.

Benchmarking²³

Note the obvious numbers – The number of Facebook fans, Twitter followers, Digg links, Delicious bookmarks, and referrals from social media sites, plus existing website traffic.

Note the less obvious benchmarks – SEO rankings and referrals, customer satisfaction scores and other business data.

Note ROI benchmarks - How much are you paying to acquire customers via other marketing channels? How vast is that advertising budget and how is it being split up? What proportion is being directed into channels that you cannot accurately measure?

Conclusion

In conclusion, social media may be here to stay but traditional marketing methods are by no means gone. To utilize the new tools that will benefit you most, they need to be consistent and wisely integrated with the rest of your communications, sales, marketing, and revenue management efforts.

Hopefully, these examples have offered some of you comfort and a reference to get started, because in this constantly evolving and dynamic medium, who knows what will be trendy six or 12 months from now? (One thing we *do* know is that this report will most likely be obsolete!) Just recently, Google announced its foray into social networking with "Google Buzz," a new service that will compete with Facebook and Twitter as a way for Gmail users to share updates, photos and videos. And away we go.

About the Authors

Leora Halpern Lanz has been with HVS since 1999 and serves as Director of Marketing for the global hospitality consulting firm and Director of its Sales & Marketing Services division. Prior to joining HVS, she worked for 10 years with ITT Sheraton Hotels of New York as Director of Public Relations & Advertising for Sheraton New York Hotel & Towers, Manhattan, Russell and Atlantic City. Her role with ITT included support for the re-opening of the St. Regis Hotel in 1992 and promotions for Radio City Music Hall and Madison Square Garden when ITT purchased those assets. She had returned to New York after five years as Director of Public Relations for the Greater Boston Convention & Visitors Bureau, and a graduate school internship at the then-new Four Season Hotel Boston. Leora holds a Bachelor's in Communications from Cornell University and a Master's in Public Relations from Boston University's College of Communications. She is a member of HSMIAI, Women in Communications, the Travel & Tourism division of the Public Relations Society of America, and Cornell Club of Long Island.

Barbara Wiener Fischhof has held senior level corporate and agency positions, focusing on public relations and marketing including investor and franchisee relations in the hospitality industry, and is a senior member of the HVS Sales & Marketing Services team. Barbara relocated from Manhattan to Atlanta in 1997 to become Vice President of Corporate Communications for US Franchise Systems (USFS). Prior to her tenure at USFS, she worked for two public relations firms in Manhattan heading up cruise line, airline, hotel, travel trade and other travel-industry related accounts. She began her career in the Washington, D.C. press office of former U.S. Senator Dennis DeConcini (D-AZ). A native of Deal, NJ, Barbara is a graduate of Tulane University and has a Master's Degree in Guidance & Counseling from the University of Miami.

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About HVS Sales & Marketing Services

HVS Sales & Marketing Services, headquartered in New York, helps hotel owners and operators strengthen returns on hospitality investments in the areas of hotel sales consulting, hotel sales and marketing consulting, hotel resort sales consulting, revenue management and e-commerce. We can assist you by conducting sales and marketing assessments; creating sales and marketing plans for new, repositioned and stabilized hotels; conducting sales training programs, and even serving as your interim Director of Sales & Marketing during transition periods or staff changes. Our strong understanding of regional and international markets will enable you to capitalize on your competitive strength and improve ROI.

For further information regarding our expertise and specifics about our services, visit <http://www.hvs.com/Services/MarketingComm/>.

Footnotes

¹ <http://www.hoteliermiddleeast.com/article-6362-hotels-ignoring-social-media-will-be-irrelevant/>

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¹⁰ <http://blogs.jobdig.com/diggings/2009/08/20/case-study-for-excellent-use-of-facebook-and-social-media-in-recruiting-hyatt-hotels-and-resorts/>

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¹³ <http://www.hotelmarketingstrategies.com/women-on-their-way/>

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¹⁵http://www.hotelchatter.com/story/2009/10/26/165912/92/hotels/Get_a_50_Hilton_Caribbean_Hotel_Credit_Just_For_Becoming_a_Facebook_Fan

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¹⁷http://www.hotel-blogs.com/guillaume_thevenot/2009/06/when-hotels-chains-use-twitter.html

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¹⁹http://www.hotelsmag.com/article/362356-Meet_The_Hotel_Tweet.php

²⁰http://www.4hoteliers.com/4hots_fshw.php?mwi=4616

²¹<http://www.europe-re.com/system/main.php?pageid=2616&articleid=15431>

²²http://www.hotel-online.com/News/PR2009_3rd/Sep09_BlogBenefits.html

²³<http://econsultancy.com/blog/3407-10-ways-to-measure-social-media-success>