



For **independent hoteliers** and owners of guest houses, B&Bs and pubs with letting rooms



Michael Cockman's **Hotel Profit Systems**

Sell more rooms, make more profits and have more time for yourself

In the beginning was the word.....

At a recent advertising conference Maurice Saatchi suggested to delegates that they should reduce their strategy to finding just one word to characterise their clients' brands. In the way that Google has aligned itself to 'search' and Apple to 'innovation' so each enterprise should find one word (no two just won't do!) and requisition it for themselves.

So what word can we seize for the hotel industry?

I believe that if we all used '**RELEVANT**' over and over again we might start to align our product to our chosen targets and grow our businesses. So often we forget to make everything we do relevant – to our customers, to our guests and to our staff.

Is everything you do relevant?

Start with your **vision**. Is it still relevant to your target market? Check with all your stakeholders (customers/shareholders/suppliers and family) to see if your thoughts when you started your business a few years ago are still appropriate for today's market. Should you revise your vision to make it more relevant to the different aspirations of today's travellers and the new generation of team members?

Then have a look at your **product**. Is it still relevant to the guests that are now using your hotel? Check all the research and look at your in-room facilities. Would guests now prefer a DVD player to a trouser press? Forget a mini bar but how about a fridge?

But especially check the look of your rooms and the atmosphere in your public facilities. Should you be chucking out the chintz? Have you refurbished over along period and do the colours you have used still come from the same harmonious palette?

Now thoroughly investigate your **team**. Are their job descriptions a straightjacket that actually prevents them from delighting your customers? Are their skills relevant to how you would like them to deliver customer service? Can you think of a more creative job title than 'Receptionist'? Is your reward system relevant to the specific outcomes that you need from each team member?

How do you generate **new leads**? Is your activity relevant to your needs for a continuous stream of new leads? If you need more business guests for mid week then direct sales will be more relevant to your needs. Advertising is generally not an effective method of getting new leads for room sales but if

you do advertise make sure that the message and the proposition are relevant to your target market.

What **channels** are you using to reach your prospects? Depending on which research you look at, up to 75% of leisure travellers use the internet to research their destination and hotel. Is your message relevant to this distribution channel? Have you been very careful that the words you use give exactly the impression that you want to give.

Chose relevant keywords and phrases and optimise your site so that you feature in organic search. Use these same phrases to bid on pay per click advertising and then get ready to reorganise your resources so that they are relevant to this influx of enquiries by e-mail and phone.

Do you have control of your **prices**? Do you find that receptionists get into discussions with aggrieved customers at the desk? If so, it is probably because you have not erected the relevant fence to stop this rate migration. Make sure that it is not possible to cancel an existing booking and rebook at your 'special internet last minute' rate.

Only allow websites that are relevant to your business to hold your availability otherwise it can be an administrative nightmare.

And finally check your **procedures**. Every hotel receives incoming calls but how well are they handled? Are they all converted to customers? Your training for new starters needs to be relevant to the sales tasks that you expect them to perform. No one can convert enquiries to sales unless they have good knowledge and a good script. Just think how much each incoming call has cost and it will soon concentrate your mind to making the training relevant to the task.

To keep all your activities relevant you need to go back to basics and with your team develop a relevant Action Planbut that's another story!

Michael Cockman is a writer and mentor who helps accommodation providers maximise their room revenue.

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