



## Sales & Marketing

by John Hogan, Ph.D., CHA, CHE, CMHS

### Five common sense steps to stronger public relations for hotels

Another great article from *The Rooms Chronicle*®, the #1 journal for hotel rooms management®! \*\*\*Important notice: This article may not be reproduced without permission of the publisher or the author.\*\*\* College of Hospitality and Tourism Management, Niagara University, P.O. Box 2036, Niagara University, NY 14109-2036. Phone: 866-Read TRC. E-mail: editor@roomschronicle.com

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My columns address many issues facing hospitality business operators. Many of my articles cover topics that are of interest to hotel and restaurant managers, hotel owners, innkeepers and hospitality associations. One of the topic areas I receive the most feedback and requests for additional materials are in the area of sales and marketing, which I have come to recognize is one of the three most essential for success.

With that in mind, here are five common sense steps to stronger public relations that should help improve the positioning and perception of your hotel, as well as revenues:

- 1. Be proud to be the expert you are.** One of the fundamentals today in business is to distinguish yourself from your competitors. With the ever increasing number of branded hotels, restaurants, clubs, spas and retail businesses, the need to differentiate you from the others has also increased. First, find that competitive edge that your hotel has over your competitors, which is a measurable difference and benefit to your guests. It could be specific services, extended hours, focus on certain markets, or any of dozens of distinctions that allow you to stand apart. You then become the market leader in that special area of distinction and an expert. Media of all types are always looking for fresh expert perspectives and sources for stories. The amount of coverage will vary on the type of story, but being quoted as an authority and an expert in a focused piece will pay positive dividends.
- 2. Make a focused effort to become a local news source.** While local newspapers are struggling, there are still many print and broadcasting options available in local markets. These media focus on hometown and regional stories for logical reasons, including their sincere goal to feature interesting stories and ideas on local businesses. If it doesn't have a local slant, they may not be interested. We have all enjoyed seeing people helping people stories and the lodging industry has many of those kinds of inspirational examples to share.
- 3. Prepare genuine, solid press releases and send them out at reasonable times.** Smaller budgets in challenging economic times may mean more self-directed PR efforts and problems can arise. Thinking like an editor or a reporter may not be second nature, but any hospitality business manager or owner can be successful with some practice and effort. Press releases should not be about special prices unless there is a real story on it, such as, for example, returning to the price levels when the hotel was founded 25 years ago for a certain period. The real impact stories tend to focus more on the personal side of life. The CBS Sunday Morning show in the United States often has many of these kind of stories that are not heavy news, but that touch people in different ways. Look for genuine stories of unique tourism, or events that are not likely to be as well-known.
- 4. Work with the media in a positive fashion.** Media reporters still have deadlines and they are likely covering your hospitality business on one, so recognize their pressures when you can. If a reporter calls you, get back to them as quickly as you can. I have written an earlier piece on Crisis Communication and I recommend you are prepared to handle the inevitable crisis that will affect your lodging property someday.



5. **Recognize and support Social Media as a major player in building awareness.** Being visible is essential to success and survival in a world where information is instantaneous. Facebook, Linked-In, Twitter and a growing number of dozens of other social media outlets are collectively a fast way to increase that visibility, regardless of one's age. Technical interests or preferences, creating a plan to develop social media and potential common stakeholders at a comparatively low cost is something to be considered and used. The reach is unbelievable, but there needs to be a plan. If you want to see the power of social media and how it can impact your hospitality business in a very short time, visit [www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com) and type in the keywords "United breaks guitars". Social media postings that have gone "viral" can propel a business to stardom and profits or devastate their consumer loyalty and bottom line.

Public relations is effective because of the real or imagined third-party endorsement and message. It seems less like advertising and less intrusive than some direct selling, but we must all appreciate the reality that it is one tool of marketing. Our success comes from using all of those tools.

#### **From the TRC archives:**

The following related articles are available on *The Rooms Chronicle*® website at [www.roomschronicle.com](http://www.roomschronicle.com):

- "Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, YouTube: Social media marketing for your hotel" by Hannah Smith, CHA, CHT. Vol. 17, No. 3.
- "The anatomy of an effective press release" by Bill Flor. Vol. 12, No. 4.
- "Public relations professionals provide positive return on investment" by Glenn Hasek. Vol. 12, No. 1. ✧

*(Dr. John Hogan is a successful hospitality executive, educator, author and consultant and is a frequent keynote speaker and seminar leader at many hospitality industry events. He is co-author of the book Lessons in the Field: A Common Sense Approach to Effective Hotel Sales and co-founder of a consortium of successful corporate and academic professionals delivering focused and affordable counsel in solving specific challenges facing hospitality businesses today. [www.HospitalityEducators.com](http://www.HospitalityEducators.com) is a membership site offering a wide range of information, forms, best practices and ideas designed to help individual hoteliers and hospitality businesses improve their market penetration, deliver service excellence and increase their overall profitability. E-mail: [john.hogan@hospitalityeducators.com](mailto:john.hogan@hospitalityeducators.com))*