



## Onsite targeting boosts bookings with relevant, targeted programs

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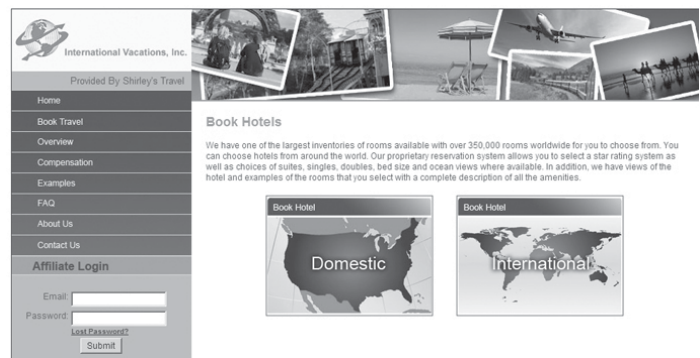
The World Wide Web has had a dramatic impact on the hospitality industry. Massive call centers necessary to absorb the volume of over-the-phone room bookings have been replaced by booking engine software that is more convenient and efficient for consumers and marketers alike. As the industry has evolved in its technological sophistication, the consumer has evolved at an even more rapid pace, rendering the once advanced booking engine technology less effective and more difficult to scale to changing consumer buying habits.

A new technology is needed to fill the cracks that are ever-so-slowly starting to appear in the booking engine's armor. Fortunately, the necessary technology exists in the form of onsite targeting – the missing piece of a complete direct digital marketing strategy. Onsite targeting, a key component of any direct digital marketing strategy, makes the online booking process more relevant for the guest and more profitable for the marketer.

### Onsite targeting

Before diving into how a shoulder stay program is easily created by using onsite targeting within the booking engine, it is important to properly define onsite targeting.

Onsite targeting is a simple concept. Rather than a webpage, or portions of a webpage (anything from one line of copy to the hero image on a page), being relegated to a single message, onsite targeting plugs into the existing webpage's framework and transforms the formerly static space into a "live zone" that rotates dynamic, personalized, and relevant content designed to appeal to all of a hotel's diverse audience. Because the modern traveler responds favorably to a direct digital marketing approach heavy on relevance, online room bookings grow and the opportunity to up-sell guests on popular amenities is also increased.



In February of this year, Forrester Research published a survey entitled *US Online Leisure Travel Channel Share Forecast: Suppliers versus Intermediaries, 2008 To 2013*. The survey forecasted that by 2013 at least 58 percent of all hotel room bookings will come from hotel websites, up from an already high 54 percent in 2008. If research shows more and more consumers are booking hotel stays online, aggressive yet subtle shoulder stay marketing programs should be implemented into the booking engine to extend stays and fill beds. Onsite targeting is the best way to execute a relevant, highly targeted shoulder stay program.

Onsite targeting is at its pinnacle of effectiveness when powered by great data. For a simple shoulder stay up-sell program inside the booking engine, the most important data point is the arrival and departure dates of a guest. All the marketer must do is create a segment within the database for any guest who inputs their arrival date as a Monday or their departure date as a Friday.

### Shoulder stay programs and optimization

The first step a prospective guest encounters in most booking engines is to input the date range of their stay. Once the guest submits that information, the marketer's database is instantly updated. Onsite targeting uses rules based on

defined segments and real-time data flow to decide what content is displayed to the site visitor. In this case, onsite targeting uses the arrival and departure date segment to decide what content is displayed on the page immediately after the guest inputs their date range within the booking engine.

The next page the guest sees contains a hero image that has been transformed into a “live zone,” displaying content with a discount to extend a planned stay to the previous weekend if the arrival date is scheduled for a Monday or an offer to extend the stay through the weekend if a guest is leaving on a Friday. A shoulder stay offer in the booking engine is simple to set up and maintain while simultaneously increasing room bookings and enhancing the guest experience at the most crucial moment of the hotel-guest relationship – the “point-of-sale.”

A good onsite targeting partner also has built in tools for testing and optimization. For the shoulder stay, it is possible to tweak the offer, the image, and the copy to discover what combination captures the most bookings. Ensuring the best, most effective content is always deployed in market provides additional security for the marketer and the best possible offer for the guest.

Onsite targeting also takes advantage of one of the hospitality industry’s best features – customer service. If a returning guest requested hypoallergenic pillows for the room during their previous visit, it is possible to access that data and display content to the guest during the booking process that informs them that their preferred pillows will be waiting for them in their room upon their arrival. If a returning guest made use of the spa or mini-bar on a previous visit, displaying new information or targeted offers in the booking process provides incentive for the guest to make use of those amenities again. Good data management and strategy, combined with the power of onsite targeting, takes the guest experience to an entirely new level – before they even step foot on the property.

## **Conclusion**

An easy to implement program, like a shoulder stay campaign inside a booking engine, accesses previously missed opportunities. Marketers often have a vast collection of valuable data points, and onsite targeting technology provides the pathway for turning that dormant data into powerful marketing programs that are relevant to the experience and preferences of a website visitor and prospective guest. The ease of implementation and maintenance also keeps the cost of adding onsite targeting under control. When used effectively with good data management and a direct digital marketing strategy based in message relevance for the guest, onsite targeting increases room bookings and creates an ideal guest experience. ✧

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