



## Front Office

by Todd Seiders, CLSD

# Prostitution, swingers clubs and orgies: Sometimes you have to say “No” — Part II

*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*

*Notice: The ideas, opinions, recommendations, and interpretations presented herein are those of the author(s). The College of Hospitality and Tourism Management, Niagara University/The Rooms Chronicle® assume no responsibility for the validity of claims in items reported.*

In an article that appeared last year in *The Rooms Chronicle* (Issue 17, No. 3 – May/June 2009) , I discussed a case of a police prostitution “sting” at a hotel, where the front desk clerk did not say “no” to a possible use of the hotel for prostitution. The point of my article was to demonstrate that the hospitality industry does not say “no” enough, especially in situations where they know they should take action, even if it means a guest may complain or be upset.

Well, it’s happened again, and it may be a situation that you may encounter at your hotel.

### Two similar situations, two different responses

I recently received calls from a large hotel on the east coast and a large hotel on the west coast. Both hotels faced a similar situation, but one manager responded appropriately and the other did not.

The large east coast hotel received a call from a group who identified themselves as an “Internet marketing group”. They wanted to book 12 guestrooms, all on the same floor, and the use of a banquet room. The hotel jumped at the opportunity (as many hotels would in this economy) and set up the group booking. Details of the group booking included the fact that this group would be providing their own “security” to assist with the event (this should be your first “clue” that something is suspicious).



Yes, I know that groups often bring their own security to protect their personnel, products, AV equipment, displays etc. But once the word “security” is mentioned, any prudent hotelier should ask more questions as to why security will be needed at the event or for the room reservations.

Anyway, no further questions were asked, and the event was booked. On the day of the event, scantily clad women started showing up, dozens of them, all asking for the event. Meanwhile, up on the floor where the 12 guestrooms were booked, tables were set up with laptop computers, and “security guards” were positioned on the floor.

The on-duty hotel manager finally asked what type of event this was, and he was told it was a swinger’s club sex party event, which you had to pay admission to attend. The laptop computers were there to accept credit card and PayPal payments, to pay for entry into the rooms filled with women. You could actually pick the type of sex you were interested in, and enter the guestroom that provided it (you think the inventors of PayPal ever thought their service would be used for this?).

To make a long story short, the hotel manager said he did not believe this event was illegal, or prostitution, because “no money was changing hands”. So, he allowed the event to continue until it was over.

An innkeeper has a “duty” to prevent prostitution at their hotel. Every state in the U.S. has a law that prohibits prostitution, and most have laws that prevent innkeepers from allowing a “known” prostitution incident at their hotels. Prostitution is generally defined as the exchanging of anything of value for sex. I think we all would agree that if you pay an admission fee to attend a sex party (whether it’s cash, credit card, a gold bar, or PayPal), it would fall under the definition of “prostitution”.

In another similar situation, a large west coast hotel received a phone call from a concerned citizen advising the hotel that an “orgy party” was being advertised at the hotel on the local Craig’s List website. The hotel manager searched Craig’s List and found the announcement, which identified his hotel as the location, with an orgy contact name listed. The manager checked his reservation list and found the contact’s name listed with a room reservation. The manager immediately cancelled the reservation and turned away the guest when he arrived to check in. The manager was honest with the guest, and told them this type of activity was not allowed at the hotel.

### Points to remember

Here are some key points to remember when deciding whether to accept a guest and/or a questionable reservation:

1. Your hotel rents guestrooms for sleeping only (and those activities related to temporary housing). **YOU** as the manager (not the guest) can decide what activities are appropriate and inappropriate to be conducted inside your guestrooms or on hotel premises. The hotel is **PRIVATE PROPERTY**, and you as the agent for the owner, have complete control of how your building and its contents are used. **YOU** decide what guests and visitors can and cannot do at your property.
2. You have a duty to provide a safe and secure environment for your guests and employees, and you have a duty to prevent crime (especially prostitution). This includes guests’ behavior, baggage, or dangerous property a guest may have (e.g., A guest wants to store full gas cans in his room, so he doesn’t have to leave them in his car. You can say no, as having cans full of gasoline is too dangerous to store in a guestroom).
3. You decide if a group’s activity is appropriate or not for your facilities. Ask the group questions as to what they will be doing, what equipment they will be bringing in and using, etc. If a group tells you they will provide “their own security”, start asking questions as to **WHY** they need security. Decide if their answers are logical and in the best interest of the hotel. Perform a “Google” Internet search on all group names, group contact names, guest speaker names, etc., to see if the group you are booking is actually who they say they are.
4. Call the Police for assistance if suspicious activity occurs, or if you need a second opinion on what to do. The Police may already have history with a group, and can provide you with additional information you can use.
5. Search your hotel’s name weekly on your local Craig’s List website, to see if you get any “hits”. You might be shocked at what you discover.
6. Ask more questions when you book events and groups. If the group says they are going to have a guest speaker, get the guest speaker’s name and perform an Internet search on the group and speaker. The guest speaker may be someone controversial who may bring protesters to the hotel or generate undesirable publicity associated with the hotel. If you know ahead of time, you can at least plan for any problems. If the group wants to set up displays, booths, etc., ask specifically what they are going to display. Get as much detailed information as you can in the planning stages.

### And don’t forget...

As a “general” rule, a hotel can refuse accommodations:

- To preserve the innkeeper’s property from damage
- To prevent a violation of the law
- To maintain the premises so as to preserve the peace and tranquility of the other guests
- To protect the physical safety of guests’ and employee’s
- Because of previous bad history with the guest



**Remember that “sometimes you have to say “no”.** ✧

*(Todd Seiders, CLSD, is director of risk management for Petra Risk Solutions, which provides a full-range of risk management and insurance services for hospitality owners and operators. Their website is: [www.petrarisksolutions.com](http://www.petrarisksolutions.com). Todd can be reached at 800-466-8951 or via e-mail at: [todds@petrarisksolutions.com](mailto:todds@petrarisksolutions.com).)*