



All hoteliers know that social media can be a great tool for driving website traffic and generating room bookings. However hoteliers will also know that the online space is hugely competitive, meaning that getting your target audience to engage with your hotel can be a complex challenge. This in turn means that it is simply not enough to do one post a day and hope for the best!

The rise of the “social traveller” is no longer a myth – it’s happening right now, and social media is an incredible tool to promote your hotel if you’re willing and patient enough to learn its ways. We have created practical yet simple social media guide that will help you strategise and plan ahead your efforts to get your hotel more visibility on social platforms.

In this document you will find our top seven pieces of advice for the time strapped hotel owner wanting to generate traffic and sales from their social channels.

1. Know who you are



Sounds simple, but it's worth creating a one pager on your hotel's key attributes, including:

- Messages (who you are, what you do and how you do it)
- Hotel profile (about, location, facilities, services etc.)
- Vision (your ultimate objective)
- Values (what you stand for)
- USP (why you are different)
- Images (because a lot of hotels miss out on having engaging images of their facilities)

This will help keep your social strategy on track, especially if you want to give some responsibilities to other members of the team. Do the same for your tone of voice eg are you a lots of exclamation marks and emojis kind of hotel or not? Take a look at what brands you admire are doing online, identify what could work for your hotel and apply this to your strategy.

2.Choosing the right platform to speak to your target audience



Know who you are talking to will help you work out which of the social channels are most appropriate for your brand. Very few of us have the resources to carry out a full strategy on all of the social channels, so you need to prioritise eg unless you are targeting customers in their early 20s Snapchat might not make sense, and if your hotel is not especially design led Pinterest might not be the best place for you either. Don't just restrict yourself to English/UK social platforms eg if Chinese tourists are an important audience for you, how about a presence on Weibo and WeChat?

So how should hotels figure out which platforms to prioritise? The first step will be to get to know the platforms a little, read what people are writing, observe and then factor this into your strategy. Once you are ready to select and prioritise the platforms for your hotel, here are our suggestions for working out which best suit your needs:

- 1 Facebook works best for storytelling – do you have stories to tell?*
- 2 Twitter is a fantastic listening platform – so if you want to learn more about your audience Twitter is the place to be.*
- 3 Pinterest works best for design led images – do you have these?*
- 4 Instagram is all about real time artistic images that convey a luxury lifestyle – do you have the team and facilities to deliver this?*

We do not necessarily recommend that you have an active presence on all platforms simultaneously. The more realistic

approach might be to start on one, do it really well and then scale up to include others once you see it starting to work.

As a general rule Facebook is generally a must for the modern hotelier. For hotels, having a strong Facebook presence means being visible to the millions of Facebook users around the world (Facebook has 1,86 billion active users compared to 400 million on Instagram and to 310 million on Twitter according to Brandwatch 2016 statistics). Research shows that travellers use Facebook for travel planning, and that 29% of travellers started their search for a hotel on Facebook rather than a search engine.

3. Build a content calendar



We all know that content is king and that we need to post consistently, but this is hard when you are busy and focusing on 100 other things. Get around this by populating a simple excel sheet with:

- a) Your hotel news - this could vary from special offers and menu launches to an introduction to a new member of staff.
- b) Key cultural events – this could include the Queen’s birthday and important seasonal dates like Christmas, New Year, Valentine's Day and Mother's Day.
- c) Locality - use posts to interact with potential and current/regular guests by advising them on the best places to visit and things to do in your local area. Ask yourself the following questions and use the answers in your content:
 - Is your area famous for anything unique?

- Was it the birthplace of a famous author?
- Where there any famous movies shot in your local area?
- Is your area famous for its parks and nature?
- Are there any surprising facts about your area that you could share with your audience?

We recommend you post at least 3 to 4 times a week, but this will vary depending on the availability of content you have to share.

When creating social media content for your hotel, it's important to remember that it's not all about you. It's about delivering value to your guests and followers on social media. Keep this in mind:

The greatest social media content is native, doesn't interrupt, doesn't make demands, is concise, and is consistent and aware.

The objective is not only to appeal to your current followers, but through posting creative content and/or content that directly incentivises sharing, to get your followers to share your content with their personal network. Whenever someone engages with you, especially if they comment on your posts, it is important that you engage back by liking their comment and where appropriate responding to that comment. This could either be a simple, "thanks, glad you like it" type comment or answering a question if one was raised. This should increase both the reach of your posts and your followers.

4. Give value



Ask for their opinions – Ask your followers which new wallpaper to choose (and listen and act upon their feedback) to make them feel valued by you. Ask them what tea variety they prefer to drink when you make your next stock order. It's all about having a two-way conversation and building a brand culture through content that brings people back to you.

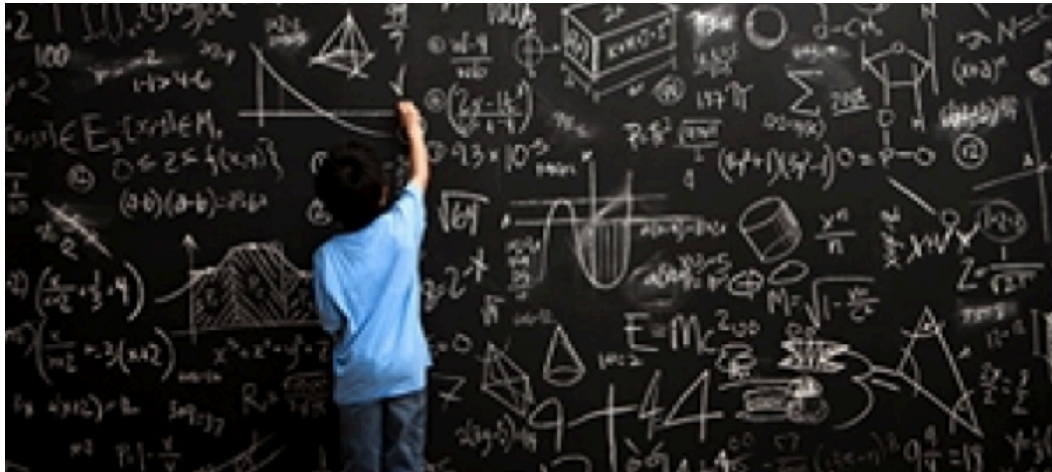
Showcase your hotel through great images - Investing in some great photography and video content is also a good idea and can be repurposed across all of your channels to deliver maximum ROI.

Give them "something" - If you want people to like your page, give them a reason to do so. Most web users won't stick around unless you give them something: an irresistible special offer, a discount, a free gift such as an e-book. They need to know what's in it for them once they hit the like button on your page. Through listening to conversations and testing and learning from different activities and types of content you will build a picture of what makes a great offer in the eyes of your target audience. You can then start delivering this to them.

Get them to spread the positive word - Word-of-mouth works amazingly well on social media. If guests like your hotel they will want to tell their family and friends about it and social media is the ideal platform to do this. Manage your online reputation by inviting and incentivising guests to post reviews on TripAdvisor, Yelp and other review websites.

Integrate social with the real world – make sure links to your social channels are visible on eg staff email footers and your website, as well as throughout your hotel from guest wi-fi cards to the reception desk. This is a great way to generate traffic to social media competitions/offers, and grow your follower base.

5. Get scientific



Let's face it, between running your hotel's day-to-day operations, managing your staff, catering to your guests' needs and other things on your daily to-do list, who has the time to keep all social platforms active? Well, you don't have to do it manually; you can automate the process. Simply create the content in advance (see section 3 on building a content calendar) and input it into an automated social media content posting system such as Hootsuite.com or Bufferapp.com.

There are also analytics tools within these systems to help you track the effectiveness of your social media marketing efforts.

Regardless of whether you opt for an automated posting system, you should definitely taking advantage of free analytics that will enable you to strategise and benchmark. Facebook analytics, Twitonomy and Klout are just a few. Set targets and monitor your progress for follower numbers, engagement, website traffic generation and online influence just as you do for other areas of your hotel business.

6. Customer service on social media



Using social media to help your potential customers and current guests is a very efficient way of delivering good quality customer service, and a hotel's reputation can rise thanks to excellent customer service. Today, in such a competitive landscape, being customer-driven is what can really differentiate your hotel from others, so we recommend that you constantly engage with customers to gain insights on how you can improve your services or fix problems.

Instant messenger apps such as WhatsApp are hugely popular, so you may want to consider offering this as an additional channel for guests to pose questions and queries. If you do, ensure that it is monitored 24/7 and that you have a process in place for responding to messages and dealing with any issues raised in real time.

There are hotels that provide quality support fast. And there are hotels that only reply to good feedback and don't know how to react when a negative review comes their way. On the flip side hotel's reputation can be destroyed when negative comments are posted and start to spread virally in a matter of minutes if no one from the hotel is there to listen and help, so make sure you respond to all reviews as quickly as possible.

The amount of platforms and conversations can make monitoring social media a daunting task. One way to get around this is using a platform which collects customer reviews on a single

dashboard, and gives a detailed view of what people are talking about.

In terms of what to respond to negative social comments, best practice is to publicly acknowledge the comments eg: "Thank you for bringing this to our attention, we are looking into it as a matter of urgency"; get the conversation offline as quickly as possible eg: "Please DM us your email or preferred contact number so that we can talk to you in detail"; work to resolve the issue with the customer as quickly as possible in a friendly manner; if the issue was your fault/the person is very upset it can often be a good idea to offer some sort of compensation eg: a free hotel stay or full/partial refund.

7. Social media promotions



Organic social media content is hugely valuable and worthwhile, but growth can be slow and sometimes you may want an additional boost around a promotion you are running for example. The best way to do this is via paid advertising campaigns on your preferred channel/s. This can be a great resource for the modern hotelier as it enables you to target your promotions and offers to demographics that you specify by eg region, demographic, gender, interest and keywords, and see the results almost instantly.

The other great thing is that you don't have to spend a lot of money on your social media advertising campaigns. For example you can start with a daily budget of just £10 and test-run your promotional campaign for say three days to see what web-traffic and e-commerce sales it generates for you. If your campaign isn't delivering as you would like, take a 'test and learn' approach by using a different advert/message/visual and serve it to a tweaked audience to see if that garners better results. Rest

assured that you always have the option to pause or stop your social media campaign at any time, but if you see that your campaign is converting into real life bookings, you may want to increase your daily budget to attract more people to your hotel.

All of the main social media channels have 'how to' guides on how to set up a campaign, so take a look.

In conclusion

These simple steps will help you grow your follower base and create interaction with your guests. Social media is no longer a "choice" in today's competitive hotel industry. If you're not on social media, you're practically invisible to millions of potential travellers. However, online engagement is not easy, but these tips and best practices will help your hotel's social media marketing strategy.

Good Luck!

About mycloud hospitality

mycloud has been developed by Prologic First, an independent, private company with over a decade and half's experience delivering end to end technology solutions to the hospitality industry across the UK, Asia, Africa and the Middle East. Prologic First's "WISH", "Touché" & Web Prol'IFIC brands are used across 30 plus countries by over 1,600 clients offering some of the most advanced features to hospitality professionals

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