

What Will Your Hotel Sales Team Look Like Post COVID?

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The impact of the COVID pandemic has clearly changed the playbook as it relates to how your sales team may be structured and function moving forward. Many hotels will experience shifts in the mix of business that will fill their hotels

post COVID. Hotels highly dependent on business from now under-performing segments. may need to refocus their sales efforts and target other sources to offset this loss. The overall deployment of your sales team will also need to be re-evaluated and the training and expertise needed to manage this team, under these new parameters, may require further review.



I have shared in prior articles, that the sales team and their deployment will most likely differ from what existed prior to the COVID pandemic. This is due to the following changes:

- Your client needs have changed
- Business and leisure travel frequency has changed
- The size, frequency and format of meetings and conventions has changed
- Your hotel's services have changed to support your guests
- The financial and operational expectations of management and ownership has changed

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The rebuilding of your sales team will most likely include the re-evaluation of how best to deploy your sales efforts and the availability of qualified sales managers to either return or be hired from the outside. Additionally, if new and inexperienced sales managers are the only option at your disposal, you will need to develop a plan to expedite the ramp up of their efforts.

- **Re-evaluate the hotel's sales deployment efforts**

Clearly the demand and growth potential of each market segment your hotel accommodates will need to be thoroughly reviewed and how it has been impacted by the COVID pandemic. Based on the results of your analysis, you will probably need to revise how you deploy the sales team and establish their revenue goals. For example, most hotels will experience a decrease corporate transient demand as this segment operates under new travel restrictions. In turn, alternate segments will need to be explored to fill this deficit. The entire group segment has changed, and most hotels will not be able to accommodate the same large functions as below to remain compliant with social distancing. Hotels dependent on citywide conventions will need to refocus their efforts to secure smaller self-contained groups, and that will require increased sales efforts.

- **Consider the use of outside vendors for training and lead generation**

The COVID pandemic has resulted in many talented and experienced hospitality sales professionals being out of work for an extended period of time. It is therefore logical to assume that this same talent and experience will have been forced to seek alternate employment by the time hotels are ready for their return. Hotels will be forced to hire new and experienced staff that will require training and a ramp up period before they reach optimal sales performance. To quickly train these new recruits while expediting sales productivity, hotels may want to consider utilizing outside vendors for the training and advance lead generation. The added costs of contracting such services would be offset by the gain in revenues generated before the competitive set hotels return to normal operations. The secondary benefit of utilizing outside vendors is the added time the Director of Sales and Marketing will have to coach and develop their new team.

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- **Consider the cross-utilization of operational staff to support sales efforts**

Given the two issues referenced above, having a backup plan that will allow your hotel to ramp up its sales efforts and provide the added assurance the hotel's management and owners expect. Some examples of such plans could include:

- Evaluate what members of the hotel's operations team have the opportunity to engage directly with future, potential clients.
- Identify a crew account to establish a solid base of occupancy, although at a lower average rate, and shrink the hotel's mid-week inventory. This will offset the revenue void until higher-rated, targeted business is secured.
- Strategically target business to share shift from the hotel's competitors. This will provide the most immediate financial return. Accomplishing this will first require identifying what business is utilizing your competitors and if there is potential to transfer this business to your hotel. Identify the demand driver. Is it location or could it simply be a rate preference? The hotel will need to reposition itself to this new, target guest to accomplish the goal.

In summary, we reviewed some of the changes to anticipate due to the extended time the COVID pandemic has impacted the hospitality industry. We then suggested that all market segments be re-evaluated to determine what changes in demand and growth will occur in a post COVID environment, and the potential challenges of securing a trained and experience sales team. Lastly, HPS strongly supports the need for each hotel to have a backup or contingency plan designed to provide a short-term and more immediate ramp up to its full potential.

About Hospitality Performance Systems, Inc. (HPS)

Hospitality Performance Systems (HPS) was created to provide operational and sales support to the hospitality industry globally. Founded in 2009 this enterprise takes advantage of its founder and President, Stanton D Jacobs, CHA, with over 30 years of proven success in the hospitality industry and strategic relationships globally, HPS is affiliated with a wide array of professionals specializing in their respective disciplines, enabling HPS to provide a wide range of services.

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