

Monthly Myth Buster:

Your lodging property should focus on traditional advertising media like print and radio advertisements as opposed to modes of online marketing and promotion.

Traditional advertising media is commonly considered to be in the form of television, radio, print, and billboard advertisements. Historically, companies have spent substantial portions of their advertising and marketing budgets concentrated in these four mediums under the popular belief that conventional advertising will yield the highest return on investment. These media avenues have been around for ages and typical advertising agencies market within these media formats as a rule. However, with the explosion of the Internet with more people owning a personal computer, there has been a dramatic shift in where businesses are spending their marketing dollars. In this month's Myth Buster, **RezNEWS** will discuss the advantages a lodging property should consider about employing online marketing and promotion campaigns.

One of the leading industries redistributing where they invest their advertising allowance is the lodging industry. This industry has significantly increased allotted budgets for online marketing and advertising and decreased the amount of money spent on standard, traditional media methods. In 2007, research studies performed by New York University's Tisch Center for Hospitality found that "67% of hoteliers will be shifting their budgets from offline to online marketing activities." These percentages are expected to continually increase over the next few years.

The adjustment in promotional spending is caused by many factors. One of the principal reasons that Internet marketing is becoming more popular in the lodging industry is due to the fact that online advertising is highly targeted; advertisements will only appear when the search term(s) relate to a property, thus, drawing clients to an advertisement based on the relevancy of the ad to the search. For example, if an individual is searching for a hotel in Denver and you have a property in Denver, your property should be listed in the search results. If a website is properly optimized, it would appear in a search engine's top organic listings. It is much more difficult to effectively target audiences in alternative media.

Online marketing also has precise measurability, which contributes to the shifting trends. With a proper tracking system in place, marketing firms or website managers are able to calculate viewers of online advertisements and/or pages in a website. Not only is a website then being populated in organic searches through the correct optimization, but advertisements are being served to interested searchers. This type of tracking is not available with traditional media. There is no true way to measure exactly how many people read a print ad or hear a radio advertisement. With online marketing, numbers are exact and offer the most comprehensive data. According to NYU's research, the lodging industry consistently sees some of the highest returns on investment with their online marketing activities.

Furthermore, the way individuals now search for hotels, inns, lodges, and bed and breakfasts has shifted to online, making the transition to where marketing dollars are spent crucial. With millions of people searching online and over billions of dollars made online within the lodging industry each year, it only makes sense for hoteliers to be at the forefront of the advancement to online marketing.

With the evolution from traditional to online media, it begs to question why a lodging property does not attract enough potential customers to their website? According to Paul J. Bruemmer of Red Door Interactive, less than 1% of marketing budgets in any industry are spent on search engine marketing. Due to poor fund allocation, many websites are improperly optimized and aren't yielding a high return.

The three core areas where marketing money should be spent online are on website optimization, search optimization, and website re-design/design. Lodging properties that do the above mentioned accurately often out-source this work to dedicated Internet marketing companies. Search engine marketing firms get better website rankings faster for their

customers as well as better click through rates on pay-per-click advertising. This is due to the fact that search engine marketing firms are highly specialized and have perfected the complex (and the continually transforming) technical aspects of search engine marketing. Do not be afraid to ask for the help of an outside marketing firm specializing in online marketing. They are the experts most qualified to assist your business receive the best return on investment for its marketing dollars.

This month's myth, that your lodging property should focus its advertising and marketing budget on traditional advertising as opposed to online marketing and promotion is...**BUSTED**.

About the author

Erin Kuwitzky is an Account Manager on the Promotion team and brings experience managing large, million dollar accounts in the advertising, tradeshow, and online marketing industries. Erin has worked for major agencies in the United States as well as Europe and brings the latest trends from print and online marketing to RezStream.