



Having a Presence on the Web – Internet Bookings and You

How do you leverage the internet to improve your bottom line against the big booking engines?

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This paper will explain our approach to Internet Bookings on your own web site and automated connections to the Internet Booking Engines - IDS/GDS systems (like Expedia.com, Hotel.com, Amadeus.com etc).

Historically each Internet booking engine had its own format for allotting its inventory and receiving a reservation. This meant that only the really large Property Management System (PMS) providers had any connectivity. Companies like Micros Fidelio, Springer-Miller and HIS come to mind - large and expensive. Most systems relied on manual techniques to “give” inventory to the booking engines and to enter reservations from the faxes these engines sent. These started as faxes and later became emails but were still re-keyed.

As the internet became more popular, people were empowered with the ability to do their own research and bypass an often inattentive travel agent. The industry underwent a major transformation and an internet presence became essential. Virtually no property had the ability to take a reservation from their web site and booking engines like Expedia were born. Slowly the big chains – Hilton, Marriott, Holiday Inn, Days Inn, etc. – built large and expensive booking engines. These brands gained popularity because they had Central Reservation Systems (CRS) – the ability to capture a reservation for one of their franchisees, even though often the reservation had to be re-keyed from the CRS into the individual hotel’s PMS.

In the aftermath of /911 and the resultant downturn in the lodging industry in North America, many properties had unsold inventory that they wanted to sell AT ANY PRICE. This spurred the tremendous growth of internet booking engines and created an attitude in guests to expect cheap prices from the internet – much cheaper prices than they were offered at the property. Discounts in the 40% range were common.

It was still cumbersome to allot inventory to the booking engines and to receive bookings from them if you were not part of a large chain or had software with this still expensive connectivity technology.

Discounts dropped as business increased in the 2004-2007 years. Rates discounted 4-25% were more common. This increase in business created a demand for properly integrated systems, where you could easily set up the inventory and the rates and publish to multiple booking engines. In some cases even seamlessly capture the reservations into selected PMS or re-key which was much more common.

The way that guests are booking is changing again. The newness of online booking is past. People, especially the younger ones (Gen X, Gen Y, Millennials) expect to book online. The big booking engines

like Expedia are very useful for finding broad availability and general price, but increasingly people research on these sites and then search for the hotel's site and try to book directly.

By having the ability to take bookings in real time using live room / rate availability directly from your own web site, you are able to be as up to date as anyone on the internet. You will not have to maintain your available inventory on multiple sites, but will instead allot selected booking engines SOME inventory. After all, you want to sell the room from YOUR web site rather than from a third party site because you have to sell to them at a discounted rate or pay a per booking fee.

Modern search engines are a great equalizer. You are not longer held ransom by the big booking engines. Instead you can appear on a near equal footing when your guests search for a place to stay in your area. And you will not have to pay the fee associated with using someone else's booking engine.

I hope this explained our approach to internet bookings and how our solution will work for you.

From here, you enter the realm of Search Engine Optimization, Meta Tags, Google Rankings and all the other techniques to make sure that guests find your website over your competitors. We will be discussing these tools in a later paper. Alternatively, you can research these topics on the internet and find many websites and papers that cover these topics.

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