

How The Print Media Could Maximize Hospitality Advertising - By J. Ragsdale Hendrie

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We have glamorous travel and entertainment magazines, superb trade publications, and niche editions which serve the Hospitality Industry.

They rightfully enjoy some of our advertising dollars, for they are targeted to the markets we wish to influence. As time is a constraint, sadly, they frequently decorate our coffee tables and office spaces, rather than serve as a 'must read', a resource, or even the definer of a 'Booking Decision' at our lodging, restaurant, attraction or retail venue.

About the only publication which does get perused energetically is the airline magazine, for they have a captured audience. But, this flight full of perspectives has other options for their time, too, whether it be a movie, a lap top or even a book. So, unless they have a specifically defined and targeted readership, magazines, although in the advertising 'mix', are losing their allure for our advertising dollars. Their circulation and ad revenues are declining, and their on-line presence is miniscule. Interestingly, the power of the print media lies in how well or not they have embraced the Internet. Where this is very evident is in the Newspaper business.

From published reports, National newspapers have tended to hold their own, as have smaller market dailies, where competition is not nearly as intense from other media forms. The newspapers which have really suffered are Metropolitan dailies, the home of many of our best Destination markets. What has made the difference is whether the newspaper has embraced the Internet or is playing catch-up, and, we, the advertisers skeptically watch this drama play out. What makes this all the more frustrating is that your Newspaper's Web Site is probably the most visited in your market - more than your city's, CVB or Chamber, association or chain. This is where not only your Residents turn but also your Visitor. This is where people seeking your type of business turn for news, information and entertainment. Their web site can be the Portal to Hospitality and your business.

The Newspaper Association of America reported in April that newspaper web sites attracted an average of 66 million unique visitors in the first quarter of the 2008, up 12% over the same quarter last year. Yet, as on-line advertising has grown at a robust 18.8% last year, print advertising continues its decline, in addition to print readership.

Where does your local newspaper fit in this transformation? Many embraced the Internet, understanding the potential early on. Others began a slow migration, and still others are baffled. The reality is that the Internet is the new means for information gathering and business decision making, and it is the landscape where you need to be represented.

Many newspapers are risk averse, they all are looking for that 'silver bullet' in terms of marketing. You, on the other hand, wish to influence a Consumer decision, presenting your business to the greatest potential audience in the most favorable light. It is still advertising, but your medium should have changed with the times.

Sometimes, we, the advertising base, need to push a little, we want the biggest 'bang for our advertising buck'. Your newspaper Hospitality Portal is real and in real time, advertising changes and enhancements can be made in a swish, your potential Guest, Patron and Visitor can be connected electronically to your business in a flash. Your newspaper's web site is not only the future, it is the now.

The success of our Destinations rests with the synergies of the partners - our DMO's, our Hospitality businesses, the municipal infrastructure. Each promotes themselves differently through various mediums. Our daily newspapers are oftentimes the 'glue' of the community. Advertising pays their freight, and we are the advertisers. We dare to be great!

Many of our Metropolitan newspapers have been slow to embrace the Internet with editorial pride in conflict with business survival. Their advertising strategies were also tied to the historical tried and true. So, the transition has been halting, at best, until the economic realities have surfaced. Now, there is a rush to the Web, which will only benefit Hospitality businesses.

As soon as a newspaper issue is published, it is old news, whereas a web site is active and time sensitive, 24/7. Your Hospitality Business can have your advertising enhanced and cross-referenced in any number of ways. Should a newspaper move from just a link to a Portal, the opportunities for booking business, special programs, creative marketing, ratings and customer reviews can be extremely powerful for your business. So, when that advertising rep comes around selling space, venture into Space (the Internet), for that is where commerce is conducted.

The author believes that Remarkable Hospitality is the portal to the Memorable Experience. Seek solutions at: www.hospitalityperformance.com

Contact

John R. Hendrie

Phone: 978-346-4387

Email: jhendrie@hospitalityperformance.com

Organization

Hospitality Performance, Inc.

www.hospitalityperformance.com

40 East Main Street

USA - Merrimac, MA 01860

Toll Free: 877-280-3650

Phone: 978-346-4387

Email: jhendrie@hospitalityperformance.com

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