



Turn guests into ambassadors.

Everything a hotel manager should know about:

Online Reputation Management

About

This guide deals with the use of social media and review sites in the hotel business. It offers a concise description of the phenomenon that we call social media. What are social media and review sites? What can or can't they do for your hotel? Who do you reach through social media? Why should every hotel use them? These and other questions will be answered here.

By the way: once you have started using social media, you will find that properly monitoring everything and responding quickly is no mean feat. That's why Olery has developed a web applicaton in collaboration with more than a hundred hotel managers. This tool meets the desire to be able to combine all input from guests. Moreover, the system will enable you to interact with your guests in a time-saving manner.

Do you want to know what Olery can do for your hotel or hotel chain? Then visit our website: www.olery.com.



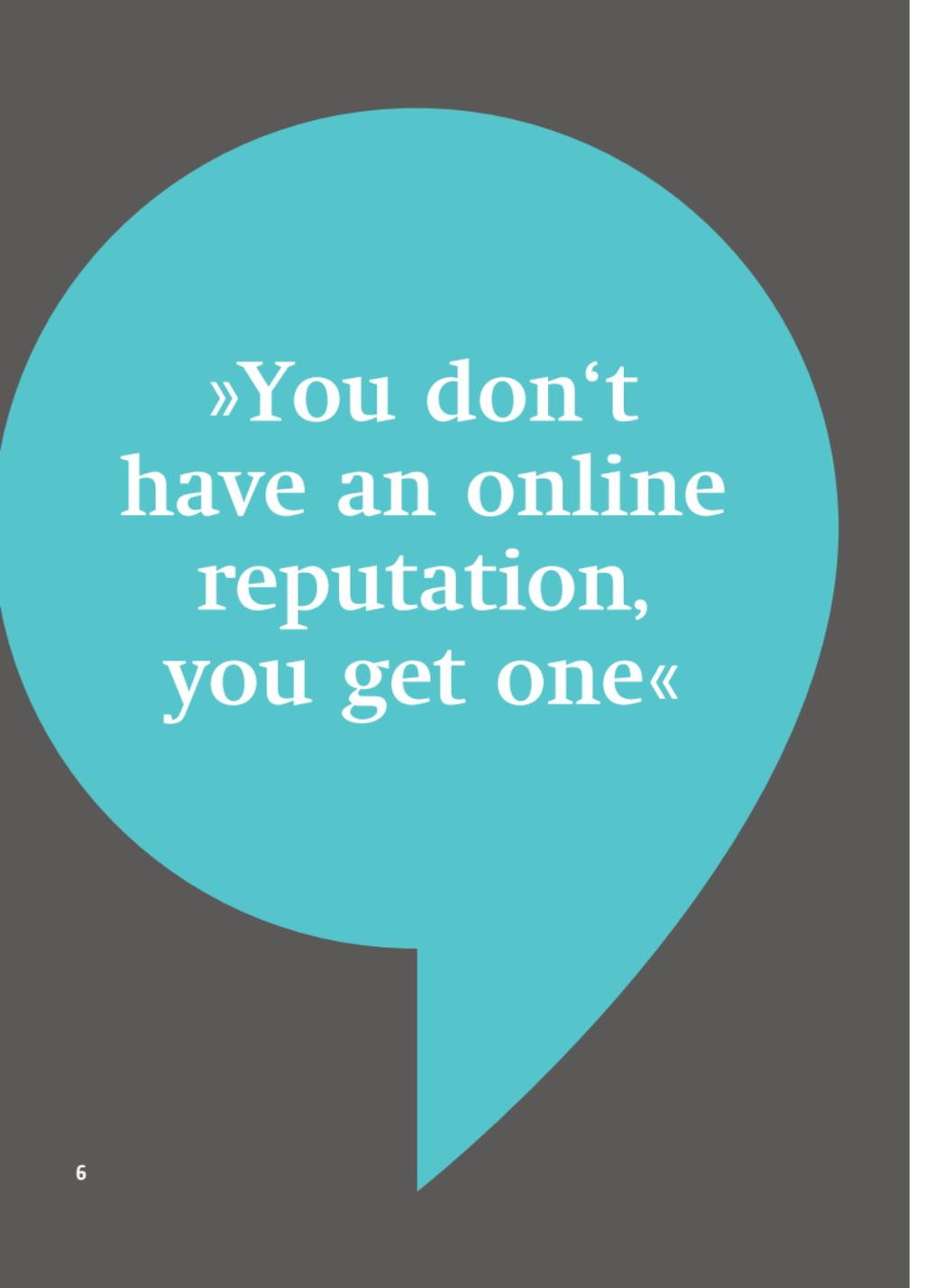
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Olery 2011



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»You don't
have an online
reputation,
you get one«

Online reputation management: the basics

Online reputation management regards anything that a guest might write about your hotel. This is important for three reasons:

1. Informative

To know what is going on, to be aware of the sentiment and of the potential impact of comments about your hotel.

2. Reactive

If you know what is being said, you have the choice to do something with it or not. By doing something with it, you can generate more positive responses. You can also respond (in a positive way) to negative reactions.

3. Proactive

The first two points are required, and defensive in nature. By acting proactively you can take control of the discussions about your brand or hotel. The most important thing to remember is that you don't have an online reputation, you get one. And that's something that you will have to work on.

twitter

What is it?

Twitter is a public message or chat service, also known as a »*microblog*«. Just like you can send a text message of maximally 160 characters to a mobile number via your telephone, you can send a 140-character »*tweet*« via fixed or mobile Internet.

The recipients of these tweets are the people who have subscribed to your Twitter page, your »*followers*«. You can also use Twitter yourself to follow people or companies that you are interested in. Additionally, Twitter has a search function that helps companies to get an idea of the sentiment surrounding their activities and people. Because Twitter offers information about the now, search engines such as Google index all tweets in real time.

Why would you use it for your hotel?

Twitter is a good tool for departments such as sales and marketing, but for guest relations as well. You can also use it to promote regular and incidental contacts with guests or to find out what is being said about your hotel and the industry. Guests at your hotel will tweet about their stay and share their opinion with all of their followers. If you keep a close eye on these responses and once in a while respond to relevant tweets, you can greatly benefit from it in a marketing sense.



»The best way to discover what's
new in your world« twitter.com

How do you use Twitter for your hotel?

📍 Before you start using Twitter, think about what your goal is for doing so. What do you want to tell? How much time do you want to spend on it? Also, determine who the target audience will be so that your strategy will have the maximum effect.

📍 Make sure that several of the hotel's departments will become active on Twitter. Have the F&B staff tweet about the daily menu, the sales team about special offers, and the general manager about what makes the hotel unique. It will make the page varied and attractive. The result is that it will appeal to different people within your target audience, with different interests. And it helps you to create the most versatile picture possible of your hotel.

📍 Begin with following interesting people and companies, such as hotel guests, suppliers and area attractions. But also follow your colleagues. After all, Twitter is all about sharing information. Others, too, will share their knowledge on topics that might be of interest to you. Don't let this information slip by. Also, let people know that they can follow you on Twitter. It will increase the chances that your Twitter network will grow rapidly.

📍 Communicate (directly) with people who tweet about your hotel and reward them for doing so, by giving them goodies or hotel vouchers for instance. Thus, you ensure that there is »something to gain« via Twitter and that people will return frequently.

📍 Create your own tone of voice, radiate hospitality, and spark people's curiosity about your hotel. Twitter is a social medium. Therefore, it is important that you stay true to who you are and also show that there's a human being hiding behind your profile. This gives you a face, which will appeal more quickly to the members of your target audience.

📍 Try to tempt people into sending you messages by putting up posts that will interest large groups of people. This is a method to increase the awareness of your (hotel) brand more quickly. And brand awareness is the best way to always be at the top of people's mind.

📍 Closely follow trending topics (popular subjects) on Twitter and visit important »#« (hashtags) pages. If you tweet along about these topics, you and your hotel will be spotlighted regularly too. Furthermore, it is a way to present yourself as some kind of authority on the subject.

facebook

What is it?

Facebook is a social network with over 500 million active users. Facebook is used both professionally and privately. On their own profile page, members post status messages about what's going on in their life. In addition, Facebook is one of the biggest group and photo sites on the Internet. With the »Like« button users can indicate if they're a fan of a certain website, page, brand or company.

Why would you use it as a hotel?

Facebook is one of the world's biggest social networks, so there's a great chance that your target audience actively uses it.

And many people log in on Facebook on a daily basis, but do not visit your website every day. Therefore, make sure that members of your target audience become a fan of your Facebook page and post interesting facts and news about your hotel.

Facebook makes it possible to interact with guests, which can give a tremendous boost to brand loyalty.



»Facebook is a social utility that connects you with the people around you« facebook.com

How do you make the perfect Facebook page for your hotel?

Facebook offers the perfect opportunity to inform people in a simple way – via an official Facebook page – about what is going on in and around you and your hotel. Here are a few tips on how to create a good Facebook page.

📍 Make sure that visitors will see immediately that they have landed on the Facebook page of your hotel. Put an attractive logo on your page, in the form of a banner. Your hotel's Facebook page has a few standard applications. These are the tabs »wall«, »info«, »photo« and »links« at the top of the page. You can use these tabs to give information about your hotel, but you can also put up pictures and videos of your hotel. With the »links« tab you can refer people to the website of your hotel or the hotel's restaurant, for instance.

📍 Keep your fans and visitors posted. Via the link »Edit page«, »Applications«, »Browse more applications« you can search for »tabs« to put on your page. Here you can present interesting information relating to your hotel. Show the menu of your hotel's restaurant, for example. Or put up an agenda that lists events in your town or area.

 Ask your page's visitors for their opinion. They can always give you handy tips or suggestions to help you improve your page. Also, encourage people to give their opinion by using polls. Make sure that there are sufficient possibilities to become a fan of your Facebook page, on the page itself or anywhere else on the Internet. You can place a button or so-called »widget« on your hotel's website. If they click on it, people are forwarded to your Facebook page.



What is it?

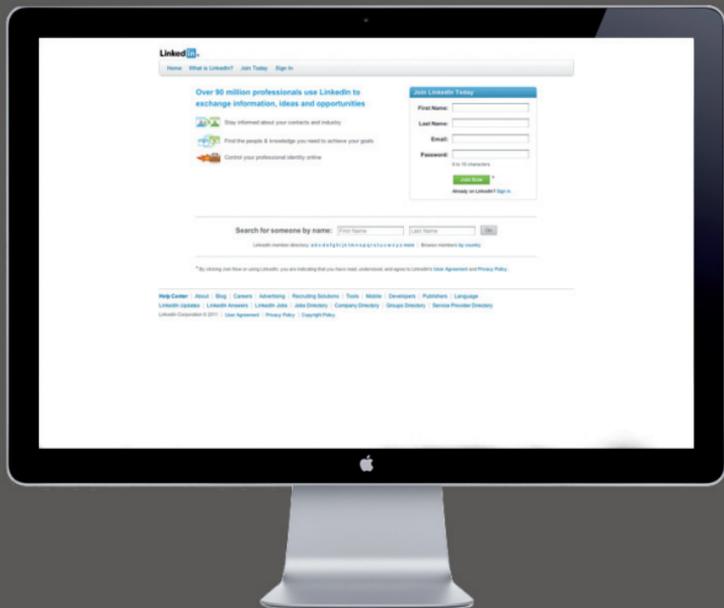
LinkedIn is a purely business-oriented network site. Its members work in all fields and branches of industry – from government institutions to pharmaceutical companies and from banks to hotel soap manufacturers.

The members use this social network to cultivate relationships, present themselves, look for a job or do market research.

They also have the option to join LinkedIn Groups. These are groups of professionals who are interested in the same theme or topic, such as social media for hotels for instance.

Why would you use it for your hotel?

On LinkedIn you can actively participate in conversations or enter into discussions with colleagues in the many LinkedIn Groups. The site is also a handy tool for searching certain people, markets and companies that you want to know more about from a professional standpoint.



»Connecting the world's professionals
to make them more productive and
successful« *linkedin.com*

foursquare

Check-ins sent
to Twitter

twitter

Tweet

Check-in

Status
update

Tweets sent
to Facebook

facebook

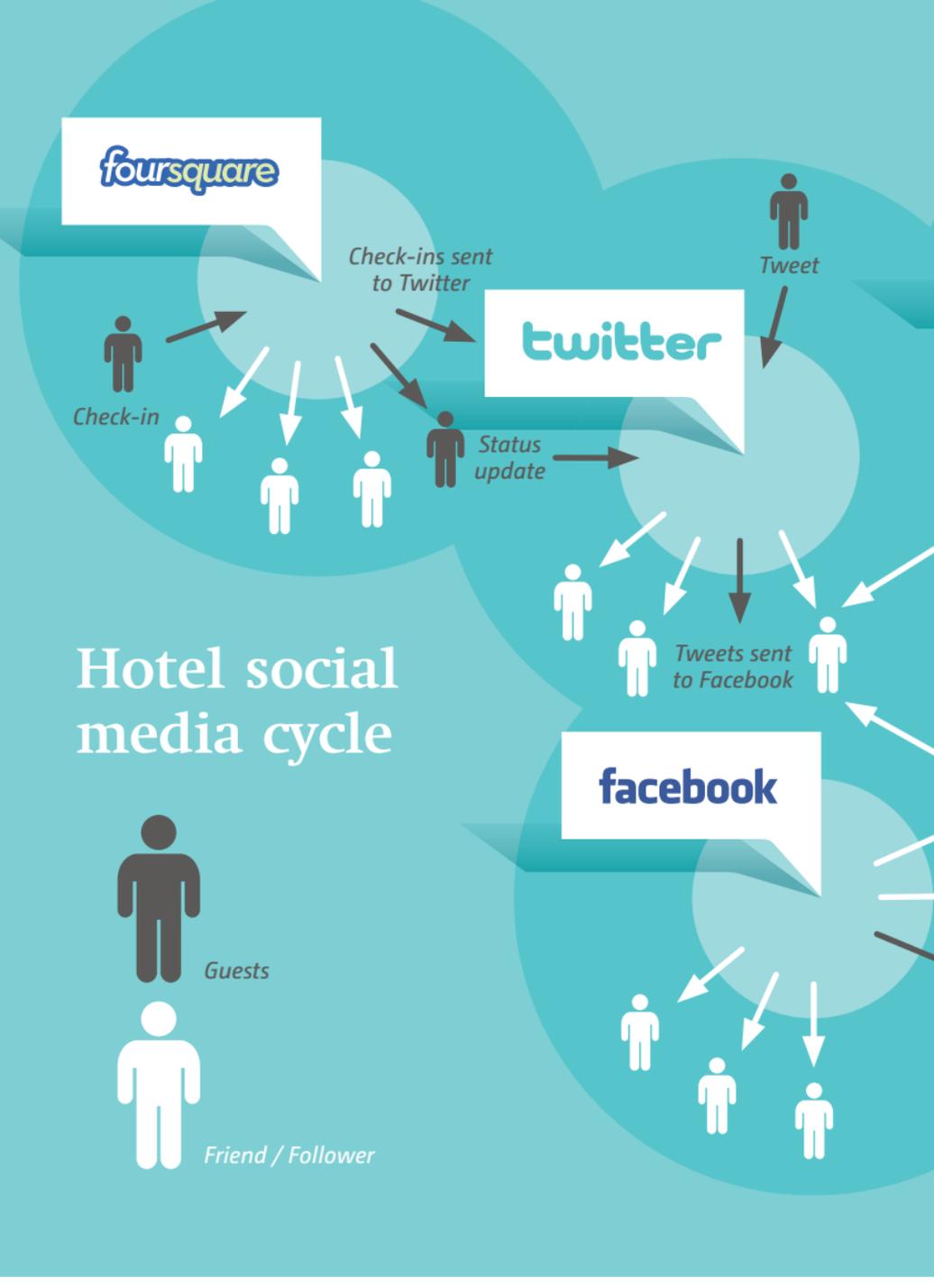
Hotel social media cycle

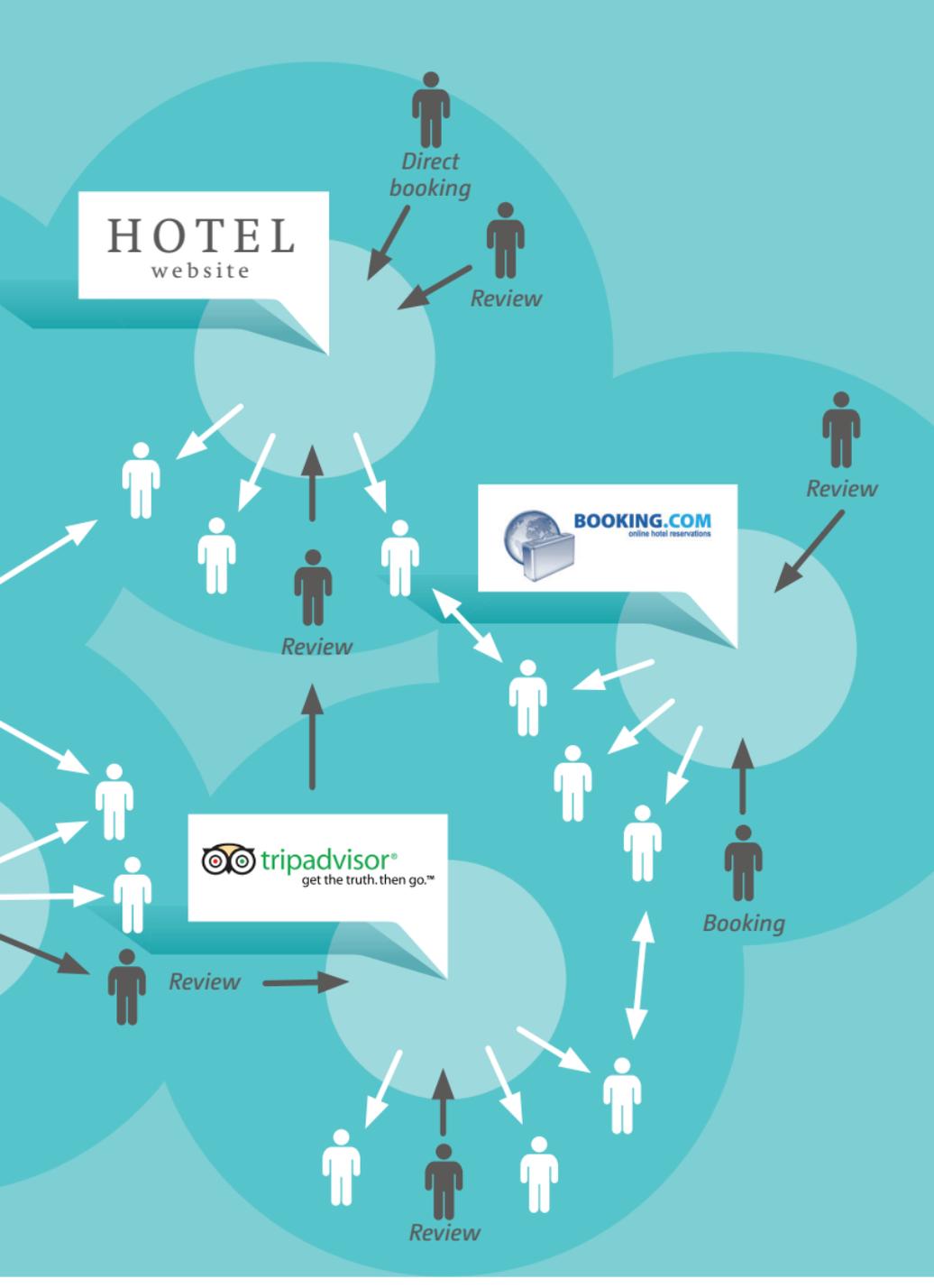


Guests



Friend / Follower





Five frequently asked questions

What types of social media can our hotel use best?

That completely depends on your goals. Based on what you want to achieve with social media, you can determine what forms of social media to use.

My hotel has a small budget. What can we do when it comes to social media?

Using social media doesn't have to cost much. Even if you have a small budget there are many (free) possibilities to employ social media. Most social media services can be used free of charge, for example.

Our hotel puts up messages everywhere, but we don't get any responses. Why is that?

The messages aren't posted on sites that are visited by people who might be interested. Make sure that you know where you can reach your target audience.

Our hotel doesn't have enough personnel to continuously monitor the social media. What can we do?

There are various programs that can collect review sites, blogs, tweets or other social media for you. However, if you want an overview that combines all social media you might want to take a look at Olery. This software not only maps all of your hotel's social media, but also enables you to measure the effects of your online reputation and interact with your guests. In less time you will gain more insight into social media and the consequences for your online reputation.

How do we make sure that we only reach people who actually belong to our target audience with our hotel?

Make your messages as specific as possible. This will increase your chances of primarily reaching those people who are interested in your hotel.

Review sites

There are many websites on the Internet where guests can post their experiences with a hotel.

Roughly speaking, these websites can be divided into two types: websites where you can book a hotel and post a review and websites where you can only post reviews.

Name of website	Type of site
TripAdvisor	Reviews only
Holidaycheck	Reviews only
Expedia	Reviews and bookings
Zoover	Reviews only
Booking.com	Reviews and bookings
Orbitz	Reviews and bookings
Travelocity	Reviews and bookings
Yelp	Reviews only
Hotels.de	Reviews and bookings
Virtualtourist.com	Reviews only

Respond
to reviews

Review only posted
by invitation?

Yes

No

Yes

Yes

No

Yes

Yes

No

No

Yes

No

No

No

No

No

No

No

Yes

No

No

How should you respond to reviews?

Many hotels are still wary of entering into a discussion with their guests on social networks and review sites. When should you respond to reviews as a hotel? And what do you do if negative reviews of your hotel are posted on the Internet? Here we'll give you some tips & tricks that you can use when responding to reviews.

Thank your reviewers. After all, no matter what they say, they still have taken the time and trouble to give their opinion about your hotel.

If guests complain about your hotel online, you should take this seriously. Take the time to listen to your guests and let them know that you take their complaint seriously, even if you don't have an immediate solution. Most guests will definitely appreciate it. Even better: apologize, explain what actions you will take to handle the complaint to their satisfaction.

Always give the guest the benefit of the doubt, unless the facts are false. Definitely don't enter into heated arguments online. This might provoke even more negative reviews, also by other guests.

Encourage positive responses from guests by reacting in person and complimenting guests on their review.

Try to be short in answering. As with long reviews, nobody reads long management responses.

Don't use automatically generated, standard replies. If these are used frequently, they will crowd out the review. Moreover, they undermine the creative abilities of your hotel staff to come up with a good answer themselves.

Response examples*

Comment »*There was no concierge, no bellman half the time, and the kitchen closed at 09:00 PM. I expected more, and won't be back.*«

Bad response: »We don't claim to be the Ritz Carlton, and we don't charge those prices either. Our hours of operation are clearly stated on our website. The kitchen is always open at least until 10:00.«

Why this is bad: **1.** Unprofessional; **2.** Abrupt and patronizing; **3.** Infers that the guest is lying.

Better response: »We are a limited-service property and our prices reflect this. Our kitchen normally closes at 10:00 PM on weekdays and 11:00 PM on weekends, and front desk staff are on duty 24-hours to assist with luggage and concierge recommendations. We feel we provide good value to our guests, but it seems we fell short in your case. I sincerely apologize.«

Comment »...*Parking cost half the price of my room! Internet was \$ 15 for 24-hours and the connection was slow. RIP OFF!..*«

Bad response: »Sorry you were dissatisfied but our hotel is not a 'RIP OFF' as you claim. You booked a low rate through Priceline and they take a high commission, so internet wasn't included. We've been in the business for 25 years and as you can see from the other reviews our other guests love us.«

Why this is bad: **1.** Contradicts the guest; **2.** Repeats negative feedback; **3.** OTA commissions and the opinions of others aren't the guest's concern; **4.** Doesn't address the real issues (lack of value and slow internet).

Better response: »I'm truly sorry that your internet access was slow, which can happen in rare occurrences when guest traffic

is high. We feel we provide good value given our location and facilities, and our pricing is comparable to similar properties in the area. At the same I appreciate your feedback, and will review it with our management group.«

Comment *»Our room was a pigsty. The closet shelf was caked with dust, the room smelled like smoke, and there were cigarette burns in the carpet (it was supposedly a non-smoking room) Oh, and I found a curly hair beside the toilet. Charming.«*

Bad response: *»I am shocked and devastated by your comments. I investigated the incident and found out the front desk agent made a mistake and checked you into a dirty room. We are so sorry, it's inexcusable!!! We are a non-smoking hotel but some guests smoke anyway and we can't control their behavior.«*

Why this is bad: **1.** Too dramatic; **2.** Blames other guests and singles out staff; **3.** Isn't exactly reassuring.

Better response: *»We pride ourselves on our spotless rooms and attention to detail, but clearly we were off the mark in your case. I have reviewed your comments with housekeeping and front office staff, and it seems we inadvertently checked you into a room before its final inspection. For that we are truly sorry. I have send you a private message and hope we can discuss the matter in person. We appreciate your feedback – it helps us get better.«*

** These examples were taken - with permission from the author - from The Hotelier's guide to online reputation management by Daniel Edward Craig. For more information on the author and his work, please visit www.danieledwardcraig.com.*

Six social media trends in the hotel business

1

Hotels will free up more time and money to spend on social media. They will also measure the results of their social media efforts more and more often.

2

The online reputation of hotels will become an ever more important factor for guests choosing a hotel. Nowadays, guests base their choice for a hotel not just on price, but also on reviews.

3

The »social graph«, a map of someone's social network, is becoming increasingly important for hotels. It makes clear what the impact of a message will be and is a tool to measure the reach of social media.

4

More and more often, hotel guests will use social media sites such as Twitter and Facebook to let you know that they have complaints or aren't satisfied.

5

Reviews will gain importance to hotels. Guests will also write reviews more frequently.

The use of Location Based Services such as Foursquare by hotels will continue to increase. This service enables people to virtually check in at the hotel via (mobile) Internet. Not only people who are in your PMS can do this, but basically everyone who passes by. There is a large element of play in Foursquare. Every virtual check-in can earn you points. The one who checks in most often at the hotel can become the location's »mayor«. Additionally, with every check-in people can tell their friends in 140 characters about their experience, which creates mini reviews on this medium as well.

6

Do's

- 📍 Mention on your website where your hotel can be followed online, and put up links to these pages. Invite visitors to become online friends and let them follow you on Twitter.
- 📍 Respond to both negative and positive reviews. It is very important to guests that their opinion is appreciated. If you respond to a guest's negative review and manage to deal with the complaint to his or her satisfaction, there is a good chance that this guest will return and will write a positive review about the service that your hotel offers.
- 📍 Try to make sure that your guests write a review on your hotel. After all, four out of five guests first read reviews on a hotel before they book a room.
- 📍 Post the restaurant's menu of the day on Twitter, for instance. That will attract passers-by, too.
- 📍 Don't be afraid to give your opinion on something. If you read a blog post that you totally disagree with, you can certainly let yourself be heard.
- 📍 Capitalize on current events. If people are stranded because a blizzard has stopped public transport, then tweet that they can spend the night at your hotel for a special price.
- 📍 Make social media part of the company culture.

Don'ts

- 📍 Don't create a social media account and then not use it. There's nothing worse than a »dead« Twitter or Facebook profile.
- 📍 Only tweet or blog if you have something worthwhile to tell. You must keep your followers interested.
- 📍 Don't advertise too much via social media. People are usually not on social media to buy something. Too much advertising will deter them. What does work well, though, is to tweet or blog about special offers and discounts. However: don't overdo it. Too many »commercial« messages could irritate your followers.
- 📍 See to it that your hotel's social media are managed by experienced staff only. And always think twice before you send a tweet or blog message into the world. From the moment it is published on the Internet, you'll have almost no control over what will be done with that information.
- 📍 Don't think that social media are free. Signing up for the various services won't cost you a dime, but you do have to spend a lot of time for them to be effective. And time is money.
- 📍 Don't use an automated message to respond to reviews. Guests take the trouble to inform you about their experiences at the hotel. They expect you to take these remarks seriously and respond to them appropriately, not by sending a standard reply.

**»To measure ROI on
social media you
must determine
the goals«**

Social media's ROI

There are many ways to calculate the Return On Investment of social media. Look for instance at how many people visit your social media page each day, how many bookings you get through employing social media, or how much publicity your hotel gets thanks to the use of social media.

To be able to properly measure the ROI you must determine the goals for using social media. Do you use social media primarily to attract new guests to your hotel? Then you should look at the number of new bookings you have received. Is your main goal to keep former hotel guests informed? Then it's best to look at the number of page views (pages visited) that you generate on your hotel's website via your social media.

Obviously, it is also important to know which people visit your pages and, more in particular, how many people landed on your hotel's website thanks to the use of social media and then made a booking (conversion). Therefore, the ROI of social media cannot be expressed directly in an amount. What is most important is the effect that you are looking for. In this regard, you should realize that it takes endurance to achieve an ROI on your social media efforts.

Glossary

Hashtag (#)

Hashtags are used by Twitter to ensure that your message will be shown within a certain category. Because others use the same combination (e.g. #hotel), these messages are grouped together.

Microblogging

Sending short messages and publishing them on the Internet. The best known example is the social media site Twitter. In that specific case, messages cannot contain more than 140 characters.

Location Based Services

Services that can be used with mobile devices and that can determine the user's geographic data via the mobile network. Based on those data it is then possible to generate relevant, location-based information (a route planner, for example).

Mobile devices

A collective term for all mobile appliances that give access to the Internet without the need for a fixed connection.

Online Campaign

Posting messages on the Internet in a structured fashion with a predetermined goal. (e.g. more bookings)

Search Engine Optimization

Adapting your website in such a way that search engines will find it more quickly and give it more value. The result is a higher ranking within the search results.

Social Media Optimization

Taking optimum advantage of social media with the objective of generating publicity for a company or website.

Social Return on Investment (SROI)

The non-financial results that are achieved by investing in the use of social media. Facebook fan page: A special Facebook page that brands, companies and organizations, amongst others, can use to keep their »fans« (followers) up to speed about news and developments.

Tweets

Messages posted on Twitter.

User generated content

Website content that was contributed by visitors to that website. An example of this are forum messages.

Widget

The term for an interactive banner or mini application that you can place on a website and which has specific functionality. It is also possible to present information from a website in a widget, such as the weather forecast, stock prices or the train schedule.

www.olery.com

