Top 10 Strategies to Promote Hotels on Social Media Channels  By Anil Aggarwal

Social media continues to grow in importance. It has not only become a critical tool to interact with customers, but is also a key element that impacts organic search rankings for your hotel. Hotels that take advantage of this hot trend are seeing significant benefits in terms of online placement and revenue.

The most common question asked in the hospitality industry is why hotels should be concerned about social media and how will they benefit from social media elements? An essential follow-up question is how do you optimize for social media and measure ROI? To build an effective campaign, hoteliers can undertake key initiatives to maximize the gain on social media channels.

Social Media Marketing: Create, Manage and Monitor

All the efforts that a hotel puts into social media marketing can be bundled into three categories: create, manage and monitor. Broken down under these categories are 10 practical promotion tips to use via social media channels.

Create

1. **Create and upload custom Facebook tabs.** Facebook allows hotels and businesses to customize their tabs to fit their specific hotel or business. Some best practices to follow while creating a Facebook page are to integrate reservation widgets, have an Events tab and create custom tabs to highlight hotel-specific items such as meetings and conferences, things to do, etc.

   **Example:** www.facebook.com/LibertyHotelBoston

2. **Create/promote destination blogs showcasing local events, news and specials.** Information posted on the blog gets indexed right away.

   **Example:** blog.nickhotel.com

3. **Build image and video content.** Creating and posting media is an effective way to capitalize on different search traffic.

   **Search Optimized Video** — Create and promote a search optimized video about the hotel’s destination and local attractions, then upload it on video search engines such as YouTube. YouTube is the second largest search engine and drives significant traffic.

   **Example:** www.youtube.com/watch?v=HraOlqiqdlN4/

4. **Maintain a Twitter stream.** Create a custom Twitter profile with the hotel’s phone number and web site address in the background.

   **Example:** twitter.com/vallartagv

5. **Promote within your community.** Hyperlocal content is typically intended for residents of a particular community, region, city, town, village or neighborhood. Hyperlocal channels are ideal platforms for rewarding users for connecting and engaging with the hotel. To participate, claim, clean and enhance listings on hyperlocal channels such as Foursquare, Gowalla, Facebook Places, etc. Also, use these channels to offer special incentives such as coupons and hot deals.

   **Example:** foursquare.com/venue/271672

Photo Sharing — Create a channel or an account on photo sharing sites such as Flickr and Picasa, then post hotel and destination photos on the sites. Tag the pictures with relevant keyword phrases. Pictures about the destination that illustrate information to potential guests are more likely to produce better results.

   **Example:** www.flickr.com/photos/8209088@N07/

Anil Aggarwal is CEO at Milestone Internet Marketing, which provides Internet marketing solutions for the lodging industry. Aggarwal is also a frequent speaker at industry events.
Manage and Promote
6. Integrate and cross-link channels. Once channels are set up, it is crucial to integrate and cross network all these channels. Make sure that the social media icons are displayed clearly on the hotel’s web site so that consumers can get to those channels. Cross-link Flickr, Twitter and YouTube to the hotel’s Facebook account. Integrating and cross-linking the channels will help with optimization, keeping the information fresh and expanding the network. Bring live feeds from social media channels into the hotel’s web site.
Example: www.nickhotel.com/html/social-media.asp

7. Grow your fanbase. Build your social media communities on multiple outlets.
   • Facebook — Become friends with organizations that are most important for your hotel/business
   • Promote Facebook profile page — Ask hotel guests/customers and business associates to become a fan on Facebook (use your e-mail lists)
   • Convert friends on Facebook by offering time-sensitive specials
   • Network with local organizations and grow fan base
   • Twitter follow — Stay connected and current by finding relevant businesses in the hotel’s area/market and follow them

8. Send out press releases and articles. Use online news channels such as Business Wire and PR Web to release articles and news to enhance search engine optimization.

Monitor
9. Create a social media reviews platform on the hotel’s site. Providing this type of platform encourages users to upload content to the site where you have control.
Example: www.nickhotel.com/guestreviews/orlando-hotel-guest-reviews.aspx

10. Monitor social media channels and review sites. It’s recommended that hotels actively monitor social media channels and review sites. The success of social media efforts can be measured in many different ways:
   • Awareness:
     › Number of friends and followers
     › Social media mentions
     › New relevant links
   • Conversion:
     › Promo code tracking
     › Google Analytics
   • Relationships
     › Rate of interaction
     › Who initiates the dialogue

There are many options available for hoteliers to monitor social media activity. One avenue is Google Analytics, where hotels can integrate Google Analytics codes on Facebook pages, blog pages, etc. and track the activity on these channels. In addition, YouTube and Flickr provide reporting tools that can help you gauge activity on those channels.

Sophisticated social media and reputation management software such as eBuzz Connect™, tell you what people are saying about your property on different channels, video views, photo views, etc. This will help you benchmark your performance month-over-month to determine whether the social media strategies are effective. These tools also help in proactively responding to negative/positive reviews and minimize the risk of not knowing what people are saying about your hotel online.

Maintain an Ongoing Connection
Social Media is an integral part of the real-time search algorithm. Social media creates real connection between companies and customers, and that connection equals purchase intent. Ongoing connection and relationship with your customers will eventually turn them into a volunteer marketing army. Make sure that social media is an integral part of your overall marketing plan. If you are limited on budget and resources, still keep monitoring the social media domain and do the best you can. Hoteliers who want to be ahead of the curve, should invest today in the media that is fast emerging as the future of Internet marketing.