

Social Media / eCommerce Tips

33 tips to help you develop an effective social media platform for your hotel

**As collected during a panel discussion
held at the Southern Lodging Summit at Memphis**

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Social Media / eCommerce Tips

*** Treat it like a party! Your team should have fun while conversing with your target audience.**

*** Address issues in a timely and honest fashion**

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*** Know the lingo, but don't let it scare you. Start with some basics. The book "Engage!" by Brian Solis is a good place to start.**

*** Take it offline. When engaging in an in-depth conversation with a customer, it doesn't need to be in front of the world. Having a private conversation can lead to resolution of any problems.**

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*** Involve multiple departments i.e. PR, IT, Marketing, HR, Legal, Customer Relations. If you don't deal with them while you're setting up the program, you will have to deal with them later!**

*** Know your target audience via market research and interviews. Don't try to be everything to everybody.**

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*** Develop a plan and stick with it. Having a master plan to follow ensures that everyone on the team understands the goals. Do your due diligence before the launch!**

*** It's OK to fail. Don't be afraid to try something new and innovative as a part of the master plan. If it doesn't work, stop doing it! Don't be afraid to push the limit.**

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*** Be sure to proofread and spell check. It sounds simple, but having easily corrected errors in text damages your integrity.**

*** Have a personality. Being vanilla doesn't make an impact.**

*** Always link to your home page from all social media outlets!**

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*** Discover who is interested *and* qualified on your staff. You might find support where you least expect it.**

*** Dedicate someone to oversee the efforts. It's good to have multiple people involved, but not having a point person will result in chaos.**

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- * Have a message and a reason for it. Simply having a social media presence for the sake of having one isn't worth the effort. Everyone on your team should know your message.**
- * Create relevant and valuable content.**
- * Understand that it is a 24/7 endeavor and plan for it to be monitored that way.**

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- * Cultivate an intimate relationship with the audience. Get to know their expectations.**
- * Social media is not a stand-alone program! It should be part of a hotel's overall operating and marketing plans.**
- * Utilizing resources from your brand will save you time and money.**

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- * It's not a popularity contest. The number of followers you have isn't as important as the quality of the people interacting with you.**
- * Return on engagement is as important as return on investment. Use analytics tools to measure engagement. Examples: Standing Dog, Pitch Engine, Google Analytics. There are many more. Do some research!**

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- * Capture as much data as possible from your followers.**
- * Another good resource is the “eConnect” feature at www.hsmai.org.**
- * Don’t just post specials. Have a conversation!**

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*** Get to know the people who can help you. Reach out to bloggers. Understand what blog seeding is, and give bloggers something to work with.**

*** The look, feel and message of your platform must be consistent, but don't be afraid to have different sub-messages for different channels.**

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- * Include the social media team, even if it is one person, on the organizational chart. Give it a home so there is some accountability.**
- * Have multiple Twitter or Facebook pages to target specific audiences. If you are trying to sell more wedding packages, let the world know your track record through videos, pictures. Have happy past clients as followers.**

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*** Don't delay getting engaged in social media. It's not too late, but don't get left in the dust. Remember when there was a discussion about the importance of having a Web page? Don't fall into that trap.**

*** Keep track of what your followers are saying by utilizing free and paid-for matrices. Do some research as there are many options.**

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*** Know the number of RSS feeds and repeat visitors to measure loyalty.**

*** Learn how search engines work.**

*** Focus on the task at hand. Don't get carried away with gizmos and gadgets. The idea of social media is to interact with your existing and prospective guests.**