

8 BEST PRACTICES FOR CRM IN A CRISIS

YOUR HOTEL'S DATABASE (THE ENCYCLOPEDIA OF YOUR GUEST RELATIONSHIPS) IS YOUR NO. 1 ASSET. IT NEEDS TO BE PROTECTED AND NURTURED, EVEN IF YOUR DOORS ARE CLOSED.

In times of crisis like the coronavirus global pandemic when things change rapidly day to day and informed, nuanced communication is vital. Your hotel's customer relationship management (CRM) serves as a powerful central command station for connecting with guests.

As you monitor the situation, adjust operations and plan for recovery, a CRM gives you the ability to target and personalize your outreach (digital marketing, email and social), pivoting when needed with advanced sophistication quickly.

Hotel CRM also helps you track customer sentiment trends and gather business intelligence to gauge impact and support re-opening. As such, here are 8 best practices for using a hotel CRM throughout the crisis lifecycle.

1 PRO-ACTIVELY COMMUNICATE THROUGHOUT THE CRISIS

Now is not the time to go silent. Throughout the crisis, keep your guests informed about the impact to their travel plans based on local and global news, any updates to your cancellation and rescheduling policies or on-site offering changes such as F/B and spas, as well as your safety and security measures if your doors are still open. Keep the connection alive with your guests as well with nurture messages.

Don't appear tone-deaf, but a nuanced outreach can go a long way to keep the relationship alive. Inspire warm/fuzzy feelings with flashback moments at your property, video messages from staff or tutorials from housekeeping on matters your property excels at, such as bedmaking, craft cocktails or welcome rituals.

2 STRATEGIZE YOUR SEGMENTATION

As plans for re-opening begin, it's important to strategize about what segments will be the first to be able to travel. Will it be for leisure, business, or both? Will it be hyper-local, or do you anticipate travelers from further afield? Leverage micro segments as well based on lifestyle demographics and psychographics, as each group's desire to travel will resonate based on targeted

messaging. Either way, map this out in a staged approach with your defined audiences under each phase. This will allow you to determine whom you should communicate with, in each phase. This planning will directly impact your revenue forecasting as well, so stay aligned with your revenue team to ensure a collaborative approach.

3 BUILD NEW EMAIL LISTS BASED ON NEW SEGMENTS

Once your segmentation plan has is complete, you are ready to start marketing to your different lists. People need confidence before they travel again, so share what you can with them about changes you've made to ensure their safety. Safety will be a huge deciding factor for those thinking about booking, so

keep your communication efforts on this top of mind. If you are re-targeting those who have recently canceled their bookings – email marketing is a great way to inspire them to re-book. As before, think about the different scenarios and the right approach for each segment.

4 UPDATE YOUR PRE-ARRIVAL EMAILS

Success! Bookings have slowly started to come in again. This is great news, but how do you continue to instill confidence about their stay? Things will most likely be quite different when they get there, so now is the time to let them know. Pre-arrival emails can be the best way to excite guests about their upcoming trip. It's a great channel to communicate about dining options,

activities, local tips, etc., but they can also be used to communicate about important changes. The more transparent you can be about these changes, the better the overall experience will be for each guest. To ensure you are maintaining the right level of personalization, use segmentation and dynamic content to tailor your messages for specific guests.

5 ENHANCE YOUR PRE-ARRIVAL SURVEYS

To help you prepare for new guests, you may need to gather important information from them, such as their arrival, whom they are traveling with, allergies, and transportation needs. What better way to field questions before arrival than with a survey?

Pre-arrival surveys allow you to open up the dialogue with your guests to ensure they feel comfortable before arriving. Channeling queries and storing the data within your CRM will streamline your re-opening and the guest experience.

6 LEVERAGE GUEST PROFILES IN RECOVERY PLANNING

Guest profiles are the cornerstone of CRM. The wealth of data that is stored and actionable within a guest profile enables hoteliers to improve the guest experience from the moment they make a booking. From segments to interests, and preferences, having this data in one

central place allows you to leverage what you need for marketing, revenue, and operations purposes. Use your guest profiles to build out your plan for re-opening. As well as market data, target those who are more likely to travel based on location and previous spend.

7 LEAN ON CRM TO REDUCE CONTACT ON PROPERTY

The human side of hospitality will always be what makes people travel, and that will never change. We are, however, faced with the need to reduce contact and keep a safe distance. This might feel like it will impact the guest experience, and it will, to some extent, but leveraging technology and automation through

a hotel CRM will ensure the effect is minimal. Automation and other technology enabling contactless transactions will also have a hugely positive impact in restoring someone's faith to stay safe and healthy at your hotel after a crisis. Keep this in mind while you plan and budget.

8 TRACK TRENDS AND SHARE WIDELY

Last but not least is your tracking and reporting. If you aren't able to report out on the success of your crisis management and recovery strategy, it may as well have never happened! While you ramp up, it's imperative that you can track your

hotel's progress and successes. This insight gives the whole team the big picture trends that can cascade and recede on a daily basis, arming them with the insights they need to make revenue, staffing, opening and other decisions. Robust business intelligence in a hotel CRM allows you to prepare, strategize, build, and restructure for a strong recovery.

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