Top 5 reasons why hoteliers should add a guest review system to their website

Today's travelers love to tout their experiences whenever and wherever possible. Whether they post their travel reviews on Facebook, Google+, TripAdvisor, Amazon.com, Yelp, or simply send an email to their universe of friends and colleagues, the bottom line is, good or bad, the information is going to get out. As hoteliers, the best possible way to stay aware of that content and control the hotel-to-guest relationship is to add an easy-to-use and extremely affordable Guest Review System from Lodging Interactive directly onto their website.

Consider this: Statistics show that the average Facebook user has approximately 130 friends. In the social media realm, that equates to approximately 10,000 friends of friends, and over 1,000,000 friends of friends of friends. If a Facebook page has 500,000 fans (fans are people who clicked 'Like'), you can imagine the vast reach each guest review can have in attracting travelers.

"There are many reasons why a hotel — especially an independent property — should add a Guest Review System directly onto its website," said DJ Vallauri, Lodging Interactive Founder and President. "In addition to the obvious need to take control of their online reputations, the Guest Review System from Lodging Interactive is the easiest way for travelers to automatically link their reviews from the hotel's website to Facebook, instantly sharing their adventures with their network of friends. When you consider that one review has the potential of reaching thousands of "friends",' it's counter-productive not to embrace this technology. This is just one of many reasons why website-based reviews are so critical to business today." Here are a few others:

1. Gain Control over What You Want Displayed on Your Website
Due to the nature of the Web, there is no real way to validate whether or not a person claiming to be a guest with a bad experience actually stayed at your hotel. Placing guest reviews directly on the hotel's website puts a stop to fake reviews posted by competitors or dishonest guests looking for refunds. This not only helps hotels maintain an impeccable reputation, but it gives hotel owners and managers an opportunity to interact personally with their guests more frequently. By having complete control to approve or deny any guest review that appears on your site, hoteliers can better manage their online reputations.

2. Boost Credibility and Display Trustworthiness
As travelers are doing more and more of their research online, hotels and resorts are relying on online reviews to entice new guests to stay at their properties. But consumers are getting smart. With critics complaining that an entire cottage industry of paid reviewers has sprung up, travelers are questioning the validity of reviews found on booking sites like Orbitz, Travelocity and Hotels.com. This makes moving reviews to the hotel's website even more valuable. Hotels that post replies — both positive and negative — will be seen as more credible and trustworthy.

In an recent blog post titled: "Keeping negative Facebook comments leads to more trust in your brand", Internet consumer psychologist Dr. Brent Coker wrote: "It is rare that a brand does not have some unhappy customers on occasion. These customers should be given the chance to publically display their disgruntlement. In other words, brands should never tamper with their Facebook page by deleting negative comments, only allowing the positive comments to

shine through. Ideally, responding to negative comments creates an opportunity to show the world that you care. The result is greater feelings of trust, honesty, and genuineness towards your brand."

To demonstrate how this works, Dr. Coker conducted an experiment at the University of Melbourne. He exposed three separate groups to three separate Facebook Pages. Group one saw a Facebook Page where the comments were 100% positive. Group two saw a Facebook page where the comments were a mixture of positive and negative. Group three saw a Facebook page where the negative comments where responded to by the brand. Group three generated the most positive results.

3. Capture Lost Business from Third Party Review Sites

Hotels risk losing website visitors if those potential bookers are forced to leave the website in search of guest reviews on third party websites. Once gone, they may never come back, or worse, they may book with the competition or third-party distributor such as Orbitz, Travelocity, Expedia or Hotels.com that sell rooms at a considerably lower rate. Adding a Guest Review System keeps your guests on your site and turns lookers into bookers at rates that you are comfortable with.

Studies have shown that 75% of online travel buyers will check at least three review sites before booking online.

4. Improve Communications with Guests via Real-Time Email Alerts

According to Forrester, 49 percent of people won't make a reservation at a property that has no reviews; only 7 percent of hotels are responding to reviews even though 71 percent of travelers say that seeing a management response is important. In addition, 79 percent of people say that seeing a response to a negative review is reassuring. When deciding between two hotels, Forrester reports that 65 percent of people seeing a management response would sway them to book with the responding hotel. But be careful in how you respond. Forrester advises that aggressively worded management responses will do more harm than good according to 60% of the people.

By adding a Guest Review System to the website, hoteliers receive real-time email alerts for every guest review submitted, ensuring their business is always on top of what guests are saying. This means no more delays in addressing guest reviews. If a problem is identified, real-time damage control is rendered, and a potentially lost customer can be saved.

5. Expand Social Media Effectiveness Quickly and Cost Effectively

Integrating a guest review system with Facebook is key to expanding a hotel's social media effectiveness. This link enables hotels to collect and share their guest reviews right from their hotel Facebook pages. In addition, past guests can share their own reviews via a hotel's Facebook page.

"Implementing these five steps is easy via the Lodging Interactive Guest Review System," Vallauri said. "Our web-based tool empowers hotels to collect their own guest reviews and post management responses on their websites. The Guest Review System lets consumers post their comments and score their hotel experiences based on service attributes. Additionally, consumers can share their guest reviews on their Facebook wall and their network of friends. Hotels are notified in real-time of new guest reviews and have the ability to validate guest stay information before reviews are posted on their website. The Lodging Interactive Guest Review System is a low cost turn-key system any hotel can use to manage their guest reviews. There is no programming required and hotels can be up and running in 10 minutes." ✧

(Lodging Interactive, headquartered in Parsippany, NJ, is an award winning leading provider of Internet Marketing Services to the hospitality, spa and restaurant industries. The company provides a portfolio of effective hotel Internet marketing services to hundreds of hotels, resorts, ownership properties, spas and restaurants. Lodging Interactive is offering a free trial of its Guest Review System. For more information, visit www.GuestReviewSystem.com or contact Richard Walsh, Vice President of Business Development at sales@lodginginteractive.com or at 877-291-4411. Website: www.LodgingInteractive.com)