

15 Tips on Growing your Accommodation Business



Aside from cutting costs (often difficult) the way to really grow your accommodation business is by a combination of

- attracting more guests
- improving your average room rate
- growing the length of stay
- attracting repeat guests and recommendations

The following practical tips are aimed at helping you grow your business through attention to these key drivers of your business success

TIP 1: Know your numbers

What is your current average room rate, How does your rate vary by day of week and seasonality, how long is your average stay, what % of guests are repeats, what is the source of your bookings by %. Who are your clients? Who is your perfect guest?

TIP 2: Build your database

A database of past clients is one of the most valuable assets of your business if you work it. Start with past clients and enter their details into a spread sheet like excel or into a proper CRM system. As a minimum include name, email address, phone, category (e.g. walk in, corporate, family, family, travel agent, wholesale booking etc.) Then add key influencers and affinity groups to your database. These are the people you will regularly communicate with.

TIP 3: Produce a regular newsletter

Every 6 -8 weeks send an interesting newsletter and update to your database. Include information about your region, what's happening, events coming up, news about your property any specials include tips, share a joke or cartoon, a recipe, a funny you tube video, make it interesting (To help this process ask for a copy of our free newsletter tips whitepaper)



TIP 4: Target niches

Who does your property appeal to, is it families, groups, business travellers, local businesses, tradesmen visiting while doing a job or project in the area, sports clubs, special occasion groups e.g. big birthdays, special interest groups, clubs and associations.

Watch local newspapers for upcoming events, mail clubs and associations, use low cost Google ad words to target your desired niches. Decide who is your “ideal guest” is and target this type of guest.

TIP 5: Increase your average stay

Put in place incentives aimed at getting guests to stay longer

- stay 3 nights pay for 2 (or 4/3 or 5/2)
- offer \$1 breakfasts or free breakfasts in the month of
- offer kids stay free
- try novel offers e.g. \$75 a night per room then \$1 a night discount per year of age for every year over say 65. Or kids under 15 stay for \$1 a year of age

TIP 6: Clip the ticket

Talk to local operators of restaurants, attractions, sightseeing who would like to attract your guests to their business. Negotiate a % off or a special rate for your guests on presentation of one of your introduction vouchers. Also negotiate a % referral commission for every one of your discount vouchers presented. Produce your own branded voucher book..... a real value add for your guests and a useful additional revenue stream for you.

TIP 7: Market yourself to local businesses... build alliances

Where do your guests eat, visit and shop while visiting your area. Talk to the owners of these businesses and ask them to refer guests. Put on a BBQ for them, offer a free night's stay for them and their family to enable them to experience your property. Make it easy for them to make referrals give them referral vouchers and make sure you recognize and thank them when they do refer guests.

TIP 8: Network, network, network

Join local clubs and associations like business networks and service or sports clubs. Look at offering some form of sponsorship where it makes commercial



sense. This doesn't have to be hard cash but might be contra accommodation for use in fundraising.

TIP 9: Make the web work for you and use social media

If you don't understand this world find someone who can help. In the past most business came via "word of mouth". The online world can hugely magnify and grow your word of mouth. Use low cost online targeted promotion. Make sure your property features strongly via SEO (search engine optimization) A low cost video on your home page can really help your SEO performance (view www.epromotionz.co.nz/powerofvideo for more information) and a video really show's potential clients just what they are buying

TIP 10: Invest in professional photography

The old saying "a picture is worth 1000 words" is so true in tourism. Make sure your imagery online and in flyers, brochures and directories is the very best possible. Good professional photography isn't a cost it's an investment!

In a similar way make sure your properties signage and branding is highly visible attractive and clean!

TIP 11: Become the "minister of first impressions"

At least once a month walk around your property and view it through the eyes of a first time visitor. Look out for tired paintwork, litter and rubbish, tools not put away, dirty paths, leaky taps, poor signage. Test your own check in facilities from a guest's perspective, look at your rooms, do they match your standards book, are their sufficient coat hangers, check for dust, cleanliness, and that tea and coffee facilities up to scratch, in room visitors compendium is interesting and tidy etc.

Also look at your website and online booking facilities are they easy to use and how do they compare to your competition.

Regularly visit guest feedback sites like www.tripadvisor.com to see what past guests are saying about your property and learn from this and act quickly on any complaints or suggestions

TIP 12: Work the trade

Make sure you are close to the people at your local visitor's bureau or sightseeing service. Make sure they know the good points about your property, who you are targeting and ensure they have sufficient



brochures and these are on display. Invite them to visit your property. Get involved in local promotions. Look to form alliances with local tour operators, travel agents and tour wholesalers. Attend online training opportunities or conferences put on by your trade association.

TIP 13: Add value don't discount

Someone will always be prepared and able to sell cheaper than you. Know where your property should sit in terms of rate against the competition and your place in the market. Where you need to compete on price try to add value rather than simply discounting your rate. Add value by offering upgrades, or inclusions such as free breakfasts, your local discount book vouchers, a flyer with a title like 10 best things for families to do in (your area) or a local historical trail, arrange entry for your guest to the local squash courts, swimming pool, tennis courts. What else can you do locally that your guests may find useful

TIP 14: Don't compete be unique!

Try to be different from your competition. Be memorable. Look at what you can do that they can't do or perhaps haven't thought about. After all a bed a bed! Often it's a combination of little things that can set you apart. One of my clients delighted his guests by washing their car window every morning before they departed and he put a little note under their windscreen wiper telling the guest what he had done and wishing them a happy day. Another gave a delightful little local memento to all guests as they left. Make sure magazines in reception or the lounge are current, flowers are fresh, and your property looks welcoming and inviting.

TIP 15: Be happy!

So important. If you have had a bad day don't let your guests be aware of it. As the host you need to be positive, attentive and informative. If you think of great service you have received in the past (and conversely poor service) use this as a guide when training your staff to improve their own service.

A helpful pleasant host and support staff are memorable. It's people that make a guest's stay and it's the people they meet on their travel's that they remember well after they have forgotten the sights!

Happy guest are referring guests!



About the author of these tips



Les Probert is a principal of Toho. Today he works as a management consultant specialising in helping SME business owners make their businesses more successful, more profitable and more valuable. He is also author of the popular management tip book “what I didn’t know I didn’t know” (download a free copy at www.ebooksnzonline.com/lesbook) and operates the website www.101besttips.com

Les has a lifetime interest and career in tourism. He is an ex general manager of Thomas Cook Travel, the former owner of a large tour wholesaler (the talpacific group) and he has sat on the NZ travel agents board and chaired the outbound tour wholesalers group. He knows and loves the travel and tourism sector and has worked in the past partnering and contracting with literally hundreds of properties worldwide and has seen the great and not so great.

These tips are designed as a starting point of ideas for operators looking to grow their business and their success. The next step is a no obligation discussion and discovery meeting on how he can really assist operators serious about profit and business improvement. Contact Les anytime at

