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9 Marketing Tips to Hospitality Suppliers for Building New Business in Tough Times

*By Karen Weiner Escalera
President and Chief Strategist*

The complex multi-billion dollar hotel and resort industry feeds a vast network, everyone from designers and architects, to tech firms and FF&E suppliers. With many hotel and residential resort developments now put on hold or dramatically scaled back, this once-thriving food chain becomes vulnerable.

Now is the ideal time to implement an effective marketing program to capture business in the short term, and ensure greater market share when the economy turns around. For those who have not marketed in the past, or have done so with disappointing results, here are proven marketing tips that any hotel supplier can undertake, from larger companies to individuals.

1. **Update your business plan.** No sustainable effort to increase business in the current market can have a positive impact, and resulting positive cash flow, without a careful look at your business plan and its ability to garner business for your particular specialty. Understand what it will take in this challenging market to adapt and prosper by focusing on and updating your business generating strategies and your strategic marketing plan. Seek professional guidance from experts who can help you shape your future in a tangible document that will give you a solid blueprint for today's market realities.
2. **Define your unique competitive advantages.** Know the key messages to highlight in all your business communications. This is one of the more difficult processes because companies are often challenged to articulate what sets them apart from the competition. This examination process can be tremendously helpful, too, in identifying areas where some "reinvention" is needed based on new economic realities. It can also help uncover new products and new market opportunities.
3. **Invest in a press kit.** A basic kit should include a fact sheet, backgrounder on the firm, and biographies of principals. This same information can be used in numerous other ways, from sales presentations to the website.
4. **Become a spokesperson for your industry.** Join panel discussions and participate in webinars at industry conferences. Get speaking engagements. Comment on blogs about current issues affecting your industry. There's a conversation about almost everything in the blogosphere, so join in.
5. **Website, website, website.** Use your website as your storefront and beckon customers to enter. Take to heart the dos and don'ts of internet marketing. While you may enjoy the aesthetics of a flash presentation showing off your product, did you know that flash discourages visitors by making your site slow to load and difficult for search engines to rank? Keep your site current, easy to navigate and easy on the eyes. Let your website show off your product with professional photography that accurately depicts functionality, rather than the mood-inspiring photographs typical of advertising.

6. **SEO (Search Engine Optimize) Your Website.** Do you know your keywords? While you may have an admirable site, it won't work for you unless you market it. Google alone receives more than 250 million searches per day. What happens when the hotel purchaser deep in the back of the house Googles "hotel bed linens"? What happens when the fledgling developer Googles "hotel architects"? Are you there and what is your keyword popularity ranking?
7. **Write bylined articles** for industry journals and online media. These articles place you in databases and search engines so that reporters writing articles on industry topics will find you front and center. You can place the articles on your website to make it more content rich (great for website SEO) plus articles are a valuable addition to your credentials.
8. **Enter award competitions**, not only for your work but also, for contributions made to your profession and community. Networking at an event with the inner circle of other award winners is one of the best opportunities to meet new prospects, and awards are powerful third person endorsements.
9. **Hire a thought leader.** Stay ahead of the curve by seeking the counsel of a recognized marketing guru who has a solid track record of forecasting trends that enable clients to predict and prepare for the future. Invest in a timely consultation before the market shifts and your business will be ready to capitalize on the industry's next big thing before it becomes commonplace.

Let hoteliers know that your professionalism, quality product and smooth execution will allow them to focus on Revpar -- but first, get on their Radar.