Getting the Most for Your Public Relations Dollars

By Leora Lanz, August 8, 2003

Public relations and publicity need to be an integral part of the sales and marketing discipline, and these tactics need to support each other’s messages.

Today, while most hotel owners and developers recognize the importance of public relations, many are not allocating the dollars accordingly. They are naturally concerned about not meeting budget and therefore cutting back on expenses. To allocate sufficient monies toward the one discipline which can actually help them during tough times is very challenging. And, as we’ve been seeing as well, if monies are dedicated for additional sales, marketing and public relations support, it is very limited – and often still haggled and negotiated with the outside providers and experts.

If you’re a hotel owner or developer, and your funds for public relations are limited, may I make a suggestion? If you can’t afford an on-site public relations person now, you DO have an alternative.

To make public relations work for you, first allow your support team to focus on specific goal-oriented tasks. Agree upon the marketing or public relations objectives beforehand; particularly if you simply want to pay a small project fee or nominal retainer for the work being done.

Bring in an outside public relations expert. His or her focus should be on very specific proactive tasks to assist the hotel or hotel company with its publicity efforts. Of course, wouldn’t it be terrific if the publicist could always be available on property to partake in additional marketing and sales support roles? That’s frankly, how the job should be done – as one integrated endeavor, if we’re talking about measures that affect the operation. But if funds are truly limited, and you’re expecting a proactive execution of tasks, let the public relations expert remain directed, goal-oriented and focused.

If the fee for such work is at issue, then perhaps sit down with the public relations expert, determine the priorities, and allow the publicist to focus on the tasks at hand. Your marketing messages will still be communicated, your media relations will be strengthened, and you will be developing a presence in the marketplace.

Of course, when the dollars are available, the ideal situation is to have an on-site public relations contact. But until the money is there, there is a very good alternative. When removed from the
day-to-day of the hotel, and focused completely on proactive and aggressive media relations and publicity, the off-site p.r. person can be very productive on your behalf.

Leora Lanz will be teaching two courses this Fall at Long Island’s Hofstra University, through the College of Continuing Education. The courses are listed under Business Professional Development and Professional Designations, "How to Succeed in Business."

**Your Comprehensive Sales & Marketing Plan**, Thursday, October 16, 2003, 6-9pm: If you currently work in the hotel industry, or if you practice marketing and want to understand how to apply it specifically to the hotel (hospitality world), this course is intended to insure that you assemble a comprehensive yet strategic and efficient sales action and marketing plan. How to get the most out of your current customer base, improving your knowledge of e-marketing; recognizing the importance of GDS advertising, the challenge of the alternate distribution systems – the course is intended to have you comfortable in developing and fine tuning your current strategies

**Public Relations in Your Marketing Mix**, Thursday, November 6, 2003, 6-9pm: Do hoteliers truly understand the nuances and sophistication of press relations and publicity? How does it benefit your hotel or hospitality product? How do you remain creative to get your message publicized, while always staying fresh, or even re-inventing what has worked in the past. Examples of hotel public relations campaigns and ideas will be shared...