

## Need PR and Marketing Help? Ask Away!

### *Q&A with Jennifer Rodrigues of TravelInk'd*

You know it, I know it. The travel industry, and particularly lodging worldwide has experienced a mammoth slowdown. ADR and RevPAR are at never-before-seen lows in all parts of the globe and there's no end in sight. And although many are projecting the economy will start to pick up in the next few months, hoteliers seem to have put themselves in a position of continued loss. It's a catch-22. To survive the recession, hoteliers rashly cut their rates, sometimes even offering rates as low as one penny(!) just to get more heads in their beds. Now, as the end of the recession is (hopefully) on the horizon, hoteliers are in another quandary: how do they increase their rates back to "normal" levels without alienating the post-recession consumer who is still very value-driven and price-conscious?

And while the operational environment for hoteliers is difficult, the marketing environment is even more so. This year, everything we thought we knew about "breaking through the clutter" changed. Being a *Twitterer* has become a profession, consumers have changed, our lifestyles have changed and business models are changing as you read.

Gone are the days of roadside inn that could bring in business with a single sign on a main thoroughfare. Gone too are the days of travel agents as the primary booking channel for consumers. Today, hoteliers need to offer their rooms across a multitude of channels – the GDS, travel agents, phone and, most importantly, online – both through their own website and through online travel agency (OTAs) sites – and their marketing tactics have to drive traffic accordingly.

Further changing the hotel marketing landscape is the rise in popularity of the social networking phenomenon with sites like Facebook, MySpace, Twitter, TripAdvisor, etc. Many hoteliers feel that because these sites aren't direct booking channels, they aren't worth considering or including in their marketing plan. But the reality is this - over a quarter (28%) of travelers typically turn to online travel search engines and review sites when shopping for travel - meaning that if hoteliers aren't using these sites to make valuable connections and open dialogues with customers, they will be missing out on revenue earning opportunities.

So what do all these changes mean for you, the hotelier? It means that you'll have lots of questions. And lucky for you, I have some answers; answers to your most burning marketing questions – from public relations, to marketing, to advertising and how these play an important role in the success of your hotel operations. I hereby vow to provide you with the information you need to be more successful in your marketing campaigns. And not just information and theoretical. Actual steps that you can take to implement the campaigns for your property today, to bring success tomorrow.

Did this information help you? If you have other questions, I'd love to hear from you – please don't be shy! Send an email to [jl@travelinkd.com](mailto:jl@travelinkd.com).

And don't forget to check back twice a month for more PR and Marketing Q&As.

*Jennifer Rodrigues, Visibility Specialist with ThinkInk and TravelInk'd, is a seasoned public relations professional with a passion for the hospitality industry, which is expressed in her role at ThinkInk's travel division, TravelInk'd. At TravelInk'd, she is responsible for developing cost-effective and creative public relations and marketing strategies for clients in the travel and tourism, airline, lodging, cruise and meeting/event sectors. For more information on TravelInk'd, please visit [www.travelinkd.com](http://www.travelinkd.com) or contact Jennifer at [jl@travelinkd.com](mailto:jl@travelinkd.com).*

