LEVELING THE PLAYING FIELD

INSIGHTS AND NON-NEGOTIABLES TO MARKETING YOUR LODGING BUSINESS IN THE WISCONSIN DELLS
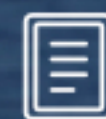
ResortsandLodges.com® FOR BUSINESS

Wisconsin Dells, Wisconsin

Empowering Material

12 Pages

Introduction

ResortsandLodges.com has been online since 1998. With that kind of longevity, we've had the privilege to help, support, and contribute to the advancement of the independent lodging community. Although this industry is very fragmented, our hope is to deliver remarkable content, technology, and think tanks to independent resorts, lodges, and vacation rental management companies. The wealth of data and knowledge we have uncovered from tier one markets like Orlando, Florida to quaint lodging communities in Ontario, Canada, will propel Resorts, Lodges, Rental Companies, RV Parks, and Boutique Hotels to gain an advantage over their competitors.

What do we mean by "Fragmented"?

The independent travel community has operated in a Wild West scenario of sorts, without a lot of best practices or regulations for these unique properties. There's no rule book, no guide for how to put yourself and your brand in front of the right travelers. We're not creating a rule book or regulations. We're here to provide a little clarity and shed some light on the sales and conversion process, while providing some best practices and educational material.

Our vision is to empower the independent lodging company. We've worked with nearly 10,000 lodging properties across the globe and truly understand how difficult it is to stay on the cutting edge with technology or where to position your marketing dollars to drive incremental new customers.

With that thought in mind we are releasing a series of ebooks that will coach independent lodging companies on where to spend those precious marketing and sales dollars to maximize three of the most important words in our industry today: Return on Investment. We believe there is a stirring opportunity to pass along extraordinary benchmarks and reports to our partners that go beyond spending advertising dollars or commissions to vendors. We believe in online resources and applications that not only drive prospective guests, but also collect consumer data, nurture past guests and prospective guests into your funnel, ultimately helping you drive conversions.

The Power of Search   TOP OF FUNNEL

Over 85% of people start at a search engine when looking to purchase a product or service.
source: FleishmanHillard

What is key here?

We know that website visits are essential for creating leads, but how will you get travelers to your website? Well, over 85% of them start the process to purchase a product or service at a search engine. How do we know this? Mostly by the keywords they use to discover and research a product. But, which search engines should you spend the majority of your time and money with to drive visitors to the top of your funnel?

Currently, Google, Bing, and Yahoo! make up over 97% of search results.

97%
combined
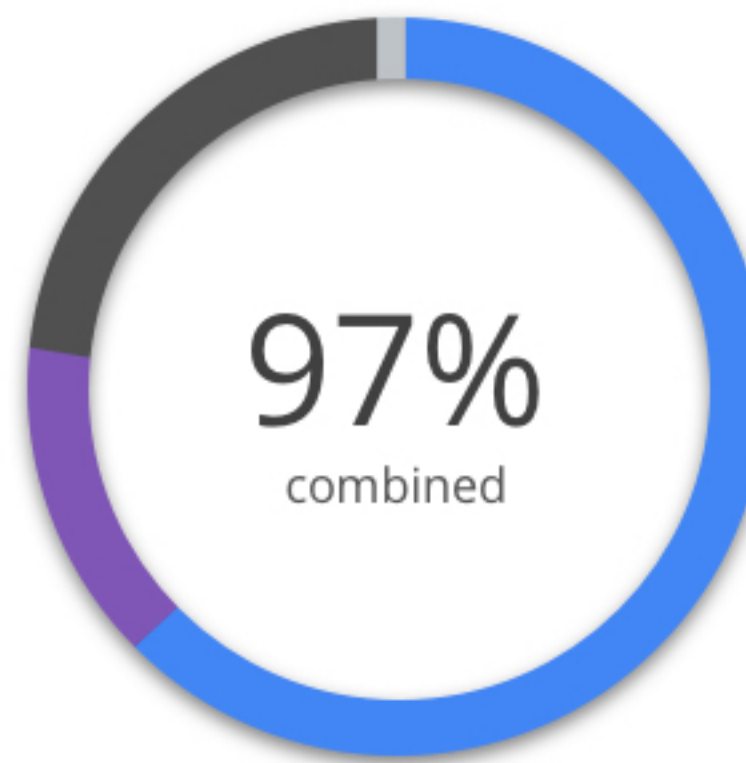
Google
64.4% of search results

Bing
20.1% of search results

Yahoo!
12.7% of search results

source: Search Engine Land

The Shopping Site Experience TOP OF FUNNEL

We know consumers don't just start at a search engine. We as consumers go deeper, we visit Amazon.com, BestBuy.com, Target.com, Expedia.com, Tripadvisor.com and a myriad of other websites. Why do we visit these sites? Because they are typically paying for top placement on Google, Yahoo!, and Bing search result pages. Those top Google Placements receive a 32.5% share of traffic from these search results pages. (Source: "The Value of Google Result Positioning" by Chitika.com, June 2013)

According to Google, the average online travel consumer will visit over 20 websites.

(Source: "Consumers Visit 20 Travel Sites Before Booking - Google" by Travolution.com, April 24, 2009)

To take that a step further, a recent Expedia study found that travelers will visit travel sites 38 times before making a final booking.

(Source: "Retail and Travel Site Visitation Aligns As Consumers Plan and Book Vacation Packages" by Expedia Media Solutions, August 26, 2013)

With so many channels being used, viewed, and flipped through by consumers, how can you be sure you're presenting your business in the right places?

Let's peel the onion back further. Where do these travelers go after they've typed in a keyword? Research shows that 91.7% of them visit sites that are on the first page.

(Source: "The Value of Google Result Positioning" by Chitika.com, June 2013)

If this is the case, the question we must answer is:

"How can I ensure my brand, product or service is on the first page?"

Example of Traveler shopping for lodging and visiting multiple travel sites before booking.

3 NIGHT STAY in the **WISCONSIN DELLS**

RESORT A via RESORTSANDLODGES.COM

RESORT B via BOOKING.COM

RESORT C via EXPEDIA.COM

RESORT D via TRIPADVISOR.COM

The Shopping Site Experience TOP OF FUNNEL

You can spend thousands of dollars to optimize your website for these search engines, but Google, Yahoo!, and Bing change their rules so often that you can use up your entire budget just trying to keep up.

Let's say I type *"Wisconsin Dells used cars"* into Google. Would we visit Chevy.com, Ford.com, Toyota.com, Subaru.com, Honda.com or would we visit Cars.com, WisconsinDellsUsedCars.com, and Carsoup.com?

As we all know from personal experience, 99% of us at some point will go to a shopping site to view all options. We want to compare all types of cars based on filters.

I Want: a used car, with less than 50,000 miles, and has a sunroof.

Finally, let's step into the marketer's shoes trying to get visitors to the lodging property's website or top of the funnel. Let's say I type into Google, *"Resorts in the Wisconsin Dells"*, would we visit WisconsinDellsResorts.com (Chevy.com) or would we vist tripadvisor.com and Resortsandlodges.com (Cars.com CarSoup.com)? We want to compare and contrast all types of resorts in Muskoka based on filters.

I Want: a resort with a price range of $200-$300 per night, with a waterpark and a golf course on the property.

As we start to uncover the power of search and how it connects into the shopping sites, we bring to light amazing listing, advertising, sponsorship, and commission programs that will drive qualified visitors to the top of your funnel.

Average Number of Travel Site Visits per Week Prior to Booking According to US Online Vacation Package Bookers*, March 2013

5 weeks out	2.5
4 weeks out	3.0
	3.4
3 weeks out	5.2
2 weeks out	6.9
Week of booking	15.5
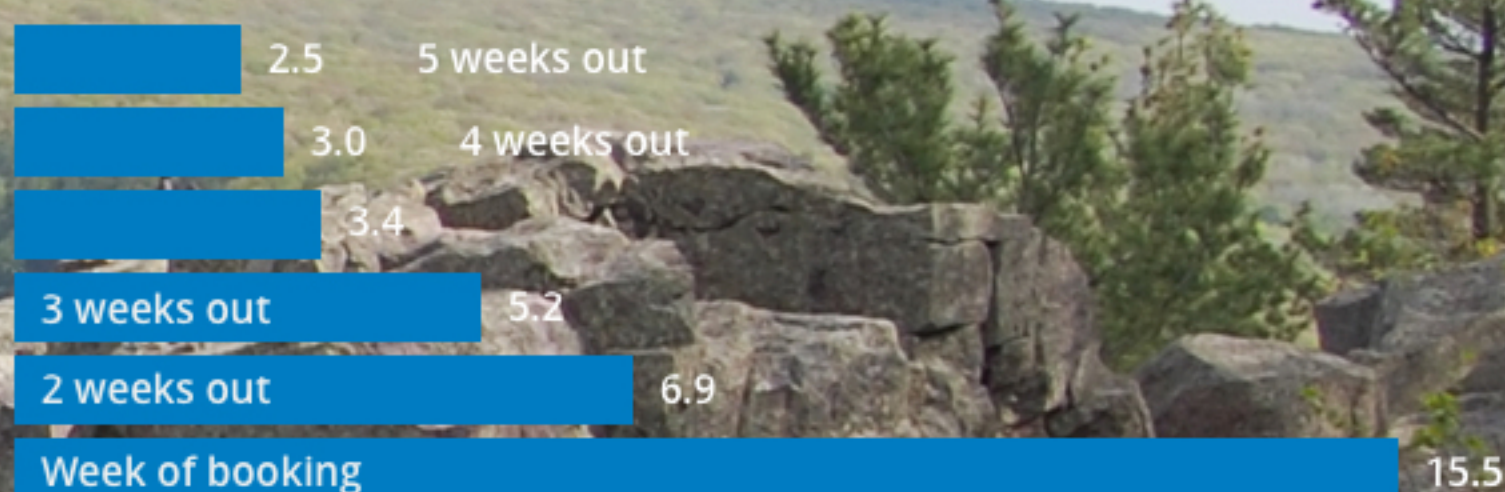
Note: read as the average booker makes 15.5 visits to travel sites in the week leading up to the vacation package booking, on PC's only; *who also visited a destination marketing organization (DMO) website within 45 days before booking.
Source: Expedia Media Solutions, "The Traveler's Path to Purchase" conducted by Millward Brown Digital, August 26, 2013

Qualifying Website Visitors TOP OF FUNNEL

Our philosophy is very simple, however, it's very effective. Given what we've covered in The Power of Search and The Shopping Site Experience, we know that over 90% of guests that check in at your property will, at some point, visit your website.

As we turn our attention to that interaction, the ability to focus on driving those visitors to your website starts to bring clarity;

Filling the top of your funnel is critical to creating leads that turn into bookings.

Here are a few key indicators at the top of the funnel to keep in mind:

1. **Do you have a daily dashboard that you analyze to ensure you have visitors going to your website from your feeder markets?**

2. **Are they spending over 2.5 to 5 minutes on your website?**

3. **Do they bounce under 40% of the time?**

4. **Do they visit 3-10 pages per session?**

5. **What percentage of these sessions are new visitors?**

As you can see, ResortsandLodges.com takes pride in ranking among the top referrers of qualified website visitors for our partner properties. In many cases we are second to only the property's own website.

Source	Visits	Pages/Visit	Avg. Visit Duration	% New Visits	Bounce Rate
1. Brand Site	26,687	3.12	00:02:53	74.34%	32.44%
2. ResortsandLodges.com	7,700	3.60	00:03:15	91.08%	32.36%
3. LuxuryLink.com	7,262	4.07	00:03:45	71.94%	26.66%
4. TripAdvisor.com	6,867	3.89	00:03:44	66.58%	28.47%
5. Groupon.com	4,685	3.55	00:02:29	83.99%	26.02%
6. FLA-Keys.com	4,027	3.41	00:02:46	77.58%	35.86%
7. FamilyGetaway.com	3,588	4.04	00:03:21	83.86%	22.83%
8. TravelWithKids.About.com	2,327	3.10	00:02:05	90.98%	39.02%
9. Facebook.com	2,060	3.03	00:02:20	74.13%	40.19%
10. FloridaKeys.com	2,036	2.92	00:02:13	86.89%	45.63%

Google Analytics of 240 Room Luxury Resort in Florida Keys

Checklist TOP OF FUNNEL

Every lodging property that wants to sell more room nights needs to drive visitors from their top feeder markets to their website. Where do you place your brand or product to increase visitors to your website? ResortsandLodges.com has been online for 17 years. Over the years we've seen visitor flow in nearly 1,000 markets. These are the sites that we have seen deliver a constant and consistent flow of qualified visitors and leads. More qualified visitors and leads result in a higher conversion of those leads into new guests and reservations.

DRIVE visitors to your website, the top of your funnel. Using this sheet as a checklist, here are our recommendations that we believe should be non-negotiables to add to your plan:

State and Local Listing Sites

☐ WisconsinLodging.org
☐ TravelWisconsin.com
☐ Dells.com
☐ WisDells.com
☐ WisVacations.com
☐ MidwestWeekends.com
☐ FamilyVacationCritic.com

Deal Sites

☐ Groupon.com
☐ Amazon Local

Restaurants

Get listed on:

OpenTable.com

National & World Wide Listing Sites

☐ TripAdvisor.com
☐ ResortsandLodges.com
☐ Kayak.com
☐ Homeaway.com (individual vacation rentals)
☐ VRBO.com (individual vacation rentals)
☐ FlipKey.com (individual vacation rentals)
☐ 5StarAlliance.com
☐ MyFamilyTravels.com
☐ BedandBreakfast.com
☐ BBOnline.com
☐ UniqueInns.com
☐ GreatSmallHotels.com
☐ ILoveInns.com
☐ Villas.com
☐ MiniTime.com
☐ TravelWithKids.com
☐ Honeymoon.com
☐ TheFamilyTravelFiles.com
☐ Google (local listing)
☐ Yelp (local listing)

Group Leisure Interest Types

Weddings

☐ TheKnot.com
☐ WeddingWire.com
☐ WisDells.com
☐ Eventective.com
☐ MyWedding.com
☐ Dells.com
☐ WedPlan.com
☐ WeddingMapper.com

Meetings/Corporate

☐ Eventective.com
☐ WisDells.com
☐ Cvent.com
☐ UniqueVenues.com
☐ Dells.com
☐ Punchbowl.com

Family Reunions

☐ WisDells.com
☐ Dells.com
☐ MidwestLiving.com
☐ Eventective.com
☐ FamilyVacationCritic.com

Social Networks

f Post memorable experiences at your property, events in your aera or at your propety, guest success photos/videos. Respond to other posts, join the conversation.

Instagram Post photos of your memorable experiences, post photos of events/festivals you're a part of in your destination.

Twitter Post memorable experiences at your property, events in your are or at your property, guest success photos/videos. Respond to the other posts, join in the conversation.

Pinterest Post photos of memorable experiences as well as events/festivals around your destination.

Filling Your Funnel TOP OF FUNNEL

To understand conversions from website visits to leads, and in turn, from leads to bookings, we can't limit our focus and analysis to the top and bottom of the funnel. We have to consider the nurturing it takes to get them there.

We've had many client consulting sessions over the last decade which has allowed us to develop a set of questions designed to help you to get the most out of your advertising dollars and provide clarity about your leads:

Of the sites bringing you qualified visitors, which are generating leads?

What is the guest value of those leads?

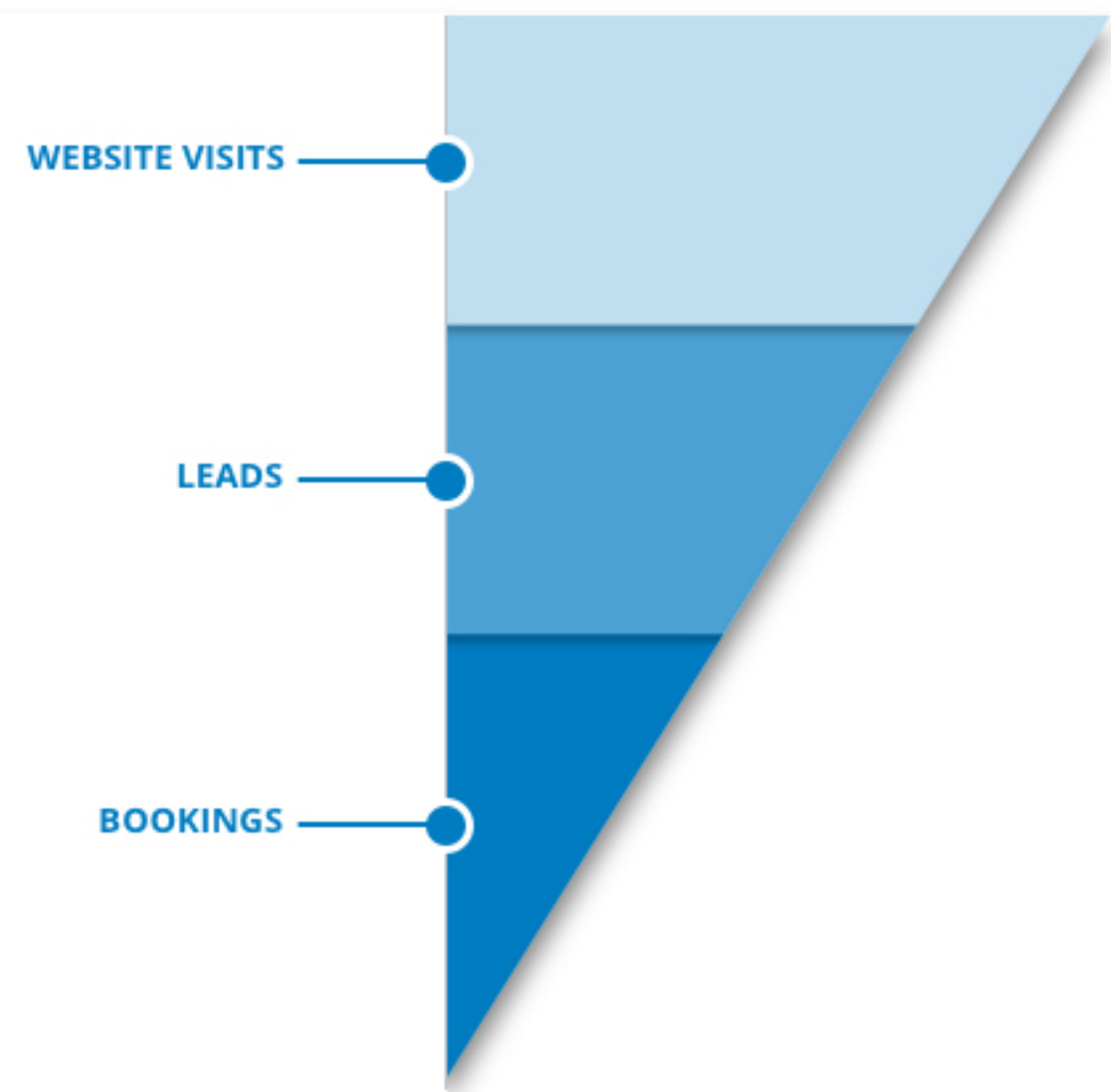How many leads did you receive last month?

How many leads were transient versus group?

Which leads were sent a proposal from your sales team?

Which leads were followed up on? More than once?

What percentage of your leads are booking?

Which leads visited your website, picked up the telephone or emailed you, then went back and booked online?

WEBSITE VISITS

LEADS

BOOKINGS

If left unanswered, you could be missing out on thousands of dollars in incremental revenue and an Outbound Sales Strategy should be put in place or reviewed.

THE PATH TO CONVERSION

TRACK — COLLECT — NURTURE — CONVERT

The most important part of driving conversions is being able to see dashboards and analytics that show which channels will nurture your leads enough to increase your closing percentage.

The Path to Conversion MIDDLE OF FUNNEL

TRACK ○---

Having the basics in place is essential. Google Analytics or a similar service is required so you can see your website visitors, top referrers by feeder city, average time on site, bounce rates and more. Secondly, we need to ensure any marketing channel or listing site that is sending you website visitors has tracking in place for calls, emails and online bookings. This will empower you to maintain consistency with sales and marketing activities that are generating the right cost per website visit, cost per lead, and cost per booking for your property.

Remember, this is critical because you're still receiving the majority of your revenue through the telephone and email. If you can clearly understand where these leads are coming from, you will be able to manage these channels more efficiently to drive more leads while increasing your occupancy and revenue numbers.

Source	Emails	Responded	Closed	%	Revenue	Calls	Collected	Closed	%	Revenue	Online Bookings	Revenue
1. Brand Site												
2. ResortsandLodges.com	100	98	15	15%	$10,000	100	56	25	25%	$15,000	50	$5,000
3. Groupon												
4. TripAdvisor												

NOT REAL DATA. Example data for display of lead conversions.

The Path to Conversion MIDDLE OF FUNNEL

○ COLLECT

Having guardrails in place to collect and store the guest and prospective guest data will help you grow your lead volume. It's relatively easy to collect data from bookings. If guests have stayed with you previously, you'll typically have their guest information including name, address, phone number, email, etc.

Solving the problem of collecting data on the prospective guests during the path to conversion will allow independent companies to unlock lucrative growth opportunities.

If you had 1,000 calls per month last year, that's 12,000 calls. If you booked 20% of those, that's 2,400 bookings you converted. But what about the other 9,600 calls? Did you collect the prospective guest information on those callers that had the intent to book at your property but for some reason didn't purchase? Over 95% of companies we work with aren't being educated about this significant growth opportunity. Think about how powerful proactively emailing and/or calling the remaining 9,600 could be. Could you convert 2% into $500 bookings? That's $96,000 in incremental revenue!

NOT REAL DATA. Example information displayed to show the collection of lead data. Product shown: TRACK Pulse

The Path to Conversion BOTTOM OF FUNNEL

NURTURE

The next activity in The Path to Conversion is empowering the independent lodging community with the tools to nurture the data they've collected. These are just a few of the questions we help our partners answer:

How many leads that were collected have received a call back within 24 hours?

Is there an an outbound sales strategy?

Is there an outbound marketing strategy?

How many leads that were collected have received an email follow-up campaign?

What percentage of the leads that were nurtured with an email and call converted versus the leads that were followed up on with only an email?

Realizing just how powerful nurturing can be allows you the ability to create new channels of revenue by taking advantage of previously untouched leads. Imagine for a moment how hard it is to create leads. Prospective guests do hours of research online before calling or e-mailing to inquire about availability. They've visited 20-30 websites, waded through pages of content, all while comparing room options as well as locations. If they are traveling with a group, they've likely debated the pros and cons of a variety of locations with each group or family member throwing in their two cents.

With all of the work the consumer puts into making an important financial decision, doesn't it make sense for the same effort to be applied when trying to convert the lead into a booking?

Report data for June 1, 2015 - June 8, 2015 from TRACK Pulse customer. Dashed line represents break in results to show Report Totals. Product shown: TRACK Pulse

Agent	Answered	Booked Revenue	Res	Res|Lead Calls	Res|Lead %	Rev / Answered	Rev / Res|Lead	Rev / Booked	Conv %
	30	$0.00	0	0	0%	$0.00	$0.00	$0.00	0%
	295	$82,759.75	39	235	79.66%	$229.05	$287.53	$1,732.54	16.59%
	288	$4,004.00	4	9	3.13%	$13.90	$444.89	$1,001.00	44.44%
	375	$69,440.83	38	285	76.00%	$145.39	$191.30	$1,434.79	13.33%
	189	$2,052.00	1	5	2.65%	$10.86	$410.40	$2,052.00	20.00%
	342	$2,107.67	2	14	4.09%	$6.16	$150.55	$1,053.84	14.28%
	384	$83,572.66	59	310	80.73%	$186.07	$230.49	$1,211.03	19.03%
	153	$1,008.00	1	4	2.61%	$6.59	$252.00	$1,008.00	25.00%
	89	$1,944.33	1	5	5.62%	$21.85	$388.87	$1,944.33	20.00%
	192	$0.00	0	5	2.60%	$0.00	$0.00	$0.00	0%
	264	$36,377.42	28	188	71.21%	$115.07	$161.58	$1,084.92	14.89%
Report Totals:	9146	$864,759.68	529	3385	37.01%	$94.55	$255.47	$1,634.71	15.63%

The Path to Conversion BOTTOM OF FUNNEL

● CONVERT

This part in the path to conversion ends up being the easiest area to understand because it's based entirely around the key reports that show you the levers to pull or the red flags to address. Here is an example of nurturing, and possibly converting, a lead into a booking.

You have a cancellation in July, you open all your leads with all prospective guests that have emailed and called that were interested in booking in July, create the list, send them a last minute offer to rebook your cancellation.

Report data for June 1, 2015 - June 8, 2015 from TRACK Pulse customer.

Leads

Priority	Last Name	Subject	Status	↓ Arrival	Value	Follow Up	Assigned Agent
★★★★☆		Deborah*Summer15	Open	Jul 25, 2015	$0.00	Jun 5, 2015, 12:00:00 AM CDT	
☆☆☆☆☆		cake summer 2015	Closed Lost	Jul 25, 2015	$6,100.00	Jun 5, 2015, 12:00:00 AM CDT	
☆☆☆☆☆		Daniels July 2015	Closed Won	Jul 25, 2015	$3,106.00	Jun 5, 2015, 12:00:00 AM CDT	
★★★☆☆		Candy	Closed Won	Jul 25, 2015	$1,220.00	Jun 4, 2015, 12:00:00 AM CDT	
★★★☆☆		Soniat*Summer15	Open	Jul 19, 2015	$0.00	Jun 4, 2015, 12:00:00 AM CDT	
★★★★★		J*Summer15	Closed Won	Jul 19, 2015	$972.00	Jun 4, 2015, 12:00:00 AM CDT	
★★★★☆		Christy July 2015	Closed Won	Jul 19, 2015	$1,992.00	Jun 3, 2015, 12:00:00 AM CDT	
☆☆☆☆☆		lisa summer 2015	Closed Lost	Jul 18, 2015	$0.00	Jun 5, 2015, 12:00:00 AM CDT	
☆☆☆☆☆		McCain summer 2015	Open	Jul 18, 2015	$0.00	Jun 6, 2015, 12:00:00 AM CDT	
☆☆☆☆☆		Nichole July 2015	Closed Won	Jul 18, 2015	$1,965.00	Jun 2, 2015, 12:00:00 AM CDT	
☆☆☆☆☆		Burks Summer 2015	Open	Jul 18, 2015	$2,000.00	Jun 4, 2015, 12:00:00 AM CDT	
☆☆☆☆☆		Hunter summer 2015	Closed Won	Jul 18, 2015	$2,650.00	Jun 3, 2015, 12:00:00 AM CDT	
★★★★★		Sandy July 2015*****	Closed Lost	Jul 13, 2015	$0.00	Jun 5, 2015, 4:45:00 PM CDT	
★★★☆☆		Wood July 2015	Closed Lost	Jul 12, 2015	$2,826.00	Jun 2, 2015, 12:00:00 AM CDT	
★★★★★		VandiverSummer15	Open	Jul 11, 2015	$0.00	Jun 1, 2015, 12:00:00 AM CDT	
★★★★★		Howard July Family Vacay 2015	Open	Jul 11, 2015	$0.00	Jun 2, 2015, 12:00:00 AM CDT	
★★★★☆		Hay*Summer15	Open	Jul 11, 2015	$0.00	Jun 4, 2015, 12:00:00 AM CDT	
☆☆☆☆☆		johnson summer 2015	Closed Lost	Jul 11, 2015	$1,608.77	Jun 3, 2015, 12:00:00 AM CDT	
★★★★★		Stapleton*Summer15	Open	Jul 11, 2015	$0.00	Jun 3, 2015, 12:00:00 AM CDT	
★☆☆☆☆		Smith Blue Angels Weekend	Closed Won	Jul 9, 2015	$1,163.82	Jun 3, 2015, 12:00:00 AM CDT	
☆☆☆☆☆		Mathews fishing trip 2015	Closed Lost	Jul 9, 2015	$2,369.65	Jun 3, 2015, 12:00:00 AM CDT	
☆☆☆☆☆		Staryak Summer 2015	Open	Jul 7, 2015	$2,000.00	Jun 8, 2015, 12:00:00 AM CDT	
★★★★☆		Pachelski*Summer15	Open	Jul 6, 2015	$0.00	Jun 8, 2015, 12:00:00 AM CDT	
★★★★☆		Bauer July 2015	Closed Won	Jul 5, 2015	$1,944.33	Jun 3, 2015, 12:00:00 AM CDT	
★★★★☆		Boyd July 2015	Closed Lost	Jul 5, 2015	$9,000.00	Jun 3, 2015, 12:00:00 AM CDT	

The Takeaway

There is no simple equation to solve the question of how to market a unique lodging property. We do know this; driving visitors to the top of your funnel will create a constant flow of visitor leads and convert new guests. Visitors will always prefer the "shopping experience", wanting to view multiple travel options at once. How is your property going to stand out against the rest? Over the last 17 years, we've seen what has consistently worked, and we strongly believe that if you add these non-negotiables to your plan, you will be successful in driving visitors to the top of your funnel.

Your friends at,

ResortsandLodges.com®
FOR BUSINESS