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Unity in a Virtual Workplace

How to Unite Disparate Teams to Work as One



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In addition to the large human cost that COVID-19 has had on the world, its effect on the hospitality industry has been unprecedented. Because COVID has taken more jobs out of the office and further online, companies have been forced to look at how they can keep their teams united in the virtual workplace. Having previously written about [silos in the workplace](#), this article looks at the “new norm” for hotels as they seek to unite disparate teams seeking to work as one.

“Normalizing” the New Norm

In disruptive times, where Zoom and Google Meet have replaced the boardroom chat, it's important to stray away from disjointedness and disconnectedness. Now more than ever, as more employees within the sales, marketing and revenue departments in hotels are working from home, it's crucial to keep an eye on teams that may be growing further apart.

For hotels, revenue, sales and marketing teams have traditionally worked in silos as separate entities at hotels. Working separately in the past, building the brand, maximizing revenue and effecting sales were often seen as distinct and independent goals.

But that was then. The same traditional demarcation between the indispensable teams is not sustainable, especially in a post-COVID world, and ultimately impacts the [modern-day traveler](#). Instead, to build more successful campaign results impacting key dates and conversions, the teams in revenue, sales and marketing must unite in an industry already beleaguered by low occupancy and falling profits.

Tech to the Rescue

Even before the pandemic, revenue, sales and marketing have historically worked in separate streams. This has largely been down to owning separate objectives rather than providing the same goal.



Allison Ahrens - President
[Hospitality Revenue Solutions](#)

According to Allison Ahrens, President of Hospitality Revenue Solutions, “Revenue managers should incorporate not only their AI/BI data, but to also use **sales** BI tools & intelligence to design strategy. Sales teams don't look at their tools like a Revenue Manager would. Sales tools give a forward-looking picture specific to group and business transient demand. Sales team direct client engagement gives a personal insight to intelligence. Collectively, you have a holistic formula and confidence in developing specific sales focuses, strategy and marketing campaigns. In turn, refining efforts for peak market and hotel demand periods.”

Whereas revenue managers were concentrating on ramping up occupancy in a market already struggling, the marketers have their hands busy creating advertising and promotions to build greater engagement. Throw the sales team into the mix, aiming to bring in new lines of business, and a disaster is waiting to happen for hotels trying to navigate their new norm.

What has been clear, however, is that new technologies will play an important role in helping hotels streamline their objectives in a post-pandemic world. For this reason, the Revenue team can drive new collaborative opportunities by leveraging the power of big data and AI in driving more business for their hotels. As [Mike Chuma of iDeas Revenue Solutions recently wrote](#), in

light of post-COVID restructuring, “revenue managers are likely to become more entwined in every aspect of hotel operations, [including] sales and marketing.”

This entails that the Revenue Manager will need to actively share their actionable trends and data for the Director of Sales and Marketing to act on. Although Sales and Revenue have been previous sources of tensions--where opportunities brought in by the former are to be signed off by the latter--the Director of Sales can still play an important role reimagining the hotel’s key objectives.

Where can Revenue pitch in when analyzing new business opportunities? After all, with all the numbers at hand, the leadership in Revenue can give key insights into where new lines of business can evolve as well as how to develop existing links.



“Rather than act as a gatekeeper, Revenue Managers can take advantage of the important insights they have at their disposal. Whether it be customer behavior or new technology spend, the Revenue Manager holds all the cards when utilizing tech to the hotel’s advantage.”

Mitch Berman, Vice President of Sales, Marketing, & Revenue
Paramount Hospitality Management

“Hotels revenue, sales and marketing strategies must be cohesive to optimize revenues” says Allison Ahrens. “New leadership roles should have a mix of experience incorporating revenue data, strategy and sales acumen. Hotels that miss this blend of skill set in their leaders will undermine the success of hotel revenue optimization. Those that do will avoid conflicting department strategies that cause revenue loss, not gains.”



Revenue Management must work cross-functionally with Sales and Marketing to achieve common goals.

Unity in the Virtual Workplace

How well do your teams understand one and other? For example, does your sales or marketing team know about demand as well as the revenue team does? On the other hand, what marketing strategies are the revenue or sales team aware of?

These might be important questions for departments to ask of each other. If the answer is “very little” or “not a whole lot”, the hotel might want to take the opportunity to cross-train the departments so that they have a more intimate knowledge of how each team works towards their objectives. It remains the case that the most important way to bring revenue, sales and marketing together is to recognize what assets each team has that they can offer each other in providing guests the most meaningful travel experiences.

In 2018, [CCO Wendy Stevens of First Hospitality Group used the example](#) of how providing the Revenue management team with social media data would encourage them to factor customer sentiment into how aggressively they can price their rates. “There is growing recognition across the industry that is bringing meaningful value in inter-departmental cross-training,” Stevens went on to say.

According to Allison Ahrens, this type of collaboration is what can make the difference. “Revenue, sales and marketing must work holistically to achieve a stronger foundation in today’s travel environment.”



Zoom is an effective tool to maintain communication between remote teams.

Maintaining Communication when Working from Home

As the future of work changes, Revenue, Sales and Marketing must avoid operating independently from one another or they can risk jeopardizing the overall ambitions of the hotel. Communication can be the most critical way to bring the disparate teams together. And an organization that prioritizes communication can best serve their underlying goals.

But with more options to connect online, so too are there opportunities to miscommunicate. Although the days of meeting in-person and water-cooler may not be part of the new norm, making sure that close social ties remain at the hotel will be essential for your customer.

“Focus on the ties that bind your people together,” said a [recent report by McKinsey](#) when predicting many businesses would have hybrid remote/on-site workforce. “Pay heed to core aspects of your own leadership and that of your broader group of leaders and managers.”

At a time where we're more connected virtually, this might require leaders to communicate more, not less. Weekly participation in revenue meetings and one-off meetings for special campaigns where teams can touch base will be crucial in maintaining these ties between departments. Meetings, even if occurring online, may also have to increase in frequency to ensure that Sales, Revenue or Marketing teams feel as they are being heard.



Pro-Tip

According to Mitch Berman at Paramount Hospitality Management, “Whether it be over Slack or your own company intranet, regular communication is key to ensuring your different departments stay on message and on brand, as well as making sure everyone feels good to be part of the same team. This functional communication filters down to how to speak to your guests as well.”

The next couple of years are likely to bring more uncertainty to hotels looking to navigate the new norm in hospitality. However, by embracing new technological tools, Revenue Managers can take the lead in providing the Marketing and Sales teams with actionable insights that can drive more business to the hotel.

It will also be important for these teams to share their knowledge across teams to ensure that collaboration also relies on collective wisdom. Which is why, above all, at a time when teams are likely to be disrupted by the new norm of teams working from home, communication between the departments remains all-important in remaining a cohesive unit.

This is one in a [series of essays by John Smallwood](#), CEO of Travel Outlook Premium Reservations Call Center about voice reservations, the second most profitable revenue channel.



John Smallwood, CEO



About [Travel Outlook](#)

In addition to the unique use of world-class call center technology, Travel Outlook is the only call center certified by Kennedy Training Network, the hotel industry's best source for sales training and guest service excellence. Its luxury call team is tested by Forbes and Kennedy each month. Travel Outlook's clients include many of the world's finest hotels and resorts.



Allison Ahrens – President



About [Hospitality Revenue Solutions](#)

Hospitality Revenue Solutions offers a holistic look at hospitality; from ownership to line level associate, we have experience on all levels of the hotel & resort industry. Our task force teams present strategic plans of development to ensure your organization meets its goals.

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