

Hotel Business Review

Social Media & Public Relations

Is Your Hotel Flying Blind on Twitter?

By Ann Manion, President, Hotel Advantage



Ms. Manion

According to Twitter's company blog, in 2010 Twitter added 100 million new accounts and the company grew their staff from 130 to 350 people. In September 2010, engagement was reported at 175 million users, and predictions say Twitter will reach 200 million users in 2011.

Twitter helps your hotel create open, friendly and informal conversations. It's a satisfying means of communicating when you consider its ability to instantly connect you with others, and hailed for its unique and efficient 140-character limit.

Hotels use Twitter in the following ways:

1. Marketing and Sales Channel

@THETALBOTTHOTEL

KEEP A LOOK OUT FOR OUR THREE NEW AMERICAN GIRL PLACE PACKAGES. SHOULD BE BOOKABLE SOON THROUGH OUR WEBSITE ONLY FOR ALL OF 2011!

2. Listening Tool

@AMBERCADABRA

SERIOUSLY. AND THIS EFFING HOTEL STAFF IS JUST CALLING THEIR VALET STAFF AND HOPING SOMEONE HAS THE KEYS. AND GIVING ME ATTITUDE.

3. Guest Relationship Management Tool

@HYATTCONCIERGE

YOU'RE WELCOME! HAPPY NEW YEAR! RT @MARLEYWING: @HYATTCONCIERGE THANKS FOR FOLLOWING UP WITH OUR PROBLEM. THAT'S TRUE CUSTOMER SERVICE.

The best Twitterers I follow advance their hotel when dispensing a tweet mix that covers all of these areas. These are digital facilitators that have a clear content strategy and have succeeded in creating a persuasive and dynamic marketing instrument to attract business.

The Charles Hotel: A Twitter Superstar

One of the best hotel Twitterers around is Elizabeth Stefan, E-Commerce Marketing Manager of The Charles Hotel in Cambridge, MA. She's crafted an online voice that's engaged more than 4500 people. It's worth noting that your Twitter influence is measured by number of engaged followers, not total followers.

Elizabeth's mastery of Twitter led to The Charles Hotel earning recognition as [@Gadling's Social Media Superstar of 2010](#), crushing the competition which included Four Seasons, Ritz-Carlton and Hyatt. This underscores an important point: today it's not the size of your hotel that gives you a competitive advantage, but the speed at which your hotel can respond quickly in delivering guest value.

Twitter is all about what's happening now, and Elizabeth excels at sharing the pulse of her Harvard Square backyard with the world. Sponsorship from her General Manager Alex Attia has helped her be an early adopter to emerging trends, as evidenced by her tweet greetings to foursquare patrons when they "check-in", and her invites to Mad Men parties and hashtag tweetups at their swanky bar Noir.

Elizabeth's tweets are marketing driven, but never solicitous or boastful. She tweets out guest appreciation, recognizes her Harvard Square neighbors, and displays confidence when giving an online nod to the achievements of her competitors. Here's a sample of Elizabeth's Tweet Mix:

- **Shout Out to Neighbors:**

A BIG THANK YOU TO @UPSTAIRSONTHESQ FOR LETTING US COME OVER FOR OUR SECRET SANTA EXCHANGE. WE HAD A GREAT TIME!

- **Advertise Events**

KIDS COOKING CLASSES RETURN TO HENRIETTA'S TABLE IN FEBRUARY! [HTTP://OW.LY/3NJ38](http://ow.ly/3NJ38)

- **Applaud Competitors**

CONGRATS ON A GREAT FEATURE RT @COLONNADE: RT @VIRGINDOTCOM: SUSTAINABLE TOURISM - THE BOSTON COLONNADE HOTEL GOES GREEN [HTTP://OW.LY/3JK0U](http://ow.ly/3JK0U)

- **Spark Appetites**

WINTER IS HERE! WARM UP AT HENRIETTA'S TABLE W THE YANKEE POT ROAST, INCL ON @TIMEOUTBOSTON 'S LIST OF "20 DISHES TO TRY" [HTTP://OW.LY/3KUGK](http://ow.ly/3KUGK)

- **Welcome Back Guests**

@GRETCHENBOSTROM - WE CAN'T WAIT TO WELCOME YOU BACK. DO YOU ALREADY HAVE A RESERVATION?

- **Connect with Industry** JUST HAD A GREAT MEETING W/ ANN FROM @HOTELADVANTAGE. WE LIKE HOW SHE THINKS! CHECK HER OUT FOR SOCIAL MEDIA ADVICE

- **Thank Customers**

THX FOR JOINING US! RT @CH3RYL: LOVELY DINNER @CHARLESHOTEL NEAR HARVARD SURROUNDED BY ELEGANTLY DRESSED PEOPLE! HTTP://4SQ.COM/6FCP2F

- **Incent New Customers**

@MEGBUT - WE'D LOVE TO WELCOME YOU TO THE CHARLES! WE OFFER A TWITTER RATE - 10% DISCOUNT. USE TWI TO BOOK - HTTP://OW.LY/3JWXG

- **Share Hotel Developments**

WE'RE RENOVATING OUR 3RD FLOOR THIS WINTER! TAKE A SNEAK PEEK AT THE PRELIMINARY DESIGNS - HTTP://OW.LY/340ML

- **Tweet Travel Tuesday Specials**

GETAWAY THIS JANUARY W OUR #TRAVELTUESDAY SALE - \$179/NIGHT FOR A DELUXE ROOM FROM JAN 18-31ST. ONLINE & TODAY ONLY! HTTP://OW.LY/3G8OS

- **Show Humanity**

HUGE THANK YOU TO EVERYONE THAT BOOKED OUR #THANKSGIVING PACKAGE! YOU HELPED US RAISE \$450 FOR @GR8BOSFOODBANK!

Twitter Attracts Traffic to Your Website

Guests today suspect they'll pay a higher rate booking a room on your website. And marketing campaigns that holler "Where You Book Matters" reinforce consumers' behavior to visit 3rd party sites first. Twitter can help you offer real time incentives so guests make your website their first stop.

Blend Twitter into your promotional mix by offering Twitter-only rates, rewards, and invitations. Your tweet mix can include links so you can trackback and measure results. Focus on tweeting offers that give exclusive value to Twitter loyalists.

- @SEAPORTBOSTON

FOLLOWERS, WE'RE OFFERING YOU A \$129 RATE THIS WKND, 1/15 - 1/17! USE FOLLOWUS WHEN MAKING RESERVATIONS - SEE YOU THEN! HTTP://OW.LY/3CSNZ

- @FAIRMONTHOTELS

TWITTER-ONLY @FAIRMONTLAURIER - \$139/NIGHT FEB 11-15. BASED ON AVAIL, USE PROMO CODE PWTW HTTP://BIT.LY/IE12MO #FHRDEAL

Can you Say SEXY BLOGGA?

Developing a magnetic online voice isn't easy, and writing for social media is completely different than writing traditional marketing copy. It takes time to hone an authentic and compelling online voice. Be patient, but get going.

Whether you're a politician, celebrity or business, Twitterers need to strike a tone consistent with their brand identity. Kim Kardashian's online voice has attracted nearly six million. Consider how this tweet promotes while also making a splash of her brand and personality:

- @KIMKARDASHIAN

WOW! SO EXCITED THAT @MARKWSCHAEFER WILL BE IN THE ADS FOR MY NEW PERFUME LINE. CAN YOU SAY SEXY BLOGGA?

Don't Hide Behind Your Logo

An anonymous online voice is less interesting, and people like following other people. Occasionally let your followers know the people behind the tweets.

- @RSHOTEL

@HOTELGANSEVOORT THANKS! COME BY AND HAVE LUNCH W @EKROGERSMITH & ME SOMETIME OR WE WILL COME HANG OUT THERE! -ADAM

- @CHARLESHOTEL

WE WOULD LOVE THAT! @FUNFEARLESSBEAN @BOSTONBRUNCHERS. FEEL FREE TO EMAIL ME ... ESTEFAN(AT)CHARLESHOTEL.COM . THX ~ELIZABETH

Turning Around a Twitter Critic

What happens if a social media power user turns to Twitter to vent? That's exactly what happened to [one Chicago Hotel](#) last year when they awoke to a firing squad of angry tweets aimed directly at their property.

Because this hotel monitored their brand online, they were prepared to set in motion a real time response. This included personal calls to the unhappy guest, an apology on their Facebook page, and a series of tweets that shed light on corrective action taken. In short order, the guest was satisfied with the hotel's response and wrote about the happy ending in her blog that was tweeted to her more than 34,000 followers.

Ten Community Building Tweets

1. **Address Customer Dissatisfaction**

@KIMPTON

@BLAIRANGELA UH OH. SOUNDS LIKE THERE'S A PROBLEM. CAN WE HELP? EMAIL US @TWITTER@KIMPTONHOTELS.COM WITH MORE INFO AND WE'LL TRY 2 ASSIST.

2. **Thank Guests for Referrals**

@FOURSEASONS
@JULIENDORDELLIE THANKS FOR RECOMMENDING US!

3. Invite Loyalty

@LEADINGHOTELS
ARE YOU IN THE CLUB? JOIN OUR LOYALTY PROGRAM & ENJOY UPGRADES, LATE CHECK-OUT, BREAKFAST AND INTERNET AT OUR HOTELS :) [HTTP://OW.LY/3BLO0](http://ow.ly/3BLO0)

4. Create Some Drama

@RSHOTEL
FEELING SPONTANEOUS? STUCK IN NYC TONIGHT? ONE FREE ROOM TONIGHT FOR THE 1ST PERSON TO CLAIM IT! EMAIL ME, ADAM@ROGERSMITH.COM

5. Drive Incremental Sales

@HYATTCONCIERGE
@PHATKATSISTAA I COULD NOT AGREE MORE, OUR PILLOWS ARE AMAZING! YOU CAN PURCHASE THEM ON OUR HYATT AT HOME WEBSITE. [HTTP://BIT.LY/ATTWW1](http://bit.ly/attww1)

6. Get Votes

@JDVHOTELS
LAST DAY TO VOTE! JDVHOTELS IS A FINALIST IN THE SUSTAINABLE INDUSTRIES' READERS' CHOICE AWARDS! PLEASE VOTE VIA [HTTP://BIT.LY/HWY8VR](http://bit.ly/hwy8vr)

7. Just Because

@COLONNADE
EVERY TIME THE NEWS REPORTS THAT THE PRESIDENT WALKS THE "COLONNADE" - OUR TWITTER STREAM FILLS UP: [HTTP://J.MP/HPCPHQ](http://j.mp/hpcphq)

8. Let Others in on the Action

@JDVHOTELS
MONDAY FUN: GUESS WHICH @JDVHOTELS IS THE BACKGROUND FOR THIS VIDEO - WHEAT THINS COMMERCIALS ARE UBER REAL [YOUTUBE.COM/WATCH?V=-PV1BF](http://youtube.com/watch?v=-PV1BF)

9. Brag About Staff

@LARKSPURHOTELS
CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR VERY OWN TYLER LAYTON ON BEING SELECTED AS THE OUTSTANDING LODGING EMPLOYEE OF THE YEAR [HTTP://FB.ME/FJ2R23I8](http://fb.me/FJ2R23I8)

10. Welcome Guests via Hashtags

@RSHOTEL
LOOKING FORWARD TO ALL OF THE FOLKS FROM #REBCNY ARRIVING TONIGHT!

Five Twitter No Nos

1. **Don't stack Tweets.** Twitter is about sharing with your followers what is happening right now. Unplug when you need to and know that followers will anticipate your return.
2. **Don't auto direct message people,** this is spam.
3. **Don't tweet unremarkable babble.** Good morning tweets are benign and unless your talking about the next Long Island Express barreling up the east coast about to land on your New England Resort, I'm not all that interested in your weather report.
4. **Don't use Twitter as a broadcast medium to direct sell** nothing will get you unfollowed faster.
5. **Don't auto follow others; be selective.** Following everyone who follows you clogs your newsfeed and distracts you from more important reputation management activities.

The Bottom Line

Today the online space is littered with abandoned, dormant and lackluster hotel Twitter accounts. The most important thing about any social media initiative, including Twitter, is to make a full commitment to the effort before jumping in. Your Twitter program should include a business objective, content strategy, marketing integration, Twitterer training, and all-important sponsorship at the top from a boss who's got a real time mind-set.

Ann Manion is a distinguished marketing professional with more than 25 years of hospitality management experience. At Hotel Advantage, she specializes in showing hotels how to create a 21st century guest experience and build a strong online reputation that attracts more guests. Ms. Manion has an MBA in Service Marketing from Simmons College, a BSBA in Hotel, Restaurant and Resort Management from the Daniel's College of Business at the University of Denver, studied International Tourism at London's Richmond College, and holds certifications from the Culinary Institute of America. Ms. Manion can be contacted at 617-531-1672 or ann@thehoteladvantage.com

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