

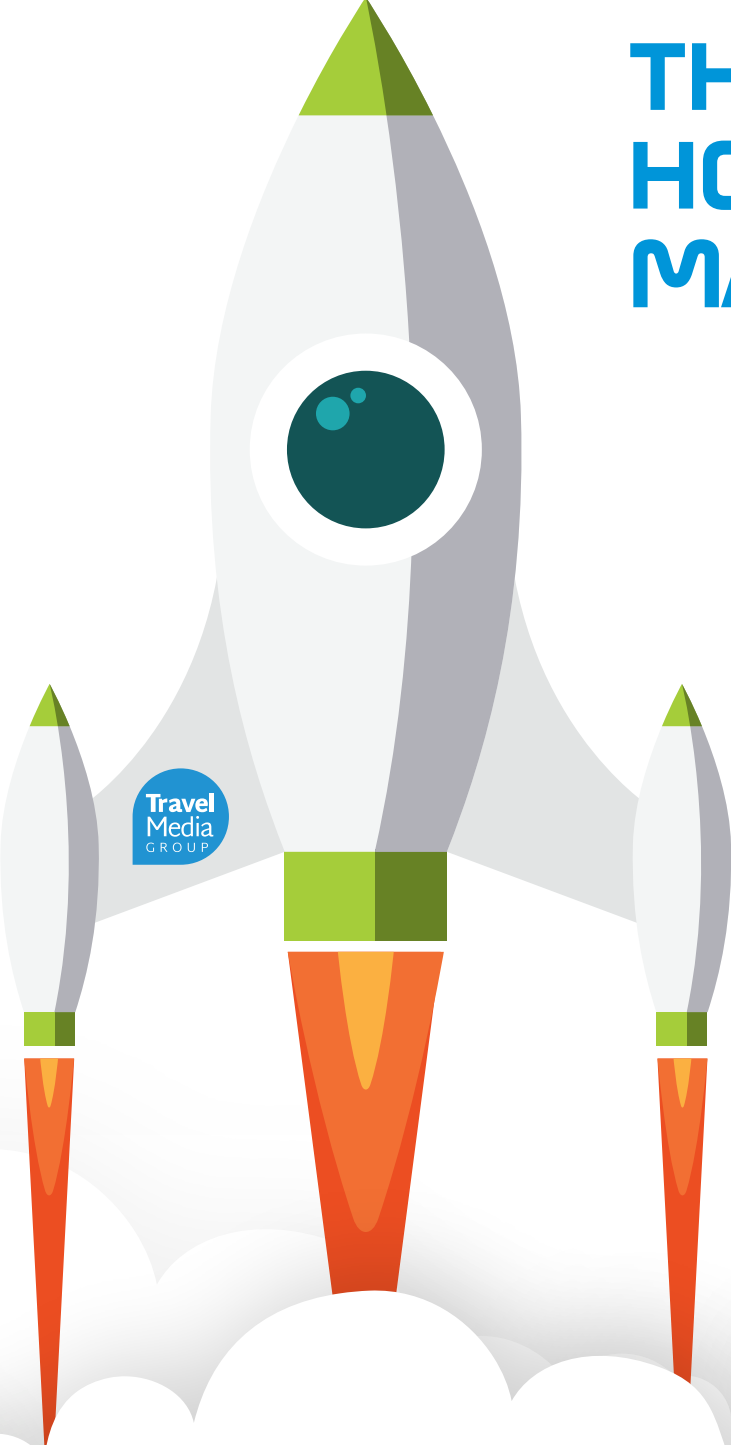


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# THE ESSENTIAL HOTEL LAUNCH MARKETING PLAN

By: Travel Media Group (June 2016)

# THE ESSENTIAL HOTEL LAUNCH MARKETING PLAN



According to research from STR, more than 865 hotels and 103,000 hotel rooms are under construction with plans to open in 2016. Whether a property is a completely new build or undergoing expansive renovations, a hotel launch marketing plan is essential to the success of a property.

Hoteliers spend months – even years – making important decisions to get the property ready for its grand opening. From review blueprints to selecting bedding and toiletries, every detail matters. Unfortunately, many hoteliers miss some vital components to opening a new hotel: digital marketing initiatives.

With this easy-to-follow guide to developing an effective hotel marketing plan, hoteliers can count on high occupancy on opening day and set themselves up for success in the years to come.

# 12 MONTHS TO OPENING

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You're a year away from opening your doors, but it's already time to start claiming your space online. You've already purchased the property and are starting plans to build – you need to do the same thing with your online presence. Making a space for your property online is easier than you think.


# 12 MONTHS TO OPENING



## 1. Purchase a vanity URL for your website.

Even if you are associated with a major hotel chain or brand, it's incredibly important to have your own vanity website. Maintaining a vanity website for your property gives travelers a commission-free channel for booking. It also gives you the freedom to showcase the best features of your hotel.

When travelers search for a hotel on a brand website, the results will include all of the hotels in your area. A vanity hotel website removes the competition from the equation while reducing reliance on the OTAs.

 Select a URL that includes the city name and other descriptors (airport, university, highway name) that a traveler might be searching for when seeking lodging in your area. For example, [bworldairport.com](http://bworldairport.com) would likely help you reach more travelers in the search results than [bestwesternorl.com](http://bestwesternorl.com).


## 2. Build your website landing page.

You may not be ready to build out your entire website yet, but that's OK. It's important to get started with the essentials at least 12 months prior to opening. At minimum, your website landing page should include:


- ✓ Hotel Name
- ✓ Hotel Address
- ✓ Hotel Phone Number
- ✓ Anticipated Opening Date
- ✓ Links to Social Networks

## 3. Claim & create social media accounts.

In the same way you've claimed your hotel's new vanity URL, it's important to claim your username and profiles on major social networks. Creating profiles on Facebook and Twitter are not negotiable – every hotel should have a presence on these websites. We also recommend claiming your profile on Pinterest and Instagram, even if you're not ready to use them yet.

 Make your social network profiles/usernames match your vanity URL. This will make it easier for travelers and search engines to find you online.

# 6 MONTHS TO OPENING



Can you believe you're just six months away from the grand opening of your hotel? In the midst of hundreds of important decisions to make and deadlines to meet, digital marketing might be the last thing on your mind. However, tackling these three simple to-do list items will have a significant impact on the success of your hotel opening.

# 6 MONTHS TO OPENING

## 1. Update/create your online listings.

Whether you're building a property from the ground up or doing a major renovation on an existing property, listing management is something you cannot afford to overlook. There are hundreds of online directories and listing websites that travelers can use to find a hotel – it's vital that the address and information about your property is consistent and accurate on all of these websites.

Accurate listings are also important when it comes to search engine optimization (SEO). Search engines like Google and Bing use listings to verify local businesses, meaning that the higher the quantity and quality of your local listings, the more search engines will trust your website.



**Using a listing management service can save you tons of time. Services like the one Travel Media Group offers will allow you to update all of your listings at once, including on GPS devices.**

## 2. Share your progress.

Start growing your audience on social media by posting engaging photos of your property's construction. By posting photos of each step of the building and design process, your followers will feel connected to the hotel. Social media is the best way to build personal and lasting connections with your guests. By the time of your grand opening, your fans will want to experience the property in person!


## 3. Build out your vanity website.

It's time to begin building your vanity website. For a typical hotel, one page should be made each for rooms, amenities, nearby attractions and a photo gallery. For full-service hotels, we also recommend pages for spas, restaurants, events, weddings and more. This is your opportunity to tell the story about your hotel without the restricting layout of your brand page. Showcase all of the details that make your hotel a truly memorable experience for your guests.



**Ensure your website is completely responsive so that it provides a good user experience on mobile, tablet and desktop devices. Consult an SEO specialist or marketing company to be sure your website is formatted properly and set to be indexed by search engines.**

# 3 MONTHS TO OPENING



At three months away from the big opening day, it's time for you to begin accepting reservations at your property. Set an occupancy goal for your first week of business and do everything you can to drive bookings to your vanity website.

# 3 MONTHS TO OPENING

## 1. Run a grand opening special.

Don't just wait around and hope that reservations will come in. Come up with a grand opening special that will still give you good margins – yet also entice guests to book with you. Perhaps you can provide champagne and strawberries for each 2+ night stay during your first month open, or maybe you can offer a 4th night free. Whatever you decide to offer your first guests, make sure it's a positive experience they'll want to share.



**Get the word out by advertising your promotion locally on Facebook, targeting based on key demographics like age and zip code. Reach out to local bloggers and invite them to stay for free if they'll provide a feature about the new property on their website.**

## 2. Share all the details.

As you make decisions about things like bedding and toiletries, share updates on social media. You'll be surprised how much a photo of a deluxe suite, a whirlpool spa or bath amenities can encourage guests to book with you.



**Social media is highly visual. Take your photos in good lighting and from creative angles to increase visual interest. If you're lacking confidence in your photography abilities, ask a family member or friend who loves to post on Instagram to help you take some photos.**

## 3. Share your URL.

As you prepare materials such as table tents, posters and the letterhead for your folios, make sure you include your vanity website address along with your property information. A key to increasing direct booking is to encourage return guests to visit your website directly rather than search on the brand.com website. Remember, the brand website is displaying you along with your nearby competition! Making it as easy as possible to find your website will help you stay ahead of the competition.


## 4. Invite local & trade press to tour the property.

Now is the time to get some positive PR going in your local area. Three months ahead of your grand opening, send out invitations to local press and to trade publications offering a tour of your brand new property. News coverage can make a big impact on the reputation of your property in town. When it comes to the trade publications, highlight the unique features of your property and things you are doing to set your property apart from the rest.



# GRAND OPENING

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If you've completed all of our suggestions so far, your grand opening should be more exciting than stressful! You've already built up your social media following and secured reservations for your first few months of service. Now what?

# GRAND OPENING

## 1. Hold a grand opening event.

Whether it's a traditional ribbon cutting, a family-friendly pool party or an upscale happy hour, holding a grand opening event is a great way to get locals to visit your brand new property. It's not just about attracting them to take a staycation – these locals will be your best brand advocates when they have family and friends coming to town or need to organize an event at a local property.



Share photos from the grand opening event on your social networks (especially Facebook!) and encourage attendees to share the photos with their friends.

## 2. Update your website.

Keep the information on your website as accurate as possible to help guests know your doors are open. Remove any text or media with your anticipated opening date and replace it with an exciting "open for business" message.

## 3. Update your listing management service.

Now that the hotel is open, it's time to check your listing management information for accuracy. Ensure that your photos and videos are updated following the final renovations, and verify that your contact information is accurate and that every listing links to your vanity URL.

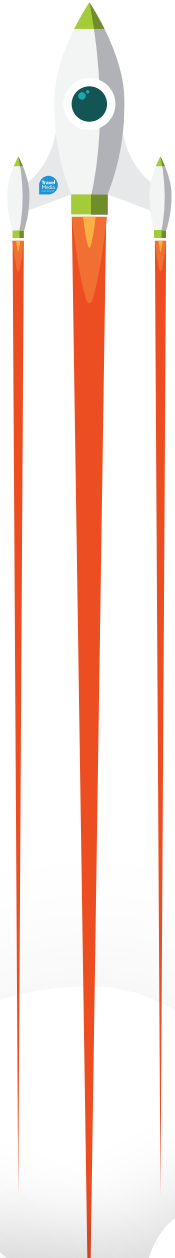


Listing management isn't a "one-and-done" strategy. Your hotel is changing all the time and you never know what the future will hold. Listing management ensures your claim on your property online, so you'll easily be able to update your listings as your amenities, photos and even your flag changes.

*I have been using Travel Media for about 9 or 10 years, every property I have managed has increased sales every year. I highly recommend them to all the owners that I have worked for."*


– Kerry Crocker, Willow Tree Inn & RV Park

# GRAND OPENING




## 4. Capture guest email addresses.

Both at the grand opening event and as guests check in to your property, one of the most important things you need to do is obtain their email addresses. This will enable you to request feedback on their experience at your property, email them about future events and specials, and even remarket to them using advertising on search engines and social networks.

 **By making this a part of your check-in process from the start and including email collection in your front desk training, it will be much easier to maintain this process than if you try to introduce this task into employees' routines later.**


## 5. Display marketing collateral at the property.

Use a mixture of table tents, posters and window clings to direct your guests to social media. By displaying these items in high-traffic areas such as the breakfast buffet, the elevator and the front desk, you'll begin building your audience on Facebook and Twitter.

 **Include an incentive for following you on social media, such as a sweepstakes.**

## 6. Add guest feedback to your website.

The positive reviews on TripAdvisor and Google should start rolling in as soon as you begin checking in guests. Add a widget or a webpage on your vanity website to display positive reviews. You can also share these reviews on social media.

 **Sign up for a service that alerts you via email or text message each time a new review is posted. This is the best way to leverage positive reviews and ensure a timely response to negative feedback.**

*Travel Media Group has provided a platform to share with the travel world the success we've achieved at our property. The power of positive reviews has been the biggest reason that we've been able to double our revenue in less than 5 years. If you have a property that's doing most everything right but can't fill your rooms, I highly recommend this program. The ROI is the best I've seen in 25 years with everything else a distant second.*

– Marco Gastelo, Kings Inn San Diego

# ON-GOING MARKETING

As every hotelier knows, your job has only just begun when the doors open and the first guests check in. Engaging in digital marketing on a regular basis is vital to your success as a hotelier. According to a study by Vocus, 85% of customers expect businesses to be active on social media. Sprout Social reported that 52% of travelers were so influenced by social media that they changed their original travel plans. These statistics are staggering, and they are consistent with modern booking and travel planning behavior.

## Best Practices:

- ✓ Post at least 4 times per week on Facebook & Twitter
- ✓ Share behind the scenes photos and employee spotlights on social media
- ✓ Hold regular sweepstakes on your Facebook page
- ✓ Analyze guest feedback to guide decisions for property improvements
- ✓ Solicit online reviews from your customers following check-out
- ✓ Share positive reviews on social media and your website
- ✓ Ensure your website is fully responsive and stay updated on mobile trends
- ✓ Respond to online reviews within 48 hours of posting
- ✓ Consistently check the accuracy of your online listings & website



Are you ready for launch? Partner with Travel Media Group and we'll help you each step of the way. [Learn more on the next page.](#)





# HOTEL DIGITAL MARKETING SUCCESS



Launching the digital presence for a new hotel online can seem daunting – from social media to websites to reputation management and local listings, there’s so much to do. For more than 30 years, hoteliers have trusted Travel Media Group to help increase their revenue through commission-free booking.



*I recommend these services to any hotel that wants to spend more time with direct customer service and let Travel Media Group spend the time in getting our hotel out there on the world wide web. Travel Media Group offers an all inclusive package that includes website building, social media marketing, web based coupons, and customer service that is outstanding. I could not have been as successful in the marketing at Vacationland Inn without them on our side. Also, key note they are very affordable. Thank you to the whole team at Travel Media Group. We appreciate you very much.*

– Leeanne Hewey, Vacationland Inn & Conference Center

Let Travel Media Group help you launch your digital presence online! Contact us today at 888.855.2590 or [info@travelmediagroup.com](mailto:info@travelmediagroup.com).

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