THE YEAR AHEAD

Strategies to Lead Your Hotel Sales Team to Success in 2021

SalesAndCatering.com

Contents

SalesAndCatering.com

Sales & Catering Software Solution

As we look to 2021 and beyond, all eyes are on the hospitality industry's rebound as we brace for the impact of pent-up travel and event demand. As we prepare for the new landscape,

hoteliers are encouraged to consider the following questions:

- (!) How can hotel sales teams do more with less?

- (!) How can hoteliers leverage proposals to maximize sales?

- (!) What features and qualities should hoteliers look for when selecting a technology partner in 2021 and beyond?

Over the last year, our world was dramatically reshaped, but many sectors — especially hospitality — are ready to get back to business. With the right tools, processes, and partnerships in place, hotels can ensure they are primed for recovery.

So the question becomes… are you ready?

How Hotel Sales Teams Can Sell More

Throughout the last year, those employees who have remained steadfast in their roles now enter the workplace with heightened responsibilities and, in many cases, limited resources. And at the helm of the ship, we have the sales team who, in the coming months, will be tested more than ever before.

With this in mind, hoteliers are encouraged to look at their technology through a new lens. How can you better leverage available platforms to do the heavy lifting for sales professionals and, in turn, allow them to focus on other tasks that help to drive revenue?

To maintain forward momentum on a path to recovery, hoteliers need to empower their sales staff with tools and platforms that, quite simply, allow them to do more with less.

The Problem:

Building efficiencies into hotel sales managers' daily work lives starts with the technology and software they are using. Unfortunately, not having the proper tools needed to succeed contributes to an inefficient work environment and frustrations. These challenges include:

- Outdated software
- Over-engineered software
- Systems with limited functionality
- A newly introduced system that is still in their infancy stage
- No software at all
- Software no one likes to use

Having the wrong system, or no system, in place, can be the enemy of staff productivity. And although this isn't a new observation, it bears repeating as hotels brace to 'return to business' with a smaller staff, heightened guest expectations, and a longer list of safety protocols to adhere to.
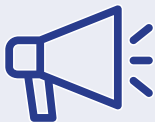
Perhaps one of the most actionable things leadership can do is to ask: "How can we change things around here to help you be more effective?"

The Solution:

Today, and in the coming months, hotel sales teams will require access to technology to enhance automation effectively, streamline workflows, intuitively organize tasks, identify data trends, and communicate seamlessly to maintain strong guest relationships. While recognizing that budgets are limited, and there is a lesser scope for spending for most hoteliers, a case can still be made around the benefits of investing in new technology or replacing less cost-effective systems.

From a sales and catering perspective, hoteliers should seek out a platform with the following key features:

- ✓ Easy to use
- ✓ Easy to implement
- ✓ Cloud-based
- ✓ Offers centralized and automated processes

The benefits of automation can be seen straight away and will significantly lift the burden on sales managers, many of whom are spending too much time on manual tasks. A mundane and inefficient layer of work would be replaced with speed and innovative technology to help staff proactively respond to leads, manage accounts, drive conversions, and facilitate exceptional relationships with event planners. It also helps over-burdened teams manage their diverse needs at a time when resources are stretched thin, yet demands continue to come in.

Utilizing technology can improve efficiency, reduce costs, and increase profits — which is especially pivotal.

In the future, events and small meetings will represent a significant revenue stream for hotels and venue spaces. And when it comes to hotel sales managers, building efficiencies into their daily work lives starts with giving them the support they need to succeed. After all, staff confidence and team morale are, arguably, more important now than ever before.

3 Steps to a Winning Proposal

They say that the most successful event is one that achieves the client's goals but exceeds their expectations.

Whether a large-scale event or a small gathering, a corporate trade show, or a small meeting, events require meticulous planning, attention to detail, and seamless execution. And, much like an elevator pitch or a first impression, event proposals represent a critical opportunity to show a client how you will bring their vision to life and, where possible, make it even better. After all, proposals are oftentimes the first piece of visual communication sent back to a potential customer. In this regard, they have the unique ability to set a tone, instantly build customer confidence, and send a clear message that the event in question belongs at your hotel or meeting venue. A great proposal will help advance your customer to the next step in the sales cycle, while a mediocre proposal can encourage your potential client to take their business elsewhere.

However, as we look to the current and future event and meeting landscape, we have to acknowledge that events will take on a different form in the coming year. And as sales teams work to cater to those unique and evolving requirements associated with intimate events and small meetings in this new landscape, the importance of the event proposal and increasing conversions becomes even more critical.

Showcase Your Expertise

It's important to remember that, although the prospective client often has a vision or goal in mind for their event or meeting, they are often disorganized and nervous about their event.

This is your opportunity to build customer confidence and position yourself as the expert who has thought of every detail and can lead the way to a successful event or meeting.

In the coming months, the event landscape will shift to favor small-scale meetings and events. Venues will become especially valuable to corporations seeking a clean, safe environment to host small meetings and working sessions, in accordance with new regulations.

Understandably, many brands feel a great deal of uncertainty as they look to return to (the new) normal and once again schedule and host in-person events.

With this in mind, hotels should make it their utmost priority to answer any questions the client might have, and provide a detailed breakdown of safety and sanitization measures being utilized across the property. Addressing these measures within the proposal will help to proactively address client concerns and put them at ease while establishing your hotel or venue as a leader in the space.

Make it Visual

We live in a digital age, and we are largely visual learners. In fact, studies show that 90% of information transmitted to the brain is visual, and visuals are processed 60,000 times faster in the brain than text.

visuals are processed
60,000
x faster

90% of information transmitted to the brain is visual

As such, it should come as no surprise that the most successful event proposals leverage visual elements to bring their vision to life. With this in mind, hotels should actively seek out an easy to use sales and catering platform that offers this functionality.

Proposals should be professionally designed, easy to navigate, easily shareable, personalized, and interactive.

Utilizing the power of video elements, virtual tours, and 3D floor plans, venues can curate a proposal that is as clear as it is engaging, providing the client with a realistic, real-time glimpse at the event plan and any corresponding details. Research shows that people remember 10% of what they hear, but when the same message is paired with an image, people remember 65% of it. So, why leave it up to the client's imagination if you don't have to?

Going from Good to Great

When it comes to events of any type, attention to detail is paramount; and so, the event proposal should adhere to similar expectations. The client should be provided with detailed analytics for their proposed event, along with catering menus, A/V pricing, fact sheets, and all other sales collateral. There is no 'one-size-fits-all' design approach for events and meetings, and your proposal should reflect that.

With this in mind, a hotel or venue space sales team should consider the following elements when preparing a proposal:

- Is the proposal print and mobile friendly?

- Can you easily customize, update, and share decision-making information (menus, av pricing, etc.)?

- Are you speaking your client's language throughout the proposal? Have you summarized and addressed their needs in a detailed fashion?

- Have you included visual elements to make your proposal more effective and memorable?

- Have you included photos of similar events or meetings you've done that accomplish things that this client wants?

- Have you included a detailed event timeline?

- Have you included virtual tours and floor plans with specific meeting rooms being used for the event highlighted?

- Have you included a range of options (catering, set-up, etc.) that suit the client's goal while remaining within budget?

Just as a cut-and-paste resume often won't win you a job interview, a basic and unimaginative proposal template often won't win a client's business.

Event proposals should be engaging, meticulously designed, and personalized with professional sales and catering software, mobile-friendly, and detail-oriented.

With the right sales and catering technology in place, hotels and venues can effectively design cutting-edge, personalized proposals that will not only stand out to clients — they'll make or break the sale.
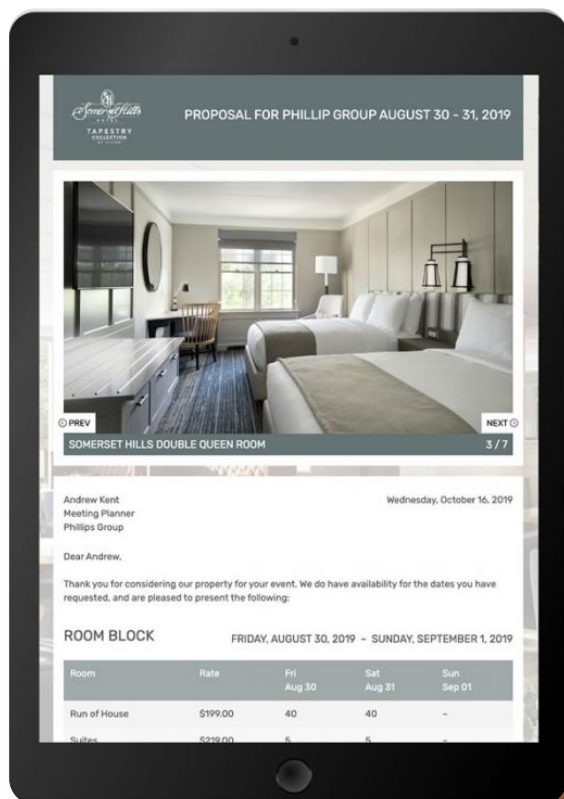
The Sales Reports Every Hotel Should Be Using

For event planners and hoteliers, the days of manual reporting and venue management are long gone — or at least they should be. The digital age has ushered in an influx of automation, as hoteliers and venue owners leverage new-age sales and catering management technology to streamline their operational efforts and drive bookings.

As we know, in the realm of sales and catering, smart data allows for smart decision making. However, if teams are inundated with data across multiple, siloed systems, they may not be able to derive the actionable insights needed to inform the sales process. With this in mind, hoteliers and venue owners should leverage their management technology to gain a holistic view of their team's performance, planner and attendee needs, trend forecasts, and more. Fortunately for event professionals, many of these systems offer detailed reporting integrated directly into the software, offering 24/7, real-time access to critical group booking insights.

With the changes ushered in across many industries during the pandemic, moving forward will bring a new wave of handling sales, groups and catered events. Whether consolidating efforts into an Area or Regional approach, both on the client side and within the hospitality sector, adaptability and system access to maintain activity flow is critical.

So, the question becomes, what reports should every sales and catering professional be utilizing, and why?

1. Sales Activity Report or Rooms by Salesperson

Understandably, hoteliers and venue owners want to keep their finger on the pulse of group booking rates, to ensure their efforts to target the events market remain consistent and, more importantly, profitable. Since the pandemic, client communication and updated information is critical, given the many job furloughs, changes and the new remote office workplace. Contacts may have changed, or be temporarily offline, so asking good questions about any new structure within your client records is paramount.

Using Sales Activity reports, or a "Rooms by Salesperson" report, managers can easily track the day-to-day activity of their sales team (including lead generation efforts, client communications, follow-up activities, and more). These reports prove to be instrumental in managing the productivity of a sales team and can help to identify any areas/touchpoints in which your team is lacking and ensure follow-up activities are in place to maintain ongoing relationships.

2. Pace Reports

For any hotel or venue, pace reporting proves to be especially valuable. The ability to identify and understand booking demand while comparing back to past patterns allows hoteliers and venue owners to derive more accurate forecasts.

These reports are designed to provide managers with a snapshot of future room revenue versus the previous year and can be aggregated based on room type, week part, etc. to provide a detailed view of current performance. These reports can also be specified to "Catering Pace Report", "Sales Pace Report", etc. and can help managers to forecast staffing needs, track demand, identify service gaps, and more.

3. GRC Reports

A GRC report clearly indicates to hoteliers and venue owners which groups are on-property during a specified date range, and how many rooms have been blocked for each night of their stay. When organized into a "GRC By Day" report, managers have instant access to a convenient summary of daily group bookings and sales.

Using the data derived from GRC reports, sales teams can provide accurate responses to RFPs, and recommend alternate properties that may be a better fit for a proposed event. Over time, GRC reports allow sales and catering professionals to identify long-term booking patterns, and ability to compare groups hosted in past years, to target re-bookings and ensure account and contact communication is set for a forward moving relationship.

4. Catering Reports

According to statistics, the majority (89%) of event technology users save roughly 200 hours per year, and 92% of marketers believe event software makes it easier to achieve business outcomes. Unsurprisingly, catering reports (often monitored on a monthly/annual basis) are a valuable tool within the group booking process but can be incredibly time-consuming if left to manual systems.

These automated catering forecasts can be aggregated based on time, event type, revenue types, etc. and help venues to project their expected revenues in detail, for a holistic view of their sales and catering performance.

5. Administrative Reports

An effective sales team is a sales team that isn't inundated with manual processes and administration duties. To this effect, sales and catering professionals should seek out a management platform that offers a comprehensive suite of administrative reports.

These include, but aren't limited to:

- Daily Function Sheet
- Hold Space Report
- Deposits
- Banquet Check
- Reader Board

- Batch Print BEOs & Bookings
- Accounts List
- Contact exports for use in email and promotional campaigns and survey program

6. Event Summary Reports

At any given time, hoteliers and venue owners should have a comprehensive understanding of past, present, and future events. Understanding booking details and event requirements (A/V set-up, staffing, F&B needs, etc.) will pave the way for a streamlined event and high-touch customer service.

Using Event Summary reports, sales teams can easily promote upsell/upgrade options and identify opportunities for improved space utilization. Properties should also explore the use of post-event surveys and reporting, to readily identify any opportunities for service improvement and inspire guest loyalty and return bookings.

7. Win/Loss Reports

A Win/Loss ratio is the percentage of opportunities proposed or quoted that your property won. Lower-than-average rates indicate a sales team has room for improvement in their effort to win group business. By reviewing win/loss reports, sales and catering teams can develop deeper insights into why they're winning group business or, alternatively, why they are losing business. These reports rely on the input provided by members of the sales team and feedback from event planners but, over time, they allow properties to better align their event offerings with guest needs.

Proposal
Loss

Proposal
Wins

Finding the Right Hotel Technology Partner in 2021

In the hospitality realm, it's always been about the people who step foot on each hotel property and the entirety of their unique experience that is made up, in large part, by interactions with staff. The relationship between a hotel and its guests is absolutely paramount to its success. So, why should the relationship between a hotel and a technology vendor be any different?

Just as the guest-facing experience relies on high-touch service, the staff-facing experience depends on the technology supplier's high-touch service. Because, in the hyper-competitive and ever-demanding world of modern hospitality, especially during uncertain times like these, hotels don't merely need a vendor — they need a partner. And while price and functionality will always play an integral role in buying decisions, a few key considerations should also guide the path to purchase.

Don't Underestimate the Importance of Industry Expertise

Let's face it; hotel operations are complicated. So, why should the support offered to hotels by technology vendors subscribe to a format which, ultimately, doesn't effectively serve the hotel's service model? During your vetting process, consider the following questions:

- Where are the support and service representatives located?

- Do they work in conflicting time zones, which lead to delayed responses?

- Are your daily contacts hospitality industry experts or just generalists in tech support?

- Are there language barriers?

- Will you have access to a dedicated account manager who is there when you need help?

A great technology partner should have the breadth of knowledge and experience to understand and support your business from end-to-end. They should be able to help you maximize your investment and ensure you receive the best value from your solution well into the future.

Do Look for Responsive Support

Whether considering a new sales and catering platform, CRM, or PMS, hotels should remember that server crashes or security breaches rarely happen at a convenient time. And although we wish they never happened at all, we understand that certain malfunctions are inevitable and, without the appropriate response from vendors, hoteliers risk costly downtime.

> **24** With this in mind, it's crucial to identify those vendors who offer a range of tangible 24/7 support options to provide assistance and workarounds as quickly as possible in the case of any unexpected situation.

Do Check References

When it comes to great service, don't just take a vendor's word for it. Take their client's word for it. A technology partner should have a track record that proves they can handle whatever you throw their way.

What are their current and former clients saying about them? Do they have a robust portfolio of satisfied clients, many of whom have left satisfied testimonials in their wake? What documented achievements have they helped their clients to make? Ask the customers questions about how well the potential partner responds, interacts, and supports them and the technology.
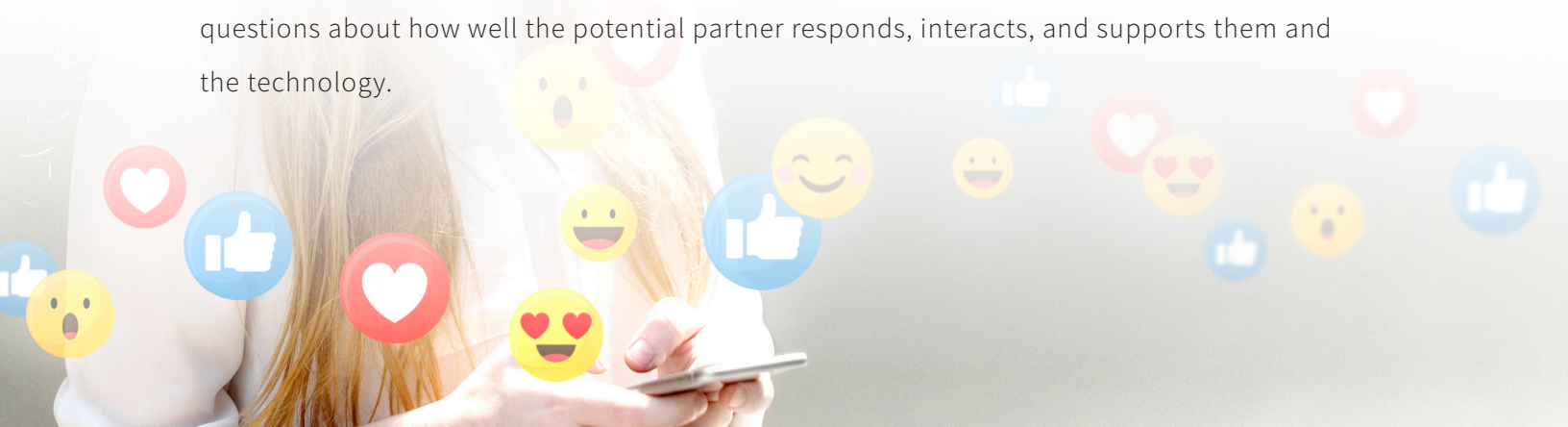
Don't Think Big is Better

Technology is ever-evolving, and there is no 'one-size-fits-all' approach to every service and need. Remember, too big can be as much of a problem as too small. With this in mind, hoteliers should consider how effectively the technology providers have tackled similar projects in the past to understand the type of partnership to expect and evaluate whether or not they're a good fit.

Remember, smaller companies tend to innovate faster without all the bureaucracy, respond to client feedback and requests when it comes to development, and focus more on providing their customers more personal attention.

Do Look to the Future

Technology isn't meant to only address problems in the present; rather, it's also meant to guide its users seamlessly into the future. As the hospitality industry continues to pivot, evolve, and adapt to emerging trends and demands, hotels will rely on those platforms which allow them to be responsive and agile in their approach. Not only that, but there should always be room for growth.

When vetting prospective vendors, consider the following:

- Is the platform scalable? Will it aid in the growth of your hotel overtime?
- Do they have a vision for the future of both their platform and the hospitality industry at large?
- Does the platform offer easy integrations for cross-platform functionality as your hotel grows its technology stack?
- Does the platform offer flexible packages and services options?
- Does the vendor offer more than one solution and platform?
- Is exceptional customer service a key part of their internal company culture?

Whatever You Do… Don't Settle

The implementation of new technology isn't simply a purchase; it's the start of a long term relationship between the hotel and the vendor. A people-first service approach can predetermine a given solution's success within a property and, subsequently, stands to impact the hotel's success well into the future. Following this guide, hoteliers can identify those vendors that offer a sincere and heartfelt commitment to their clients' success and, in turn, empower their team to do their most outstanding work while keeping their customers at the forefront of everything they do.

At SalesandCatering.com, our approach has always been to focus on what we can do, both in times of triumph and times of hardship. We lead with gratitude and flexibility to advocate for the long term success of our clients and industry, by providing an affordable, practical solution, customizable solution to help hoteliers make sense of an unconventional world.

STS Cloud is not only an industry leader in terms of scalability and functionality, but it's also incredibly cost-effective and, therefore, is strategically positioned to offer hotels and venues much-needed support at this time.
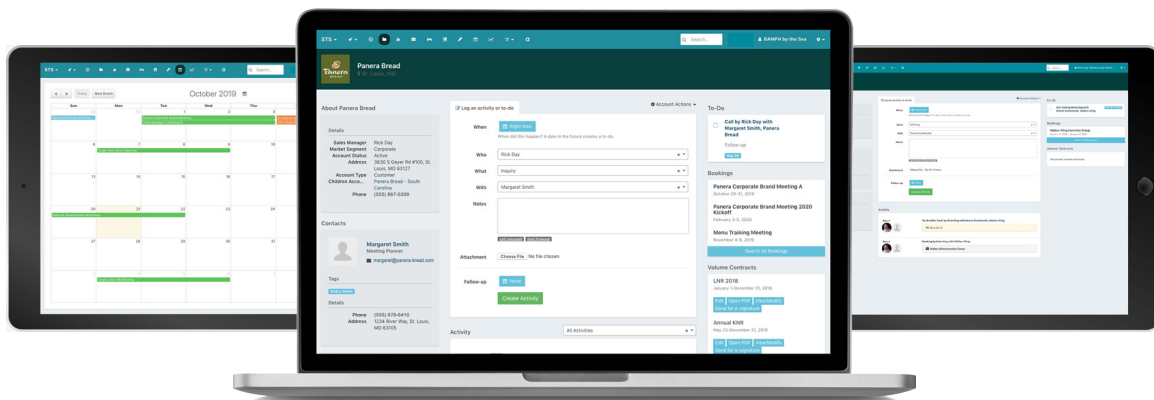
"With the market now trending towards small group meetings and events, we understand that hotels and venue owners are looking to shift away from costly legacy platforms to reduce operational costs and drive revenue. Currently, STS Cloud offers clients their base product at a rate that is often 50-75% less than competitors, with an impressive suite of features. These savings will allow clients to re-allocate funds to other critical areas, including cleaning and sanitization efforts."

— SalesAndCatering.com co-founder Ryan Hamilton.

SalesAndCatering.com has established a reputation for personalized service and exceptional technology, servicing independent properties and hotel chains around the world. We work closely with each property to create specialized sales environments based on individual property needs, pain points, and budgets. Personalization, flexibility, and care have always been at the forefront of our offering but, over the last year, those core values have gleaned more meaning than ever before.

As hotels look to reorganize their sales teams in preparation for a quick rebound and recovery in 2021, our next-generation, cloud-based hotel sales technology will be there to support, accommodate, and help lead the way forward.

SalesAndCatering.com, LLC

SalesAndCatering.com provides the most affordable, full-featured Sales and Catering System for hospitality. Founded over 25 years ago, and currently serving over 2200 of the world's leading hotels, resorts, and meeting venues, the next-generation cloud and on-premise systems are developed and supported from the company's US-based offices. Only STS Cloud offers a full suite of features for unlimited users at a flat monthly fee.

For more information please visit:

SalesAndCatering.com

SalesAndCatering.com

Sales & Catering Software Solution